

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON NOVEMBER 5, 2015 AT 6:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS WERE HAD, VIZ:

Present: **Brenda A. Holt, Chair, District 4**
 Eric Hinson, Vice Chair, District 1-absent
 Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, District 2
 Gene Morgan, District 3
 Sherrie Taylor, District 5-absent
 Robert Presnell, County Administrator
 David Weiss, County Attorney
 Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

1. Introduction

Chair Holt welcomes everyone and asked them to silence their cell phones, and said the workshop was for the proposed Multi-used path along State Road 12 (Arts Trail) from Quincy to Havana.

Commissioner Viegbesie gave a brief history and said he was the CRPTA representative for this district. He added he began to hear from citizens regarding the impact of the project and at none of the last CRPTA meetings, when this project came up for approval, he requested based on the citizens’ concerns it was asked of CRPTA and DFOT to give them time to re-think things through and they agreed to give Gadsden County some time to discuss this. He said this workshop was to brainstorm to come up with a solution on how to get the project through without losing the \$9.3 Million that has been approved for the project.

2. History and Analysis

April Williams, P.E., FDOT District 3, Project Development Engineer, appeared before the Board and spoke to explain the purpose of the trail. She explained in 2012 when the project began, Gadsden County came together and developed a bicycle pedestrian masterplan along with other stakeholders. She said some of the objectives that the County identified were to enhance walkability within the County, promote bike opportunities, look for ways to enhance mobility throughout the County and economic development. She further explained the plan was developed and presented at a public meeting in January, 2012 and public comments were taken; taken back and incorporated into the Master plan and the master plan was brought back to the Board. From that point Gadsden County adopted the plan. She also said out of the studies, the preferred location for the trail was on the south side of State Road 12. A kick-off meeting was held with the County Commissioners in September, 2013 and shortly later the Department received a letter from CRTPA requesting that widened shoulders be included as part of the resurfacing project. She added the Department was required to show a purpose and need for the project and one purpose was to look at options for constructing a multi-use connection between the cities of Quincy and Havana along the State Road 12 corridor. She said this would provide travelers and pedestrians out of conflict from the roadway. She explained the trail would start at Corry Street in Quincy and travel into Havana. She also explained within the historical district of Quincy, they went with six foot sidewalks and once outside that district, it turned into a 10-12 foot multi-use trail. She further explained that it was anticipated that right-of-way would be needed from 36 parcels and a total of 3.1 acres, but

no business or residential relocations were anticipated; there was very little impact to wetlands in surface waters and lowlands.

She said at this point she wanted to run through some of the public comments and concerns there had as part of the project. Impacts to the existing drainage system-as part of the State Road 12 resurfacing project, they were putting curb and gutter along a good portion of the road in the more urban section to collect some of the run-off and added that as part of the resurfacing project, an additional inlet was being added in the vicinity of Corry Street to try to catch some of that water. She also said in order for this to be designated as a multi-use trail, it had to be a minimum of 10 feet in width for bi-directional traffic and anything less would be a sidewalk and could affect if they were looking long-term and want it to be a Florida Arts Trail, it had to be maintained at 10 foot minimum. She also said they were not looking into acquiring more than 20 foot of right-of-way.

She pointed out this project originated with Gadsden County and the CRTPA and looking forward, to finalize the PD&E was a Type 2 CE submitted to Federal Highway Administration and FHWA Approval and Location Design Concept Acceptance.

She asked if the Board had any questions.

3. Questions/Comments

Commissioner Viegbesie asked in moving forward with the project and if the route happened to change, he knew \$500,000 had already been paid already for the design, if route changes would money have to be paid again for another study. Ms. Williams said yes, the study was specifically geared for a trail along State Road 12 and any other alignment would be starting over. She explained options regarding ADA regarding design.

Commissioner Morgan said he was not a proponent nor opposed to the arts trail, but was concerned with businesses along the route, and was curious on impacts it could have with increased traffic, etc. and was concerned with safety. He also was concerned with taking property owners property.

Ms. Williams said with regard to a specific impact to a business, it went back to the access would be maintained and would be put back as it were if not better to department standards.

He then asked how it was determined that this would be a positive impact for the County and she said that was one of the goals and objectives in the masterplan and what the County saw as mobility for network for bikers within Gadsden County.

Commissioner Viegbesie piggybacked on a question Commissioner Morgan asked and said in looking at minutes from the September 3, 2013 meeting, one speaker from the City of Quincy spoke along with Town Council member from Havana in support of this project and the City of Quincy gave a Resolution in support of the project.

Chair Holt said she could not remember anyone speaking in opposition of the bike trail when this was advertised earlier and there were some that were in favor of it along with the Commission.

Commissioner Morgan said at that time they were not aware there were thirty-one residential properties that would be affected and would love to see this become a reality without there being

such a dramatic impact and that there were real issues that needed to be addressed.

Ms. Williams pointed out that the original feasibility study and management plan started the proposed trail at Quincy Creek and went east to Havana and was unsure where the section from Quincy Creek back to Corry Street came from and knew when the Department received what they were supposed to study, it started at Corry Street.

Commissioner Viegbesie said in his research, he understood that the initial approval started at Camilla Drive by Quincy Creek and then the City of Quincy with its Commission, wanted it to come into the City.

Chair Holt asked to move onto questions and comments from the audience. Mr. Weiss announced there were approximately 9-10 speaker forms and if anyone wished to speak to fill out a form and give it to the Clerk and they were limited to 3 minutes per person.

William Sapp, 701 East King Street, Quincy, FL-speaking as opponent. Mr. Sapp said he lived in the first 1.9 miles of this project and affects everyone's front yards and some disastrously. He also said the bike trail had nothing to do with arts and would not affect the economy of Havana and Quincy and the ones that lived on State Road 12 would be the ones affected.

Freida Bass Prieto, 329 E. King Street, Quincy, FL-opponent. Ms. Prieto said they were not showing that the trail would begin or end at the apex of the hill and s-curve and in the City of Quincy there was an ordinance that forbids and says unlawful to ride a bike on the sidewalk and the project was labeled as a sidewalk and not a multi-use pathway in front of her house. She said the bicyclists would have to cut across King Street to get to the path and once inside King, it is one of the narrowest stretches of road and then would have to go down Madison. She said she was not against multi-use pathways being a walker but was concerned that with the plan, one of the first thing noted was there was not in the City of Quincy one single bike path. She added she was disappointed they would try to connect two cities before helping the people that needed the help and they needed to promote folks walking in town. She also said she felt an opportunity was missed with the by-pass because it had a beautiful wide right-of-way and had two areas that had two retention ponds and in some areas, they turn retention ponds into recreation areas.

Angie Pitts, 1401 East King Street, Quincy, FL-opponent. Mrs. Pitts said she was speaking on behalf of her mother, Beverly Stephens. She said she measured the distance from her front door step to the asphalt and it was 58 feet. She said she feared for her safety and asked the Commission to consider everyone it would affect.

Fred May, 178 May Nursery Road, Havana, FL-opponent. Mr. May represented May Nursery and said they were located approximately one-half mile west of Havana on State Road 12. He added the project would affect approximately 4,000 feet of their frontage and was very concerned how it would affect their day-to-day operation of their business because they have fields on both side of the road and equipment crosses the road approximately 100 times a day. He also pointed out that from March until the end of July, they work six days a week, that includes Saturday that would be a busy time on the path. He said with this path, their drivers would have to look for cars, motorcycles, and now bicycles, people walking in both directions and was a serious safety hazard for them. He added the road would go from being 24 feet to 67 feet to cross and it was significant. He asked also how it would affect the water run-off, where the ditch would go and how much the

State would encroach on their property. He added for the sake of safety, May Nursery would like to formally request that included in the project, be a two land tunnel going underneath State Road 12 for them to go back and forth.

Diana M. Thurman, 361 E. King Street, Quincy, FL-opponent. She said some of the comments she wanted to make had been touched on 1) Basic necessity-already have widening going on which has created two 8-foot wide bike trails on the north and south side and this would be a third path on the same roadway, which was a rural county road; 2) Feasibility-is on same side of road where utilities were located and would have to be dug up and be relocated and significant slopes either going down or up and on her property, it would end up being a suspension bridge running the entire length of her property. She added she was a Regulatory Official with Department of Environmental Protection and was an expert in storm water appliance, permitting and enforcement and when State Road 12 was widened in the late 90's to add the current four foot shoulders and widen the lanes, DEP exempted DOT from storm water treatment and it caused significant impact to certain properties, including hers. She said she had spent over \$6,000 dealing with storm water impacts. She said two topics not addressed yet was maintenance, picking up trash and liability insurance. She said it needed to be addressed if someone was injured on the property, who would be liable. There were other items she pointed out.

Rusty Ivie, 8658 Havana Highway, Havana, FL, Napa Auto Parts Store-opponent. Mr. Ivie said he has a 39-foot driveway that customers enter and leave his building and if this path happens, there would be a significant safety concern because if someone left store and headed east to Havana they might not be looking west and also has a propane filling station to fill motor homes, commercial tanks, barbeque grills, etc. and has a fence that the State made him put up and has 23 feet from fence to edge of existing bike trail and 4 feet of existing bike trail to white line, which is total of 27 feet. He said 10-12 more feet would be needed and felt would cause propane facility to have to be moved. He said it was on the only spot it could go because of set-backs and no place else he could move it and would be a severe economic loss to him.

Margie Sims, 612 Havana Highway, Quincy, FL-opponent. Ms. Sims said she has lived at this address almost 53 years and distributed to everyone an information sheet that showed the parcels being taken and said they were homeowners that had owned the property for many years and was residential and had 220 signatures against this project. She also mentioned the by-pass and said if extended on Strong Road, it would benefit people that needed to come to town that walked and could not afford the bus fare.

Commissioner Viegbesie interjected as the CRPTA representative from Gadsden County and said the By-pass North is the next phase and in the plan they would be discussing it at the next meeting.

Ms. Williams clarified regarding the By-pass, the Quincy loop to the north that goes up from State Road 267 is funded for design and P&E is funded to the south.

Pastor Randy Ross, 5910 Havana, Highway, Havana, FL-opponent. Pastor Ross is representing Lake Tallavana Church and school and wanted to bring up one thing not addressed was safety issues for their school. He mentioned part of their parking lot would be taken and the trail would go by their biggest window and had a real concern regarding how to keep the children safe and felt the liability would be on who built the trail.

Bob Lauther, 805 NE 1st Street, Havana, FL, with Havana Merchants Association-proponent. Mr. Lauther said he was the President of the Havana Merchants Association and felt this would be a big benefit having a link between Quincy and Havana. He said he used to ride a bike in Havana and stopped because it scared him with the cars and trucks going by but saw a benefit in it enabling exercise.

Matt Thro, 302 N. Main Street, Havana, FL, representing the Town of Havana-proponent. Mr. Thro said the Town of Havana supported this and several studies was presented to them, geographically the County had a lot of beautiful, natural assets and the topography was sought after. He added that being a property owner, he understood the concerns and hoped there was a way to move forward and find some way to make this work and fit the needs of the County.

Andy Gay, 711 Bonita Avenue, Quincy, FL. He thanked the commission for having the workshop and allowing the citizens to participate, thanked Commissioner Viegbesie and said he felt it important to be transparent and have as much information as possible to make good decisions. He said the conceptual plan was presented in 2013 and the idea of it was supported by the City of Quincy commission at that time. He said going forward with the proposed plan where it proposed to take homesteaded properties and other impacts revealed at this workshop he did not think there was as much support for that plan. He further said as far as the City requesting to have the bike trail extended to Corry Street, did not think it was an agendaed item and was voted on, thought maybe a representative with the City might have had that added to the plan. He also said as the Commissioner that represented that district, he opposed the extension just because of the several impacts that were previously mentioned. He encouraged them to work with DOT to revise parts of this plan.

Commissioner Viegbesie said he was very excited to see the level of participation and wished it had been done initially. He suggested that they come up with a Citizen Task Force of about five people including the County Administrator, the Transportation Director for the County, a representative from Havana, a representative from the City of Quincy and a citizen that lived on the pathway that the project would impact so they could come up with an alternative way to proceed with the project and bring it back to the Commission with as little impact as possible to the citizens. He said he did not want the County to lose the \$9 Million and said the way he saw it, the County asked for it (before his time) through their CRPTA representative.

Commissioner Morgan thanked the FDOT team and the citizens that were directly impacted and spoke as either a proponent or opponent for coming to speak. He said they needed to look into if the \$9 Million could turn into costing the County more money if there were other issues and felt there was very important safety concerns among other issues mentioned at this meeting.

Chair Holt said she lived on Highway 12 going west from Quincy and had been told it would eventually be four-laned that would take part of her yard and understood the position and appreciated the participation of everyone this evening. She then asked Commissioner Viegbesie if for the Citizen Task Force he mentioned, if he wanted opponents or proponents and he responded if they had to make it seven or nine, he did not care as long as they had it coming back to them from the citizens. Chair Holt said she had spoken to the Administrator and said they could have two, one that was pro and one con and two from the County Administration it would make an odd number and would work out.

Commissioner Morgan suggested it would be wise to have someone that represented the businesses as well, not just the homeowners.

Commissioner Viegbesie suggested the opponents meet and the proponents meet and choose one among them to represent them on the task force.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:27 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**BRENDA A. HOLT, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk