

**CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH
VISION PLAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MAY 12, 2008**

The regular meeting of the Vision Plan Stewardship Committee of the City of Fort Walton Beach was held on Monday, May 12, 2008, at 5:00 pm in the Council Chambers of Fort Walton Beach City Hall with the following members present:

Debbie Bodenshine (EDC) (arrived 5:25); Ted Corcoran, Chairman (Chamber of Commerce); Eric Davis (citizen); John Jannazo (County); and Kabe Woods, Vice Chairman (Citizen)

Absent: Daike Klement, CRA (excused); Tommy Gill, Historic Sites (unexcused); Catherine Howton, Beautification (unexcused); Janet Wilson, MPB (unexcused)

Also Present: Missy McKim, CDS Director; Samantha Abell, Sr. Planner; Toni Craig, City Attorney; Michael Jimmerson, Beautification Committee Representative

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:28 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Woods stated the minutes of March 10 reflect him leaving the meeting at 6:45, and then showing him as voting on an issue after he had left.

Mr. Woods moved to approve the minutes of March 10, 2008, as corrected. Mr. Davis seconded motion and it carried unanimously with Bodenshine, Corcoran, Davis, Jannazo, and Woods in favor (Klement, Gill, Howton, and Wilson absent).

NEW BUSINESS--VISION PLAN GOALS: FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Samantha Abell, Planner, discussed the ranking of future goals of the Vision Plan, and introduced the ranking of goals as selected by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and the Municipal Planning Board (MPB). The Chairman also introduced the ranking of goals as chosen by the Chamber of Commerce.

The ranking of the various committees was almost identical, with Economic Development and Transportation being ranked first. The combined final ranking of the four boards was as follows: 1) Economic Development; 2) Transportation; 3) Public Safety; 4) Neighborhoods; 5) Infrastructure/Utilities; 6) Environmental Resources; 7) Land Use; and 8) Governmental Relations.

Missy McKim, CDS Director, advised that in accordance with Economic Development as the first-ranked goal, the Committee may want to consider ways to get the word out about the City of Fort Walton Beach by talking with the Chamber and the EDC as to how they decide on businesses to attract. She further noted that since the City does not have a business/marketing department to promote the City, the Committee could assist in coordinating the efforts of the City along with the Chamber, EDC, TDC, and other organizations.

Ms. Bodenshine of the EDC advised the focus of the EDC is bringing businesses into the area, and discussed the factors most likely to influence workers to an area, including a good labor market, amenities, a blend of work and leisure, a sense of place, an active lifestyle, alternate arts and culture, a good environment, diversity, and creativity and innovation.

The Chairman noted the role of the TDC is to promote tourism; EDC is to bring businesses to Okaloosa County; and the Chamber is to take care of businesses once they are here, and that there is no one organization promoting the City of Fort Walton Beach in regards to tourism, business, or in any way.

VISION PLAN GOALS (CONT)

The Chairman stated that according to the goals identified, the Committee needs to determine exactly what Fort Walton Beach is so it can be marketed correctly. He discussed the 'branding' concept, whereby the Committee determines what the City is now, and what they want it to become, so future endeavors can be accomplished.

Ms. McKim noted the topic of 'branding' has been discussed with the CRA and MPB, and she feels the Committee's idea is right on target. She stated the citizens know what they want the City to be, but exactly how to market the goals needs to be determined. She suggested there are resources available, and that perhaps the CRA Board can review their vision with the Vision Committee and the process can begin to identify what the City wants to market, and how.

Ms. Abell talked about the City's vision statement as a small, family-oriented seaside community. She offered the idea that to determine what the City wants to become, it is important to know what is not wanted, such as entertainment businesses coming into the downtown area. She also noted the importance of the older homes in the City that will be reaching the historical age of 50 years, and the importance of promoting the historical value of the City. She commented that the Museum Director, Laura Bessinger-Morse, could provide valuable input on marketing the City as a historic seaside community.

The Chairman suggested that if the Committee decides to go ahead with the 'branding' concept, it can be done locally through organizations such as UWF, Troy, OWC, or the Haas Center, as opposed to hiring a company to do it, which could cost in the area of \$80,000.00.

Mr. Jannazo discussed the large influx of BRAAC personnel that will be coming to the area in about 18 months and that this would be a perfect opportunity to market this group and how to capitalize in regards to housing, growth, infrastructure, etc. He noted this will be a benefit to the City and provide an opportunity to manage the expectations of the citizens, and stated this is an economic development opportunity that is literally being handed to the City.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS-- VISION WORKSHOPS WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman advised that in light of the discussions of today, he will initiate a meeting between the Chamber, EDC, and others to begin this marketing process. He questioned whether it is still necessary to have a vision workshop with public participation since the Committee has a definite direction in which to follow. The Board agreed that with the information discussed, they feel they have definite goals in mind.

FUTURE MEETING DATES AND TOPICS

Consensus of the Board was that 5:00 pm on the first Monday of the month is a good time, and their desire to meet on a monthly basis. It was noted that the first Monday in June is the Billy Bowlegs Parade; therefore, it was decided to hold the June meeting on the 23rd at 5:00 pm at City Hall. Ms. McKim advised that meetings will begin during that week with the architects to discuss architectural regulations and that may not be an opportune time for them to meet. The Chairman advised June 23 is a tentative date that may change.

The Chairman questioned the legalities of the Committee having informal meetings outside of City Hall to discuss their ideas with other agencies. The City Attorney advised she attended this evening to ensure she understood the direction the Committee was taking, and that Staff was clear on the role and mission of the Board. The City Attorney informed that since the Board acts as an advisory committee, not a recommending committee, the Sunshine Law does not apply, and that the Board works better with each other and among the community as only an advisory committee.

FUTURE MEETING DATES AND TOPICS (CONT)

The City Attorney read from Resolution 95-28, which created the Vision Stewardship Committee, and their mission statement is to “guide the implementation of the Vision Plan using consistency, coordination, common purpose, and citizen involvement.”

The City Attorney mentioned that something they may want to discuss and consider for the future is whether to change the purpose of the Committee to a recommending authority, either to the CRA, MPB, or City Council, which would put them in a different realm with a different sort of authority.

She advised that a lot of things have changed since the Committee was formed in 1995, but the Vision Plan remains, and how the Committee goes about recommending or advising on that implementation will weigh on what they can do as a Board. She again stated that in her opinion, the Sunshine Law does not apply at this point, but it does to other members of other boards in their capacity.

The Chairman stated with that being said, he recommends having a luncheon meeting between now and the June meeting, and that he will contact everyone regarding a luncheon date and time.

The Chairman also advised he would like to go before Council and update them on their plans. Ms. McKim advised she will do a staff report to get him on the next available meeting, perhaps the last meeting in May.

COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. Bodenstine with the EDC advised EDC members will be attending the Farmer Air Show in July to recruit military unmanned vehicle type of industry in the Commerce and Technology Park.

Mr. Woods mentioned the tight budgets that local governments face in the next couple of years, and that everyone should do their part to stay away from any studies, etc. that would cost the City additional funding. Mr. Woods noted there are a lot of volunteer groups who are willing and able to assist in some of these ventures.

Mr. Corcoran announced the Doolittle Raiders the end of the month and the Billy Bowlegs Festival and Parade in June.

Mr. Davis asked about the Sister City initiative and who was spearheading the effort. The City Attorney advised that Council will consider a resolution adopting Kristinehamn, Sweden, as a Sister City, and this is the first step in the process. The Chairman noted this is an example of Eric Stenberg taking the opportunity to market Fort Walton Beach.

Mr. Davis also noted the Daily News gave minimal coverage to the world-class tennis tournament held at the Tennis Center, and this is another case where the City missed a marketing opportunity.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.