

CUMBERLAND COUNTY POLICY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 21, 2000, 11:00AM
REGULAR MEETING

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Commissioner Talmage Baggett
Commissioner Breeden Blackwell
OTHERS: Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager
James Martin, Deputy County Manager
Grainger Barrett County Attorney
Bob Stanger, County Engineer
Matt Rooney, Interim Planning Director
Marsha Fogle, Clerk
Tonya Harris Council, PIO
John Gillis
Billy Maxwell
Dohn Broadwell

MEMBER

ABSENT: Commissioner Jeannette Council

Commissioner Baggett called the meeting to order.

1. Elect Chairman

Commissioners Baggett and Blackwell voted to elect Commissioner Jeannette Council, Chairman.

2. Discussion/consideration of the following water/sewer projects:

a. Kelly Hills Subdivision Sanitary Sewer Project

The County Engineer reviewed the history of this project. He noted that the estimated cost to provide water and sewer to this area is \$2,930,800. He said he thought the magnitude of this project is beyond the resources of the citizens in the area and the County's water and sewer fund. He noted he talked with Community Development about some funding; however it has been determined they would only be able to kick in \$200,000 - \$250,000 per year. At best, Community Development could be a supplemental funding source for the project. Mr. Stanger said he also contacted USDA/Rural Development to discuss the feasibility of funding this project. He shared the major points of interest from this conversation:

- The applicant must be a public body and demonstrate it cannot secure funding on the open market, necessitating some public body other than the

county be the applicant. A Water & Sewer District could be formed. A bond referendum would be required.

- The median household income in the project area must be below the State Rural Median Household income which is \$24,560, based on 1990 Census data.
- The purpose of grants is to reduce water & waste disposal costs to a reasonable level for users of the system (generally Rural Development considers \$25 to \$28 per month a reasonable water or sewer user rate).
- Maximum funding for this problem could be up to 60% if at least 51% of the households in the project area have failing septic tanks (has to be documented by the Health Department). It is felt that documentation would support the 51% figure.
- Maximum project size is about \$5,000,000. The application takes between 1 and 2 years from submission to construction.
- Ownership of the capital improvements must stay with the applicant.
- Must be a sufficient number of households that voluntarily sign up for service to make the project feasible, since Rural Development funds are based on a user cost recovery method.

Some questions that will need to be answered are who will be the applicant, and should the County create a specific water & sewer district for Kelly Hills (340 acres)? The advantage of a district approach is that there is support within the district for the bond referendum. The major disadvantage is the potential for a proliferation of small water and sewer districts within the County. Note: the Eastover Water and Sewer District includes 11,420 acres.

Mr. Stanger noted the County will soon be considering an agreement for a Rural Water Feasibility Study and one of the major tasks is to assess the feasibility of establishing multiple water districts in the County such that each district could qualify for Rural Development grants and loans. Although the emphasis of this study is to develop a plan for county-wide water, the results will be applicable to sanitary sewer. Mr. Stanger suggested it may be premature to make a decision about the creation of a Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road Water & Sewer District until we receive the consultants report (will take about six months).

Commissioner Baggett noted that even though the Eastover Water & Sewer District includes 11,420 acres, it would be better if it were larger. He noted the work involved in getting this project started and to fruition. It said it has been a massive undertaking requiring a great deal of work.

Commissioner Baggett stated his concern that by developing numerous water and sewer districts within the County, we may hurt our chances and jeopardize any future hope for a county-wide system. He noted the need for sewer services in this area but said he thought the area too small to establish a district.

Commissioner Blackwell concurred with Commissioner Baggett's comments.

MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved that although we want to help that we do nothing at this time that would jeopardize our long range plans.

SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Blackwell noted that once we receive a report from the consultants we can better assess our situation. Commissioner Baggett stated it is not the committee's intent to put this off; however this area should be included in a larger plan which would also lower the cost.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

b. Windridge Subdivision

On March 16, 2000, the County Policy Committee received a report from the County Engineer about a petition from property owners in Windridge Subdivision requesting the extension of water and sewer. The cost of this project to the property owners would be \$757,620 or \$9,354 per lot (does not include FIF Fee from PWC and cost to tie the water and sewer to the house (about \$1,000)). The average property value in Windridge Subdivision is \$86,290. Given the high estimated water and sewer assessments and lack of available funding, the Policy Committee directed staff to get feedback from the property owners regarding their ability to afford these costs. A project fact sheet was mailed to the 70 property owners in the project area requesting their input. Responses were received from 33 of the 70 property owners. The majority of the responses favored extending only public water (24.3% of the property owners). Should the County proceed with the extension of water only, and the County and PWC share in the cost of the 16-inch water main along Chicken Foot Road (\$230,000), the estimated assessment per lot would be \$2,946.

Mr. Stanger noted there is only about \$369,400 in the County's Water and Sewer Fund.

The committee discussed the consequences of drawing this fund down noting a major consequence would be if there was an emergency need in some area of the county that would need to be addressed with these funds. It was also noted the payback period of 10 years leaves our Water and Sewer fund relatively short of money for a fairly long period of time. The Committee noted that it should not be too long before the Town of Stedman will be able to pay us back (they borrowed to

get their Sewer Project up and running). Once we get the \$500,000 back from them we will have a little money to work with.

Commissioner Baggett inquired if there was some distinguishable factor between the two projects that makes one more of a priority than the other. Mr. Strassenburg noted that there is a greater threat to the public health in the Kelly Hills project. He also noted that if the Health Department condemns the septic tanks, people would have to move out of their homes.

The Windwood problem is one of the quality of the water, i.e, a well survey revealed elevated lead levels in 5 of 32 samples taken; however, the Environmental Health Director noted there was no immediate danger to the residents.

MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved that we not take any action on this project until we get the feasibility report from our consultants.

SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

3. Discussion of rescinding the requirement in the urban services area.

Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager, reviewed the history of this issue and noted that the discussion should center around the proposed amendments to the Subdivision Ordinance as presented to the Commissioners at their meeting on September 18, 2000.

Mr. Matt Rooney reviewed the amendments that were recommended as they related to the urban services district requirements. He noted the proposed amendments include sections of the ordinance that do not affect the urban services area. He said he would direct his explanations to those amendments that affect the urban services area since that seems to be the area of concern. The amendments affecting the urban development standards are triggered by density (see attached chart). Mr. Matt Rooney, Mr. Dohn Broadwell (representing the developers) and Mr. John Gillis, Planning Board Member and member of the Sub-Committee recommending approval of the amendments, support the amendments calling them "practical, reasonable, and affordable". Jimmy Teal, City of Fayetteville, also noted his support of the amendments as recommended by the Planning Board. Mr. Broadwell said it is not the intention to gut the entire subdivision ordinance, but rather make it workable for everyone. He urged the Committee to recommend approval to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Billy Maxwell noted that if it is the Board's intention to encourage new growth, we should make it as easy as possible for that to happen.

Commissioner Blackwell noted he better understands the amendments and the effect it will have on construction of homes in Cumberland County. He inquired of Mr. Strassenburg, County Manager, if he thought the amendments were beneficial. Mr. Strassenburg said he thought they were. He said there will always be some fine tuning that will need to be done.

In response to a question, John Gillis said his subcommittee will continue to review the ordinance, offering recommendations to make it workable and understandable by the homebuilders and citizens of the county. They will soon be looking at the section of the ordinance that deals with private streets.

Commissioner Baggett noted an area in the ordinance dealing with the requirement for fire hydrants. He pointed out that just because a fire hydrant is present in a subdivision does not mean it will be an effective tool for the fire departments if there is a fire. Some hydrants cannot handle enough water to generate enough pressure to put out a fire. Mr. Gillis said he was aware of this and at some point the Committee will take a look at this section of the Ordinance to see if they can clarify it, so citizens will not have a false sense of security.

MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved to recommend approval of the amendments and revisions to the Cumberland County Subdivision Ordinance as recommended by the Planning Board, to the Board of Commissioners.

SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

MEETING ADJOURNED: 12:30PM