

# Board of County Commissioners

## Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: August 2, 2010

Date Submitted: July 29, 2010

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Lynn Artz, County Commissioner, District 5

Subject: Workshop to discuss Mt Beasor Road

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### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item requests Board approval to schedule a workshop on October 7, 2010 to discuss Mt. Beasor Road.

### **Background/Description:**

Mt. Beasor Road has been discussed at 3 recent Commission meetings. Most of the discussion has focused on the section of road in front of one lot where the homeowner installed a chain link fence. Although the homeowner also removed soil from the embankment on the other side of the road from the fence, the width of the roadway became too narrow for emergency vehicles such as fire trucks. Through negotiation, we reached an out-of-court compromise with the homeowner that addressed the public safety concerns. The homeowner agreed to move his fence back 1½' and the County agreed to remove 1½' from the opposing embankment.

During Board discussions about the fence, other nearby property owners asked the Board to widen Mt. Beasor Road by clearing the county right-of way that is shown on the original plat map of the Sopchoppy River Estates subdivision. Apparently there has been long standing desire and strong advocacy by several property owners to widen the 1-lane road into a 2-lane road using the existing right-of way.

During the winter of 2007-2008, Public Works mailed a survey to all property owners of record on Mt. Beasor Road. The survey asked whether the property owner did or did not want the County to open Mt. Beasor Road by clearing the 50' County right-of way. Many property owners responded and a large majority of those responding wanted to have the road widened.

Widening the entire length of Mt. Beasor Road would be problematic given the height of the embankment along much of its length and the presence of wetlands in the right-of-way. The cost is also prohibitive. At the last Board meeting at which Mt. Beasor Road was discussed, the Public Works Director offered to explore widening a small section of the roadway where there are no wetlands and the embankment is relatively low.

I convened a meeting with two property owners, the Public Works Director and Engineer, and the County attorney. My goals were to better understand the desires of these property owners, to make clear that the county does not have the funds to widen this roadway, and to describe the MSBU process by which citizens can themselves finance neighborhood improvements. The MSBU option was immediately rejected.

At the end of the meeting, the Public Works Director volunteered that ESG may be able to widen the short portion (~0.3 miles) between the Robertson and Nettles properties at minimal cost by doing it "in-house." To

accurately determine the scope of work and estimate the cost, Public Works had this short section surveyed. The Public Works Director planned to bring this back to the Board for approval. However, a sign also was posted and notices taped to doors informing nearby residents that the road was to be widened.

The survey, marked trees, and written notices have resulted in numerous phone calls and emails to County Commissioners expressing either opposition or support for widening the road. Concerns expressed include loss of tree canopy, likely erosion into the Sopchoppy River, and lack of public input. Also one tree that would be affected is reportedly a nesting tree for swallow-tailed kites that are protected under the Migratory Bird Act.

**Analysis:**

Scheduling a workshop for Thursday, October 9, 2010 will allow the Board to review objective information about the possible environmental impacts and the cost of widening a short section of Mt. Beasor Rd as has been requested by several residents. A workshop will also provide an opportunity for property owners and other citizens to express their views, concerns, and preferences.

**Options:**

1. Direct staff to schedule on October 7, 2010 a workshop to discuss Mt. Beasor Road.
2. Do not direct staff to schedule a workshop to discuss Mt. Beasor Road.
3. Board direction.

**Recommendation:**

Option #1.

**Attachments:**

1. Information about Protections and Permits for Swallow-Tailed Kites