

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: May 3, 2010

Date Submitted: April 26, 2010

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator
Timothy P. Barden, Assistant County Administrator
Doug Jones, Director Public Services
Ray Gray, Director Parks & Recreation Division

Subject: Board Update and Action Plan Regarding the Wakulla County Community Center Programming, Management, and Community Forums.

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item provides the Board with an update and timeline for the Wakulla County Community Center including programming, management, and community forums.

Background:

The Wakulla County Board of Commissioners and staff has been actively working to identify a site for a Community Center since 2007. In late 2009, a 22 acre parcel of land, including buildings, on the corner of Shadeville Highway and Trice Lane was offered for sale by its owners, New Life Christian Fellowship of Crawfordville, Inc. Following numerous site visitations to the property, independent property appraisals, and authorization for administration to negotiate an agreement for purchase of the property, the Board unanimously approved a motion at its April 5, 2010 meeting to approve the Agreement for Sale and Purchase of Property owned by the New Life Christian Fellowship of Crawfordville, Inc., for the County's future Wakulla County Community Center. The property includes approximately 22.31 acres of land and two buildings totaling approximately 12,500 square feet, located at 318 and 322 Shadeville Road, Crawfordville, FL, and all personal property currently at the site.

Prior to formal acquisition of the property, on or before May 15, 2010, inspections, permits, and title insurance will be obtained by the County and a survey of the property will be obtained by New Life Church. Following the closing, a Grand Opening/Ground Breaking Ceremony will be scheduled and scheduled activities will be announced.

Analysis:

The Wakulla County Community Center will allow the County to offer its citizens a broad range of cultural, recreational, and educational services for the first time. This agenda lays out the details of an action plan to occur during the next few months that will lead to the establishment of programs and activities at the center and to prepare for its opening in service to County citizens.

Agenda Request: Board Update and Action Plan Regarding the Wakulla County Community Center Programming, Management, and Community Forums

May 3, 2010

Page 2

In preparation for the ultimate opening of the new Community Center, staff is analyzing management models, developing a list of programs, events, and activities that can take place at the facility. Accordingly, staff is setting forth an action plan that will gather input from the community on those activities it would like to see be conducted in the existing facilities, identification of those activities and services it would like to see with further development of the site, and a comprehensive set of management options that may be available to the Board to implement those programs/services. This information will be presented in a long range plan for the Wakulla County Community Center.

With a 22 acre site, largely undeveloped, the County has many options as to the direction this property may take in the next five to ten years. There are staffing and management considerations and choices on the long term amenities to be added at the site as grants and other funding becomes available. As such, and in preparation for that activity, staff proposes to immediately begin a series of community forums and conduct surveys to gather citizen input into what is most appropriate for the community center in Wakulla County. These community forums will lead towards the ultimate creation within the next two years of a long range master plan for the community center and the 22 acre site on which it sits. In addition, these forums will lead to critical analysis and presentation of options regarding programming to be implemented at the center before fall of 2010.

Step One: Hold Community Visioning Sessions and Conduct Citizen Surveys:

In order to provide a facility that will reflect community needs and desires, input will need to be gathered from the public in a variety of ways. Community Visioning Sessions will be held at a number of locations throughout the county including at the new Community Center site once the purchase is final. These meetings will generate and refine a “wish list” of activities and programs to be conducted in the already completed buildings being acquired including recreational activities, arts, health & wellness, public computing, and educational endeavors. It will also generate a list of other activities and functions that can take place at the 22 acres site, such as a gymnasium; swimming pool; outdoor recreational courts for basketball, tennis, volley ball; community gardens; and ask participants to rank those activities that they deem most important or beneficial.

While preliminary data and survey results will be presented at a BoCC workshop in June, youths and families will continue to be surveyed over the summer for their desires for a Community Center. In addition to conducting paper and online surveys, a Facebook web site soliciting input will be developed. Meetings will also take place in early August at the Back to School Nights at each public and private school. All activities will be announced in the Wakulla News, Wakulla Area Times, thewakullanews.net, wakulla.com, and the County’s mywakulla.com web site. Surveys will also be available for pick up and completion at community forums, outlined below. A draft copy of the proposed survey document to be utilized is included as Attachment #1.

Proposed Dates for Community Survey and Visioning Sessions:

- May 8, 2010, all day, at the 2010 Green Living expo at the River Springs Middle School.
- May 20, 2010 (tentative subject to closing date), 5 to 8 p.m., at the Wakulla County Community Center site.

Agenda Request: Board Update and Action Plan Regarding the Wakulla County Community Center Programming, Management, and Community Forums

May 3, 2010

Page 3

- May 24, 2010, 6 to 8 p.m., concurrent with the Wakulla County Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting at the community room or the Wakulla County Public Library.
- June 2, 2010, 12 to 2 p.m., at the Wakulla Coalition for Children and Youth, at the TCC Center-Wakulla County (adjacent to BoCC Annex Building).
- June 3, 2010, 4 to 8 p.m., at the Wakulla County Public Library Summer Youth Program Registration event.
- June 17, 2010, at the Wakulla County Community Center - BoCC Workshop. The final visioning exercise will take place at a workshop where survey results, a tour and discussion of the facilities, presentations on the management models, and a Board discussion on direction will take place. Significantly, staff is planning to invite Mr. D.J. Gothe, YMCA Finance Director, and Mr. Pat Plocek, Director of Leon County Parks & Recreation, to attend and present at this workshop in further explanation of their management models and synergies that may exist in Wakulla County.

Potential Uses/Programs to be Explored During the Community Survey and Visioning Sessions:

The following is a list detailing many of the activities that have already been identified and that could become part of the Community Center's ultimate programming (note: these will be further explored with the use of surveys and direct feedback and visioning sessions):

- After School Programs-Tutoring, Teen Leadership, Computing, Homework Help, College Prep, Resume Writing, Job Interviewing
- Arts & Crafts-Calligraphy, Scrapbooking, Painting, Sculpture, Cake Decorating, Flower Arranging,
- Community Activities-Volunteer Center, Branch Library, Meeting Place, Community Theatre, Community Band, Community Choir
- Dance Classes-Hip Hop Dance, Ballet, Ballroom Dancing, Square Dancing
- Fitness-Aerobics, Jazzercise, Treadmills, Stationary Bicycles, Free Weights, Exercise Machines
- Gaming-Computer Games, Mah Jong, Bridge, Chess & Checkers, Board Games
- Health and Wellness-Diabetes Awareness, Cooking Classes, Organic Gardening, Smoking Cessation, Weight Loss
- Hobbies-Model Car Racing, Radio Controlled Airplanes, Astronomy, Fishing, Bird Watching, Gardening, Photography, Videography
- Indoor Sports- Foosball, Ping Pong, Billiards/Pool, Darts, Gymnastics, Cheerleading
- Martial Arts Training-Boxing, Yoga, Karate, Judo, Tai Chi, Taekwondo

Another component of the survey and visioning sessions will be to develop a long range plan for the 22 acre community center site. Topics, facilities, and activities to be explored include:

- Gymnasium Complex
- Swimming Pool Complex
- Outdoor Basketball Courts
- Outdoor Tennis Courts
- Outdoor Volleyball Courts

- Skateboard Park
- Walking/Jogging/Exercise Trail
- Playgrounds
- Community Gardens
- Farmers Market
- Park & Ride Location

The Community Center Survey will be one of the primary tools for gathering community input. While paper versions of the survey will be available at Visioning Sessions and Workshops, the survey will be available online and will be a major source of opinion gathering. The survey will be promoted in the Wakulla News, Wakulla Area Times, thewakullanews.net, wakulla.com, and the County's mywakulla.com web site. In addition, a link to the survey will be sent out in a number of local email newsletters emanating from local groups and organizations.

Step two: Identify and Review Management Models (with Costs) - 3 Examples:

Staff's initial review of program models, partnerships, and implementation examples used by jurisdictions elsewhere for the management of their community centers has begun. This initial review has already revealed a number of "standard" models for community center management that the BoCC may pursue in Wakulla County. For example, some centers are managed "in-house" by Parks & Recreation personnel, while others are privatized and/or managed by not-for-profit agencies by way of interagency agreements. In this subsection, an initial overview of three potential management models is provided for initial BoCC and public review. Please note that these models will be discussed at the community gatherings for additional feedback and development, building up to further Board direction at the proposed Community Center Workshop on June 17th (and it's later ratification at the July meeting).

Direct County Management - Active Model:

The first model would be to have County staff (expanded) manage all activities and uses at the Community Center. Accordingly, the Parks and Recreation Division is preparing to accommodate the addition of Community Center activities to the list of services it presently provides to Wakulla County residents. Staff agrees that a multitude of programs, services and activities (ultimately selected by county citizens and approved by the Board) could also offer a potential new revenue source to help offset some of the cost of operation under this model. With proper staffing, progressive budgeting and holistic development of services, staff envisions a facility that provides a wide range of community, cultural, and recreational opportunities as well as other revenue generating activities such as weddings and large receptions. This function would be greatly enhanced by the ability to offer before-school and after-school activities; while generating child care revenue and offering a constructive alternative to the youth of the County.

Staff notes that the direct management model will potentially provide the greatest array of activities; it is also the most fiscally intensive (costly) model due to its staffing and budgeting requirements and will have to "grow" into a fully developed model as time and funds permit.

Ideally, a viable (staff operated) Community Center facility would be open from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekends with special uses and hours integrated as necessary. With hours as described, staffing would consist of two (2) fulltime positions (manager and assistant) with four (4) halftime OPS workers. The operational hours, like the staffing, can be flexible and progressively grow as the programming and demand for use from the community dictates. The Manager must be a professional in the field that possess the ability to program effectively and the “where with-all” to seek out contributions, alternative revenue sources and the ability to generate a portion of his/her salary.

The direct management model will enhance current collaborative efforts between citizen services and other County departments and their civic partners. For example, community gardening is of interest to Cooperative Extension and the Department of Health. The goal is not only to grow food but to improve nutrition, physical fitness, self-responsibility, and to provide economic benefits. Other county department synergies and mutual goals for personal well being exist between Recreation and Parks, Library, Health Department, Cooperative Extension, Sheriff’s Office, and Fire and Safety. All have a stake in community education programs which could be easily accommodated at the community center. A joint effort across departments associated with BoCC and other elected officials would likely provide greater support and buy-in by our employees using the direct management model. Other models, if utilized, should include provisions and strategies to ensure goals of other county departments remain a high priority.

Under a direct County management model, programming at the Community Center would include the use of contract services or contract classes. For example, a cooking class would have an instructor that would teach the class, be responsible for all essentials for participants and charge each participant to cover the cost of the class as well as the indirect cost of the facility use. This provides a service while helping to offset the cost of operation. Another example would be a gymnastics program that would be contracted to train, teach and offer classes and competitions with a contracted lease for services. The Community Center would function as a hub of programmed activities as well as a location for alternative open uses afforded a county facility. Volunteers will be a major component of this operation.

Direct County Management - Passive Model:

A second management model is a “passive” County managed model: the type of service currently offered by Leon County Parks & Recreation. Staff notes that this is one of the least costly models but also provides the fewest structured programs and activities. According to LCP &R Director, Pat Plocek, Leon County has five (5) Community Centers that are opened as needed and reserved for use by the public, groups, and organizations. Leon County does not conduct significant programming in these facilities, but rather offer them to the public for a fee. According to Mr. Plocek, even though there are fees, he estimates that 85% of events receive a fee waiver from the BOCC through the non-profit fee waiver provision. Comparably, only two (2) full time staff members are required to operate the centers at this level of service. More of an “a la carte” program model, if groups require additional staff labor for their event, additional county charges will apply to pass on those costs.

This model of management offers a more efficient method of operation but substantially limits programming possibilities. However, with the facilities laid out and furnished as they presently are, staff acknowledges that lease possibilities do exist at the Wakulla County Community Center site for programs such as gymnastics, child care, and church groups, on a long term basis – a positive for this model. The cost associated to utilities, staffing and operation will still fall to the County, but it does provide for space use with fee waivers and the possibility of public use at a fee. As identified, this would eliminate any programming by staff as well as any open use to the taxpayer for services without additional fees.

Contract Model – Not for Profit Management:

A third management model would involve a partnership allowing for a turnkey management operation to a third party (likely not-for-profit). Some Agencies normally recognized as providers are the Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA and YWCA, and other not-for-profits not presently located within this service area.

The Capital Region YMCA has expressed an interest in partnering with the County in the operation of our Community Center. D.J. Gothe, Finance Director for the Capital Region YMCA and Director of Programming at Camp Indian Springs, has expressed an interest in partnering or managing the Wakulla County Community Center. The YMCA reports that it can offer assistance from individual programs to full programming, planning, and facility management. In addition, during non-summer months, Camp Indian Springs' facilities might be available as an outreach activity for those individuals participating at Wakulla County's central community center. The YMCA is an accredited provider of services and provides a staff to participant ratio of 8 to 1 and 12 to 1 depending on the participant age group.

Staff will continue to gather information and flesh out the details on these models, investigate them during the community forums, and ultimately will bring back to the BoCC a comprehensive pros and cons analysis of the three models. This information together with the input gathered from the Community forums will be brought back to the Board so that a management model and scope of activities can be initiated.

Following the gathering of input from the community on what services and activities they would like to see in the Community Center a master site plan will be developed and both short and long range plans for Community Center programming will be implemented.

It is hoped and desired that the Master Site Plan can be developed utilizing the services of landscape architects and engineers, and that major desired projects can be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, a traffic study that will maximize the safety and efficiency of pedestrian, bicycles, and vehicular traffic to and from the site and from in and around downtown Crawfordville and nearby neighborhoods is desired.

Summary

This agenda item presents an update on the acquisition of the facility, presents an outline of a series of community forums and visioning sessions that are being planned, a draft (paper and online) survey to gather the desires of the community at large on what they would like to see in their Community Center. It also gives an overview of three “standard” management models that may be selected by the Board for the operation of the Community Center. Please note: these models, their estimated costs, pros and cons, will be refined and expanded upon by staff for final Board consideration and action building for the July BoCC Meeting.

In the interim, staff will continue their work in performing the survey and forum process to gain citizen input that will inform Board decisions. Staff will also be working to further refine the fiscal and operational impacts of the three management models and estimates a more detailed agenda item with specific pros and cons, and estimated costs. At this time, staff is recommending Board approval of Options #1 and #3, below as well as Board involvement during the community outreach process to occur this spring and into the summer.

Options:

1. Accept the Update, Schedule of Upcoming Events and Activities, and Survey.
2. Do not accept the Update, Schedule of Upcoming Events and Activities, and Survey.
3. Approve scheduling of a Workshop on and at the Community Center on Thursday, June 17, 2010 at 6:30p.m.
4. Do not approve scheduling of a workshop on and at the Community Center on Thursday, June 17, 2010 at 6:30p.m.
5. Board Direction

Recommendation:

Options #1 & #3

Attachment(s):

1. Community Center Survey

Initials BHP/TB/DJ/RG/SJ/dj