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STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

"Dedicated to making Florida a better place to call home"

CHARLIE CRIST
Governor

THOMAS G. PELHAM
Secretary

October 9, 2007

Ms. Lynda Waller County
Planner Washington
County 1331 South
Boulevard Chipley, Florida
32428

RE: Request for Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) Letter of Understanding

Dear Ms. Waller:

The Department of Community Affairs reviewed your letter dated October 8, 2007, and received on October 8, 2007, outlining the major issues to be addressed in the preparation of the Washington County's Evaluation and Appraisal Report. The Department agrees with the summary of major issues as set forth in the letter. The Department would also request that you address groundwater and springs protection as part of the 'Protection of Natural Resources and Open Spaces' major issue in the EAR. This letter serves as confirmation of our understanding. The Department anticipates the County will fully address the applicable requirements under Section 163.3 191(2), Florida Statutes. As a result of the assessment, there may need to be proposed changes to the comprehensive plan to better implement the intended planning objectives.

If you or your staff have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Susan Poplin, AICP, Regional Planning Administrator, or Keely Brown, Community Planner, at 850/921-4767.

Sincerely yours,

Mike
McDaniel,
Chief

Office of Comprehensive Planning

MDM/sps

Attachment: Washington County Letter of Understanding Request

Cc: Charles Blume, Executive Director, Apalachee Regional Planning Council

Website: www.dca.state.fi.us

COMMUNITY PLANNING

AREAS OF CRITICAL STATE CONCERN FIELD OFFICE

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
1331 SOUTH BOULEVARD, CHIPLEY FL 32428
TELEPHONE: (850) 415-5093 - FAX (850) 415-5094
Email - hvaller@fl.washingtonfl.com

October 8, 2007

Charles Gauthier, AICP Florida Department
of Community Affairs Division of
Community Planning 2555 Shumard Oak
Boulevard Tallahassee FL 323999-2100

Re: Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)
Letter of Understanding

Dear Mr. Gauthier:

The 2000 Washington County Comprehensive Plan has served our county well. With revisions, the Plan is expected to continue to deliver successful results for future goals and objectives. The EAR process will allow us the opportunity to explore and prepare for changes caused by growth.

In 2006, Washington County, in cooperation with the West Florida Regional Planning Council, sponsored a workshop aimed at helping the Towns of Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau with the Visioning Process. Later in the same year, the Washington County Planning Office partnered with the Local Mitigation Strategy Committee to discuss the needs of the community. We invited the public and all local agencies to both meetings with excellent attendance at both. On April 26, 2007, a public workshop, with DCA staff present, was presented to discuss the EAR process and those issues that are of concern for all citizens of Washington County. With other state and local agencies present, along with majority of County department supervisors, we identified the following issues as items of concern that will form the foundation of the Washington County Evaluation and Appraisal Report due to the Department of Community Affairs as of April 2008. These issues were submitted to DCA in May of 2007; however, this letter was misplaced and we are again submitting the issues along with some minor changes for DCA's review and consideration:

1. Transportation:

Increased demands on the local transportation system caused by growth needs evaluation and reviewed as to responsiveness to land uses and ability to meet future traffic needs.

- Evaluate effectiveness of transportation system as evacuation routes.

Establish policies that will serve to assist in alleviating disruptions in transportation services to all municipalities during the four-lane projects of SR 79 and SR 77. Evaluate the transportation levels of service transportation service being developed by GASB 34 clerk.

Assess and evaluate the need for increased pedestrian and bicycle corridors in rural settings.

Develop policies and procedures to ensure that all transportation infrastructure and other improvements are added to the CIE schedule.

2. Affordable Housing:

The increase in property values and increase in the cost of constructing reasonably priced housing has put a strain on the housing system of the County to provide adequate and safe site built homes and housing units and has thus encouraged the use of substandard mobile home housing both in the urban and rural areas of the County. Lack of information provided to the County has generally resulted in a lack of understanding as to what constitutes "affordable housing."

- Establish policies that educate and thus encourage public and private initiatives to provide affordable housing.

Evaluate the Fair Housing Ordinance and incorporated any needed changes into the Comprehensive Plan.

Review, evaluate and update all housing data in the Housing Element.

- Evaluate the possibility of offering a bonus density for affordable housing.

3. Urban Sprawl:

The desire of the increasing population to reside in more rural areas as opposed to the more urban areas has posed the increase of urban sprawl within the County. Lack of urban services (central water and wastewater treatment) has added to this problem...

- Reevaluate the urban sprawl issue in relation to density currently allowed under the clustering provision of the Comprehensive Plan. Revise as necessary.

Direct development and growth to those areas where urban services exists.

4. Economic Development:

The County has no comprehensive method to compare population growth, income, education and employment opportunities as an effective system in assessing factors, resources, and conditions affecting current and future growth.

- Develop an Economic Element for the Comprehensive Plan.

Recommend a formal creation of one entity that will address economic concerns for the county instead of various ad hoc committees.

5. Urban Services:

An increase of population preferring a more rural lifestyle in areas not serviced by any urban services (especially wastewater treatment services) has resulted in the continued use of individual septic tanks within the County in those areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive area, lakes, creeks and stream, thus threatening possible contamination of the surface waters and groundwaters of the County.

- Establish policies to provide for evaluations of the need for urban services for identified areas of the County that would normally be expected to have those services. One area is the Town of Ebro who will be affected by the new Bay County International Airport.
- Establish policy to cooperate with the City of Chipley in providing urban services (water/wastewater services) for the area south of I-10 on SR 77.

Establish policies that will serve to assist in alleviating disruptions in urban services to all municipalities during the four-lane projects of SR 79 and SR 77.

6. Protection of Open Spaces and Natural Resources:

The environmentally sensitive areas of the County are threatened by development in areas where no urban services (central water or wastewater treatment facilities exists. Discussions regarding property rights versus the need to protect these sensitive areas are expected to increase as growth continues into the more environmentally sensitive areas.

Establish policies that will ensure compatibility between environmentally sensitive areas and residential subdivisions.

- Develop policies that will protect water supplies, with special emphasis on the Econfina Watershed Area.
- Focus development away from wetlands and conservation areas by increasing setbacks and buffers as required.

7. Land Use:

The need to sustain rural areas of agricultural and forest lands of the County is the most identifiable need with regard to land use issues. Preservation of these lands are needed to ensure that the foundation for economic growth for the agriculture industry remains intact as well continued protection as the threatened and endangered species of plant and animal life found on private agricultural lands are protected. Development should be encouraged only in areas where existing urban services are available unless developer is will to install such needed services.

Examine impact of residential development on agricultural land; identify and evaluate methods to preserve and support the agriculture land uses. Determine if there is a need for an Agriculture Element for the Comprehensive Plan.

Develop a mixed use category that is responsive to development needs.

Evaluate the intensities of Neighborhood Commercial uses and transfer the more intense uses to the General Commercial category.

- Assess the impact of general commercial development along the SR 77 corridor and develop policies to promote a commercial district along the roadway as opposed to having residential and general commercial uses intermingled.

8. Update the Comprehensive Plan (and Land Development Code as needed):

- Review the Comprehensive Plan for confusing language and policies, and update as necessary.

Policies need to be established that will increase the level of cooperation between the County and municipalities to improve all aspects of growth management.

The above list constitutes the scope of review Washington County will pursue and forms the basis of the *Letter of Understanding* between the Department of Community Affairs and Washington County. In addition to these issues, the County will address the applicable requirements under Section 163.3191(2), F. S.

The required information will be obtained from the different departments of Washington County and local and state agencies, with the requests for data and analysis being made by the Planning Department as the EAR review process moves forward.

Should you have any further questions or need further information regarding this adoption package, please feel free to contact this office.

Washington County extends appreciation for your help in this endeavor.

Yours truly,

Lynda Waller
Planner