

## **PORT ST. JOE, FLORIDA**

**AUGUST 12, 2009**

### **COMBINED WORKSHOP**

The Gulf County Board of County Commissioners and City of Port St. Joe Commissioners met this date in a combined workshop with the following members present: Chairman Nathan Peters, Jr., Commissioners Billy E. Traylor, Bill Williams, and Warren Yeager. < Vice Chairman Carmen L. McLemore was absent>. City of Port St. Joe Commissioners Charlie Stephens, John Reeves, Greg Johnson, Rex Buzzett, and Mayor Mel Magidson.

Others present were: County Attorney Timothy McFarland, Deputy Clerk Kari Summers, Chief Administrator Don Butler, Assistant Administrator Michael Hammond, Deputy Administrator Lynn Lanier, Planner David Richardson, Sheriff Joe Nugent, and City Manager Charlie Weston.

Chairman Peters called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., E.T.

Assistant Administrator Hammond opened the meeting with prayer, and Chairman Peters led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

#### **BIOMASS PLANT**

Chairman Peters thanked everyone for attending the meeting, stating that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss concerns anyone might have in reference to the Biomass Plant. City Mayor Magidson welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked the County Commissioners for allowing this meeting to be held in their Board Room.

Glenn Farris, Biomass Gas & Electric, appeared before the Board and gave a presentation on the new Biomass Gas & Electric Plant, stating that the new Biomass Plant will benefit Gulf County and the City of Port St. Joe. He discussed that the plant will be the first development of a grain energy project within the area. He discussed benefits such as, it decreases Gulf County and Port St. Joe's carbon footprint, new employment for the County and City, a new \$200,000,000.00 asset, help spur more grain development in the area, has ability to be a carbon sink especially through sustainable farming, and additional benefits through the tax base. He reported on the current role Biomass plays in the United States, stating that all the B.T.U.'s consumed in the United States (mobile, fuels, petroleum, etc.), Biomass produces approximately 7% of the energy consumed. Mr. Farris reported that during construction there will be approximately 200 jobs and during operation, 25 direct employees with a payroll in excess of \$2,000,000.00; and with an additional, 75-100 jobs created in the Biomass supply chain, this will be a great economic development. He reported that Biomass is estimated to have the ability to supply 30% of the renewable energy use in the United States. Mr. Farris reported that the Northwest Florida Project should not affect the air quality in Gulf County, stating that according to the United States E.P.A. report issued in 2002, cars will emit more hazardous air pollutant than the Biomass plant will on an annual basis. He reported that the two largest emitters of dioxin in the United States are back yard barrel burners and the incineration of medical waste. He also reported that they have found no evidence that construction of the Northwest Florida

Renewable Energy Center will lower property values. Mr. Farris reported that the laws and regulations are written by the Federal E.P.A., and the Department of Environmental Protection in Florida is charged with enforcing those regulations, stating that there will be continuous emissions monitoring equipment allowed to come on site anytime to review monitor results, and the equipment is required to be tested yearly to make sure it is in compliance. He reported that the primary source of water will be from the wastewater treatment facility, stating that what is left will be discharged back to the wastewater treatment facility for the water return.

Edward Nelson, Executive Director of Gulf County E.D.C., appeared before the Board and discussed that his role is to influence the economic development process for the benefit of the community, stating that this is done by expanding job opportunities to the community and expanding the tax base. He discussed that the goal is to create a healthy economically viable and sustainable community. Mr. Nelson reported that the point is to protect and enhance the community quality of life.

Doug Kent, Administrator Gulf County Health Department, appeared before the Board and discussed risk control, stating that there are more pollutant coming from fireplaces and controlled burns. He further stated that there will not be any significant health effect once this plant is installed according to D.E.P. and E.P.A. regulation in this community.

Trina Vielhauer, Chief Bureau of Air Regulation for D.E.P., appeared before the Board and discussed that they have not received an application for this project, stating that once it is submitted it will come to her office for review. She passed out contact information for her office, stating that she can be contacted at any time.

Sally Cooley, Administrator of the Panama City Branch Office for D.E.P., appeared before the Board and discussed that the air application will go through the Tallahassee office for processing and the Panama City office will handle the storm water and dredge and fill applications. She passed out contact information for her office, stating that she can be contacted at anytime.

David Reed, D.E.P. Permit Engineer, appeared before the Board and discussed that he works in the Tallahassee office with Trina Vielhauer, and passed out contact information for his office, stating that he can be contacted at anytime.

Dr. Robert Saff, Asthma and Allergy Specialist in Tallahassee, appeared before the Board and discussed that  $\frac{1}{2}$  of all men and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all women will develop cancer in their life, stating that air pollution is a risk factor for this issue. He discussed that according to the State of the Air Report from the American Lung Association; approximately 60% of Americans live in a County that has unhealthy levels of ozone particle pollution. Dr. Saff reported that air pollution causes an increase risk of death, increase in Respiratory and Cardio Vascular disease, increase mortality in children that African American children are impacted, increase in congestive heart failure, increase in emergency room visits for acute respiratory, increase in asthma attacks, and diabetics are at an increased risk. He discussed that air pollution lowers IQ in childhood when the mother is exposed to high levels of air pollution and the baby is in the womb, and it is now linked to Parkinson's disease, stating that air pollution inflames the brain. Dr. Saff reported that air pollution is carcinogenic, and that approximately 1 in 8 women develop breast cancer, stating that air

pollution is a risk factor for breast cancer and it also stunts lung growth in children. He discussed that it was opposed in Tallahassee because it was located near residents and a community center, stating that dioxins is thought to be one of the most carcinogenic compounds known to Science. Dr. Saff discussed the SO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 83 tons per year, stating that this was the fourth largest producer of SO<sub>2</sub> which causes acid rain in all of four Counties.

Erwin Jackson, of Tallahassee, appeared before the Board and discussed three things that he would like to speak about regarding the Biomass plant (1) jobs, (2) County potential liability, and (3) Mr. Farris business practice. He discussed how many jobs this Biomass Plant will create and how many jobs it will destroy, stating that as a developer and owner of real estate it will destroy more jobs than it will create. Mr. Jackson discussed the intercoastal waterway, stating that there is a lot of value along the waterway if it was developed. He discussed (2) the County liability, stating that there is a liability as far as noise, smell, and vibration from railcars.

Bob Fulford, of Tallahassee, appeared before the Board and stated that there is not a Biomass Plant in Burlington, VT, there is only buildings. He discussed the Representatives from D.E.P. attending the meeting tonight are not here to support the people.

Steve Wilkie, Bay County Life Management Center, appeared before the Board and discussed that he is the Co-Chairman for the Bay County Green Party. He discussed the importance of the permitting process, stating that there is a lot of money to be made, and the Green Party is against Biomass. Mr. Wilkie discussed that the Green Party is concerned about global warming and the impact that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions has on global warming. He discussed the transport of Biomass products to be burned and the impact that truck traffic will have on the community and road systems. He also discussed his concerns regarding the water quality and the cooling process for the plant.

Tara Lee Flowers, of Tallahassee, appeared before the Board and discussed that she has witnessed a lack of honesty from Glenn Farris and B.G. & E. She stated that opposition to Biomass is huge, worldwide and is growing. She gave information on two websites to visit to obtain information, and . Ms. Flowers discussed a Massachusetts case; stating that an article was printed in The Star regarding the Biomass Plant. She presented a video of the Biomass Plant in Burlington, VT.

Marilyn Blackwell, of Wewahitchka, appeared before the Board and inquired about how much of the tax payers money will come from the \$200,000,000.00, and how many of the 25 jobs will come from the people in this area. Ms. Blackwell further inquired about who will perform the air quality testing for the Biomass Plant. She stated that this is not a good thing, and there needs to be a way for the citizens of Gulf County to object and stop this as other Counties have.

City Mayor Magidson discussed that the Representatives from D.E.P. were asked to attend the meeting to answer any questions from the public. He stated that if the City and County were being railroaded there would not have been a public meeting to discuss this issue. City Mayor Magidson discussed that the purpose of the meeting tonight was to obtain input from the public and learn the facts concerning the Biomass Plant, stating that if this is going to be harmful to this community it will be stopped.

Kenny Strange, of Port St. Joe, appeared before the Board and discussed that he appreciated everyone from Tallahassee and their views on the Biomass Plant. He stated that if this is bad for this County, the Commissioners will not allow this to happen. He also stated that it is time for something good to happen for this County.

Ted Thomas appeared before the Board and discussed that it is a sad day when members from B.G. & E. have to be attacked by members of the audience. He discussed that in January 2007, Florida Trend Magazine stated that Florida generates more wood waste than any other state in the form of urban tree trimmings and pine operation. Mr. Thomas reported that he supports the Biomass Plant and we need to be less dependent on foreign oil.

Steve Hurst, of Tallahassee, appeared before the Board and discussed that he has been a supporter of the Biomass Plant for the past four years, stating that he was a member of the Big Bend Climate Action Team which formed in June 2005 and met with the City of Tallahassee regarding the Biomass Plant. He discussed the Biomass Plant in Burlington, VT, stating that the City of Gainesville is in the process of installing a plant. Mr. Hurst reported that energy and conservation through managing customer demand will not be sufficient to handle the future needs.

Dr. Holyfield, of Tallahassee, appeared before the Board and thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to speak regarding the Biomass Plant. He discussed that this is indeed a health issue, stating that infant mortality was 53% higher, and air pollution is serious business.

Bobby Pickles, Progress Energy, appeared before the Board and stated that this is not a Progress Energy Facility, but Progress Energy has contracted with B.G. & E. to purchase power.

Marlene Whitfield McNair, of Wewahitchka, appeared before the Board and discussed that her primary concern is the children, but this County needs jobs.

Roy Lee Carter, Gulf County Extension Agent (IFAS), appeared before the Board and reported full support from I.F.A.S. for this industry. He discussed that they are involved with performing demonstrations on various types of fuel stocks which can be used to supply this plant (pine, grass, etc.), stating that they have a demonstration in Quincy.

Johanna White, of Port St. Joe, appeared before the Board and discussed that this County needs jobs, and the City and County leaders will do what is best for this community.

Tom Graney, Chairman of Gulf County E.D.C., appeared before the Board and thanked the Commissioners for the meeting. He discussed that E.D.C. has a goal to develop an integrated, growable, and sustainable economy for Gulf County.

Dr. Patricia Hardman, of Port St. Joe, appeared before the Board and discussed that she is the President of the Coastal Community Association of South Gulf County and stated that they appreciate the initiative of the City Commissioners and County Commissioners for finding green industry to bring to this County. She discussed that this will lower some of

the burden on Ad Valorem taxes, and hopefully attracts other green energies, and opens the door for other responsible industries to come into this County.

Edward Nelson, Executive Director of E.D.C., appeared before the Board and discussed information from Florida State University, stating that the Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plant at the University of Florida do not consider the plant previously discussed by Gulf County Extension Agent to be a problem.

Pat Manok, Professor of Civil Culture, in the area of Biomass Production at the University of Florida, appeared before the Board and discussed that he has a lot of direct experience with the *Arundo donax* grass, stating that the only way to manage this weed is to control it and to eradicate it. He stated it is an evasive weed and personally feels it is irresponsible to grow that plant as a fuel stock, particularly in a County where 80% of the County has a beautiful stand of forest/trees which were planted to support an industry that has left this County. He stated that what the industry does is provide a sustainable source of energy; it's about using trees to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and to use that as a fuel source. Mr. Manok stated that it is a very viable process through these advanced technologies that are being proposed in this plant, to use the material to provide energy in a sustainable fashion. Mr. Manok reported that the University of Florida/IFAS is here to support the industry development, but will at the same time safeguard the environment.

City Mayor Magidson thanked everyone for attending the meeting, stating that they appreciate Channel 7 and Channel 13 also for attending the meeting.

Chairman Peters reported that under the Florida Sunshine Law it is very important that they hold Workshops for citizens to voice their opinion. He reported that there will be another Workshop on Wednesday, August 26, 2009 (time and location to be determined).

Commissioner Williams thanked the people from Leon County for attending the meeting and sharing their opinions.

Commissioner Yeager discussed that there have been many people and organizations involved in this process, stating that a lot of information has been reviewed and they will continue to review more information. He expressed his full support of this Biomass Plant. He stated that this is green energy and reduces your carbon footprint in your County, and if the Federal Government and E.P.A. did not believe that this was a good energy source they would not allow this to happen. Commissioner Yeager discussed that we need jobs in our community.

Commissioner Traylor discussed facts vs opinions in relation to the Biomass Plant. He stated that there has been a lot of hard work put into this Biomass Plant, and that D.E.P. was invited to attend the meeting tonight as an information source.

There being no further discussion, the meeting did then adjourn at 8:00 p.m., E.T.

**NATHAN PETERS, JR.**  
**CHAIRMAN**

**ATTEST:**  
**REBECCA L. NORRIS**  
**CLERK**