



BEDFORD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RULES AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, December 17, 2019
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Location: Third Floor Courtroom, Bedford County Courthouse

Present: Chairman Biff Farrar; Commissioners Jimmy Patterson, Anita Epperson, Ed Castleman, Greg Vick

Absent: none

Others Present: Mayor Chad Graham, County Commissioners: Sylvia Pinson, Mark Thomas, Linda Yockey, Don Gallagher, Chasity Gunn, Brian Farris, Bill Anderson, Julie Sanders, Greg Vick, Finance Director: Robert Daniel, Sheriff: Austin Swing, Juvenile Director: Cynthia West, Assistant to the Mayor: Anna Frazier, Times-Gazette Reporter: John Carney

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chairman Biff Farrar, 5:00 PM
2. **Prayer:** Commissioner Biff Farrar
3. **Roll Call:** all present
4. **Approval of November 19, 2019 Rules and Legislative Committee minutes:** Motion made to approve, (Vick, Patterson) unanimous
5. **Consideration of placing the approval December 17, 2019 Commission minutes on January 14, 2020, County Commission agenda:** Motion made to place items on county commission agenda, Motion made to approve without recommendation, (Vick, Patterson), unanimous
6. **Consideration of placing the notary applicants on the January 14, 2020, County Commission agenda as requested by County Clerk, Donna Thomas:** Motion made to approve, (Vick, Patterson), unanimous
7. **Veterans Officer Report:** Visitors were down in November compared to October, but fuel and travel were up (Castleman, Vick), unanimous
8. **Community Clinic Report:** FYI. No approval needed.
9. **Ag Center Report:** FYI. No approval needed.
10. **OLD BUSINESS**
 - a) **202 Anderton Road** – Chairman Farrar opened the floor to discussion. Planning and Zoning Director Chris White stated that he had written a report that he has submitted to the committee including a comprehensive report from Farm Bureau that is given to Farm Bureau customers related to different court decisions. For Director White’s report “it is strictly from a zoning point of view in agricultural exemptions as they read in the



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law today.” Director White informed the committee “about the law and zoning and how it relates to agricultural uses.” Director White proceeded to discuss a recent and one of the biggest cases in Tennessee regarding agricultural exemptions, Shore v. Maple Lane Farms LLC. Maple Lane was a traditional farm that began to diversify and eventually had a rock concert. Ms. Shore, a neighbor, brought it to the attention of the local Planning and Zoning office. The Board of Zoning Appeals met and allowed the farm one concert per year. The farmer refused to follow the Board of Zoning Appeals decision. Ms. Shore then filed suit in Chancery Court. The court backed up the farmer stating that the activities fell within the Right to Farm Act. Ms. Shore appealed the verdict to the State Court of Appeals, which then overturned the original decision and stated that it fell under agritourism. Ms. Shore then took it to the State Supreme Court which reversed the Court of Appeals decision stating that entertainment activities, specifically rock concerts or any kind of music concert was not an exempt activity. The activity did not bear nexus with what the farm was essentially doing; producing corn and raising cattle. In reaction to the State Supreme Court’s decision the State General Assembly met and changed the definition of agriculture in the Right to Farm Act. Now a permitted use in the Right to Farm Act is entertainment, although it is limited in scope and must support the principle use of the farm. Director White stated that from a zoning point of view is “first, how do we determine if it’s a legitimate farm? Because clearly, if it’s a legit farm they’re exempted as long as it’s a supported activity...one of the things that we have done is we’ve looked at an amendment to our zoning ordinance which would give us a set of metrics that we could use to make that determination that we could be fair and objective.” Director White stated that he is proposing to the planning commission that if a person applies to get an agricultural exemption that [the person] provide [Planning & Zoning] with a copy of their previous year’s Schedule F tax return. The planning commission is reviewing the proposal and will vote on it next month. Mr. White stated that “this should give a piece of objective criteria to make a reasonable determination if it is a legitimate farm.” Mr. White stated that the “law supports what they [202 Anderton Road] are doing as long as they can substantiate that they are a farm...they were always told that if the farm, if the commercial activity ever exceeded the scope of the farming activity they would lose their exemption. So, they know that, this is not something that you just get forever...hopefully we can get something to the commission next month and that would be one way we can try to address this.”

Commissioner Vick interjected that he has read the appellate decision regarding Maple Lane Farms and said, “I think that what the court was saying is that a farm is a noisy place; tractors, equipment, is a dirty, dusty place because, once again, your farming. So, we’ve got to be very careful because the most important business in this county is farms and agriculture. They are the backbone of this county and we need to protect them and be on their side and if we are gonna fall any way, we’re gonna fall this way to give the benefit of the doubt to the farmers and agriculture in every single instance, but I think the real defining difference here is what is a farm and what is agriculture? I mean if you have 15 acres, you can be zoned agriculture. Well, what if you don’t have a tractor? Well, then are you a farm? Or what if I have a tractor, and 9 acres am I a farm but I’m not agriculture? So, the semantics in this are critical as to what does agriculture mean?”



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Now when they go through the definitions here when it talks about entertainment activities, conducted in conjunction with...but secondary to...such activities occur on land used for commercial production of farm products and nursery stock...[if] this is your business and then all of a sudden this comes in and it's entertainment and it's rock concerts or whatever, does it quit being a farm? So, we've got a fine line we've got to walk if we're gonna protect farmers and stay on that side and not injure them in anyway but then we have to distinguish selling beer and racing horses, is that a farm?"

Commissioner Anderson: "I've got a question. The question I've got is where's the farm in here Chris? I mean honestly, I mean they're not farming anything (unintelligible) some of these cases you have a corn maize, well you've got the corn so there's obviously an agricultural use here. Out here at this place they're pretty much racing, concert and there's no agriculture. And my next question...the structures that are at the place, do they pay an impact fee like everybody else does when they build stuff on all the structures out there?"

Director White: "So, no one pays an impact fee on any buildings unless they're residential."

Commissioner Anderson: "Okay."

Director White: "All those other buildings are exempt from that tax. So, here's the history of this case, when they first came to town and started going out there and moving dirt and we became aware of it, I went out there and talked to the contractors. They put me in touch with the owners and I had them come to my office and we met and I essentially explained the law to them because at the time there's was nothing even similar to agricultural activity, but they had been told because it was zoned ag and they just had limited understanding of what the law was and I think they got an attorney out of Nashville who'd given them some poor advice. They moved forward anyway despite my advice and they spent a tremendous amount of money out there...but once they had started the racing I actually sent them a cease and desist [prior to 2016, possibly as early as 2013] and that's when I got their attention they came in and we talked about what they need to do and essentially I explained the law to them and I said, 'if you guys are growing horses like other people grow horses and you want to train those horses out there on this track and if you're caring for, breeding – because equine management, equine production is in the law as agriculture activity and if it weren't there'd be a lot of people in the walking horse business here that would be sorely upset...They're covered if it's equine activity...They built a barn and they started boarding horses out there and I did like four inspections probably in a three month period of time while this was going on to ensure that it continued. They fenced in the property, they started pasture grazing horses out there, so they started doing all the things that they're supposed to do. Now whether or not they ever legitimately became a farm business, I don't know. We don't have anything in our book, in our ordinance right now that suggests that they have to produce that kind of (unintelligible). It's just a matter of us going out and doing inspections and seeing that it's continual farming operations going on out there. So that's how I released the cease and desist and because we've been out there and looked at it on multiple occasions and determined that they were doing all those things, so from that point of view I have to treat them the same way as I would treat any other equine business out there. They're showing, racing



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horses in a straight line and other people are racing them around in a circle. I can't make a zoning distinction between those two."

Commissioner Anderson: "My next question would be is horse racing even legal? I know the Kentucky Derby's got the Kentucky Derby and we all know the underlying basis for parametrical betting that the state legislature discussed and did not pass is because you go to the horse race to bet, we all know that's what's going on here. And is that not an issue? Maybe not a zoning issue, but I just get if it were legal wouldn't there be racetracks in Nashville? And I want to parallel it by saying this, if I wanted to open up a dog track, like some place in Memphis or Arkansas, would that not be illegal?"

Director White: "Dogs are not considered agricultural activities. As far as whether they're betting on horses and stuff like that of course they aren't going to tell me that. Whether they're committing crimes out there or not is not really a zoning matter."

Commissioner Anderson: "They put it on Facebook you can pretty much, what I've been shown on Facebook you can sit and watch it, place your bets and the whole nine yards."

Commissioner Brent Smith: "Chris, who enforces the codes?"

Director White: "What codes?"

Commissioner Brent Smith: "Any code in your department."

Director White: "Well, the zoning ordinances, I do most of all the inspections on zoning unless it's related to setback or something like that. If it's building codes, then I have two building code officials that do those inspections."

Commissioner Brent Smith: "And then to build a house how long is that permit usually good for?"

Director White: "The house permit is...you're not building if there's no construction activity is going on, it's good for a year."

Commissioner Brent Smith: "And then what if, pick a code, I violate it, you send me a letter, and I just ignore you, who enforces me ignoring you?"

Director White: "...[T]he same codes officials that are enforcing the code regardless of how the timeline is (unintelligible)."

Commissioner Brent Smith: "I guess my question is if I ignore your letter, what are the consequences really mean?"

Director White: "Which letter? What type of letter?"

Commissioner Brent Smith: "Oh, maybe a letter that said...you have to have this done in a certain period of time or"

Director White: "Related to building codes – we don't go out and we don't call people and tell them when they need a final inspection or when they need a framing inspection. They call us. So essentially we just don't give them a CO until such time that they call us and ask us for a final inspection and we go out and do the final inspection and then approve it, give them a CO so it's kind of incumbent upon the person who applies to ask us, request the inspection before we'll give it to them."

Director White went on to add that if a violation is suspected, he usually sends someone an information letter saying "we suspect that you may be in violation or we've seen this or someone has seen this and reported it and we'd like for you to call." If the person[s] is/are unresponsive or fail[s] to correct the situation a last resort is to go to court, however, this almost never happens according to Director White.



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Commissioner Brent Smith: “I think it’s pretty safe to say, and it isn’t your fault, that some things can probably slip through the cracks and you may not know about it.”

Director White: “Oh, absolutely. And there’s a ton of violations out there that have never been reported that we don’t know anything about. That’s all over the county.”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “Just so it’s clear for me because I’ve got 56 acres so and I’m currently green belted. So if I wanted to apply for agribusiness license, you know because I have got (unintelligible), pear trees (unintelligible), I could have occasional concerts, maybe say 2,000 people, does that sound fair (unintelligible) as long as it doesn’t exceed my principle business?”

Director White: “It depends, I mean if you are going to have structures, are they going to be indoor events, outdoor events?”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “It’ll be outdoor and loud.”

Director White: You’re going to have to – if it’s an exempt activity it’s an event activity, if it’s not an event activity and you were getting like a temporary permit for a festival or something like that, you’d have to submit a site plan, show us where the parking’s going to be, how many people are going to be able to park and then your occupancy”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “What if I didn’t do that. What if my driveway, and it is, it’s my fault, it’s a one way in, one way out, I mean, how would that work? Would you write me a cease and desist letter then? (Unintelligible) Fire department, the sheriff’s? How does all that work?”

Director White: “If you were applying for a permit, like a temporary permit, for a festival, there is a number of things you would submit on a site plan, one would be ingress/egress, how are people going to get in and out, you know we’re going to base that on the type of road that you live on, if there’s a curve in the road, that kind of thing. We don’t want people stage it on the road, on the county road (unintelligible), you’re going to show us (unintelligible) where people are going to park, you are going to show us what you’re going to do in terms of restrooms, and how people are going to use the restrooms, what you’re going to do with the trash, we’re going to talk about lighting, we’re going to talk about noise”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “Well it’s good to talk about all of that but still people are staging up, I mean still it’s a little out of hand, what do we do then?”

Director White: “So in that situation, you’d have a temporary permit and if somebody reported it to us, we would talk to you and see if we could get it corrected. If we couldn’t get it corrected, we’d have to cancel the permit.”

Commissioner Anderson: “Chris, (unintelligible) have this question, are there any permits issued out here at the place that we’re talking about for any of these things or concerts that they’ve been having?”

Director White: “No”

Commissioner Anderson: “There should be there shouldn’t it? At these events I’m told there are two, three, four thousand people at the concerts that’s a huge deal with limited, as we were discussing last month, ingress/egress, could 911 get in there safely if something bad went wrong, but if they applied for any permits for this, to have the events that they’re having”

Director White: “The horse race you’re talking about?”

Commissioner Anderson: “I’m talking about concerts.”



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Director White: “No, I wasn’t even aware of them having concerts.”

Commissioner Anderson: “They’re big concerts. Forty, fifty dollars a ticket, five-thousand people.”

Commissioner Epperson: “They had a big thing, they said the police couldn’t even get in, they beat somebody with a belt buckle. It was in the paper.”

Director White: “Nobody reported that to me, but again, they’re probably, this is probably a case very similar to what happened with Shore v. Maple Lane Farm where they felt like they were exempt. And in this case clearly these people do think that they are exempt. And if it were just a horse race, I would think that they are exempt.”

Commissioner Anderson: “Now we’ve branched out into this other venue now we’re even bigger ‘cause we’re doing the concerts too.”

Director White: “Right. So, what the law says with the definition of agribusiness or agriculture now under the state law in the Right to Farm Act is one, is it a farm? If it’s a farm, they can have entertainment activities so long as it’s subordinate to the principle activity. So that’s a metric that is very difficult to determine.”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “How do you even calculate it, I mean, are you policing that?”

Director White: “That’s a good question, because when it comes to”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “I mean the answer is no.”

Director White: “There is no metric for it. Which is one of the reasons I’m proposing the first thing we do is we ask them to produce a copy of Schedule F from the previous year’s tax return. That is (unintelligible) a piece of objective material that we can use to make that determination. Aside from that now we still have to get to the meat and potatoes of what’s subordinate and what’s not and so we have to look at what’s the investment that they’re putting into this farm operation, what is the revenue coming from this farm operation, what is the amount of time is spent, hours of operation, hours of work that’s been put into it. There could be a lot of different things that we have to look at but at the end of the day, I can’t tell you that I know exactly where to go.”

Commissioner Anderson: “I’ve got one last one, if you don’t mind, but from the standpoint of when we did zone years ago, part of the design for doing it was protect residents from people putting in things like this. So we also have to look at it from the perspective of the residents that live out there; windows are rattling, can’t watch football game, at some point in time we’ve also got to look at the rights of those residents out there and it’s bad and that’s what they’re telling me, some of them are saying their windows rattle, they can’t watch television in their own homes. Some of them are saying when these events go on, we go out of town and leave our homes. So, is there anything from that perspective where we can protect these other residents?”

Director White: “I just don’t know exactly what to do. This is such a new phenomenon; I would think that we are one of the few counties that already are addressing it. In our zoning ordinance you guys passed a pretty comprehensive amendment to our zoning last May and we did that to account for agricultural activities but now I want to look at ways so we can refine it, further refine it, but I didn’t have anybody to go to, to get that information from, we’re just kind of (unintelligible) as we go and there’s really no one to look to for it, cause it’s just such a new thing. And places like Rutherford County and Murfreesboro they don’t have these big agricultural operations like we have here, they



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don't have the farmland that they once had, like we have, we're a very agricultural community, so we're in a position to benefit from the agricultural experience here in ways that they don't, but we're also in a position where we can also be abused by it."

Chairman Farrar: "One or two more questions."

Commissioner Sanders: "Is there a way to bond these people in any way?"

Director White: "If they were to get a fine, it would come from the sheriff, I can't assess a fine. And we'd have to take them to court, and I'd have to find some piece of evidence to take them to court with."

Commissioner Sanders: "City codes, for example, I know they have code enforcers that go out, write tickets and things like that. Is there a way or a method...some kind of policy we could put in place to where we could start doing things like that if something like this happens?"

Director White: "Yes, we have the same ability. We have all the same abilities that they have. The problem is we've got to figure out what crime it is they're committing. What violation is it they're committing? As it stands right now, until we have some metric to make a determination whether they are a legitimate farm, what do I use?"

Chairman Farrar: "Commissioner Thomas"

Director White: "At the end of the day the decisions that I'm going to make at the ground level affect every taxpayer. If I get a suit because I'm overstepping my boundaries, so I think we really need to be careful and we really need to be highly logical about how we proceed from here because the law supports what they're doing as long as they can substantiate that they're a farm and what limited things that they're doing right now look a whole lot like a lot of other farms in the community. If we weren't the walking horse capital of the world this may look a lot different, but we are in the walking horse capital of the world. That is a big factor here and I think that doesn't need to be lost."

Chairman Farrar: "Commissioner Thomas"

Commissioner Thomas: "Let me ask you this, in your scenario that you laid out and being familiar with this because I have worked rodeos and stuff, but in the horse racing that they do and what I've seen in the past, they bring in a band and they play music while the horse racing is going on at the same time. Does that cover them what they're doing in the agriculture part of it? Because what they do is, they merge this stuff together."

Director White: "So you're saying that they're having concerts but it's also simultaneously as the horse racing is going on."

Commissioner Anderson: "I think that's happening at the rodeos you're referring to, what I've heard it's separate and once the race is over then they bring in a concert and bring in these big bands."

Commissioner Thomas: "See the way the Celebration is operating is there's a rodeo and a mariachi band doing all at the same time (unintelligible) it's entertainment."

Director White: "If you really dissect this and look at the Supreme Court decision it really centers around concerts...[if they were having horse races and then all of sudden started having concerts] the first thing that I think of is they're trying to model themselves after another very famous lawsuit. I almost wonder if they're trying to lure us into doing something that would trigger a lawsuit. I can't help but think that."



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Commissioner Farrar: “Commissioner Smith, one last question.”

Commissioner Brent Smith: “Just one last question concerning public safety. I live off 231, Commissioner Vick lives off 231, other folks do too, to be honest with you a lot of us are a little afraid to go out on Saturday nights because of what’s already occurred. I guess the question is if we continue to not enforce our codes, we continue to not upgrade our codes, what’s to stop more of these to moving into the county and creating more of a nuisance to public safety and then as a follow up to that do we have nuisance laws that (unintelligible) in place?”

Director White: “If there’s nuisance laws enforced that would be a law enforcement matter, it wouldn’t be a zoning matter. But, back to your question, when it comes to this particular matter, I’m not going to tell you that we’re not enforcing, because at this moment in time I can’t tell that there’s something to enforce. Because if they’re riding on an exemption, that means the county can’t do anything. That means our hands are tied. So what I’m trying to do is, I’m trying to give us some method I think that we can move forward and try to change the circumstances a little bit in our favor, but right now as it stands...what they’re doing is surely a nuisance and what they’re doing surely is causing (unintelligible)...If they’re having concerts, which I was not aware that they’re having music concerts, then clearly we need to take another look at it, and we need to take another look at get them to submit data so that we can make – otherwise they if don’t submit data (unintelligible) the level of farming activity that they are having, then how else could I (unintelligible) show that the concerts and that the racing is subordinate to the farming activity. So, if they’re doing those things that puts them in a different category where I think they’re going to have to start some justification for it. Up until then, I don’t know what to do.”

Chairman Farrar: “Thank you Chris. I appreciate the time you spent, the copies that you’ve given us and thank you for going beyond and certainly have met everything we asked you to do and for your presentation tonight.

Property Assessor Ronda Clanton said that the way a property is zoned isn’t necessarily how we tax it. Property Assessor Clanton referred to a case, included in the packet she provided, regarding a one-acre pumpkin patch that the owner took out of his property, that was in the greenbelt, as commercial. A judge ruled that in 2017 it could be commercial, but from 2018 forward it was agriculture. Property Assessor Clanton said, “under the agritourism, they are for the farmers, our hands are tied a lot.” Referring to the above-referenced case, Property Assessor Clanton read from the information she distributed, “Farm property includes all real property that is used or held for use in agriculture including, but not limited to growing crops, pastures, orchards, nurseries, and it goes all through the amount. Including golf course playing hole improvements. Our Riverbend Country Club is farm, it’s not agriculture, but it’s zone farm. It’s farm property.” Property Assessor went on to say, “if they are having concerts or they are betting, if I have something concrete in hand when I go in front of the judge and I can say, ‘here it is.’ If I don’t have that proof, that judge is leaving on greenbelt, I’m just telling you right now.”

Commissioner Anderson: “Ronda, I’ve just got one question. Here’s the other problem. You go reassess this property, say Greg Vick lives at 203 Anderton Road and Commissioner Farrar lives at 206 and I have a barn right here next to it. Our property



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values aren't worth what they used to be worth because of the entity that's here. And I mean that is just a reality, is it not?"

Property Assessor Clanton: "It could be, but we're looking at the market. When we do a reappraisal, we're not looking at individual pieces of property. We're looking at the market for the buying and the selling."

Commissioner Anderson: "Could one not make the argument that your property touching this place, it negatively affects a lot of people."

Property Assessor Clanton: "One could individually come in and appeal to the county Board of Equalization, yes. Yes, they could."

Commissioner Anderson: "Because things have changed now this year obviously that piece of property that was a hundred acres or a three hundred-thousand-dollar house and it's next door to this. I don't think it's worth what it was worth before this happened."

Property Assessor Clanton: "And that's what the appeals process is for. But when we're looking at setting a new market, we are strictly looking at sales. Qualified sales. Willing buyer, willing seller. It's been on the market, it's been advertised, there's no distress on that sale whatsoever."

Chairman Farrar: "Any other questions? Thank you, Ronda, I appreciate you and Chris for coming in and bringing us updated and that's a lot of good questions and answers. Thank you all."

Commissioner Anderson: "Commissioner Farrar, there's one more thing. I was just going to touch base with Robert [Finance Director, Robert Daniel] to see if you had reached out to the Tennessee Department of Revenue about this matter."

Finance Director Robert Daniel: "I did, and I talked to someone there and I don't know anything beyond that. But they have all the information."

Commissioner Anderson: "There is a lot of sales tax y'all, if we've got five thousand people here and it's thirty, forty dollars a ticket and I don't think ag exempts you from sales tax on tickets, beer sales or food. There is a lot of money that we out to be collecting if we are gonna let it go on and I got a feeling we're not collecting anything."

Property Assessor Clanton said two acres are out of the greenbelt at the moment [at Anderton Road] and she may be able to take additional acreage out, if they are having these races, they have to have a place to park cars, a place where someone is standing taking money. Commissioner Epperson asked Sheriff Swing if they've been called out to the area. Sheriff Swing said that the Sheriff's Department and Highway Patrol are out in the area during events to try to create as safe of an environment as possible. Mr. Denny Hastings is a neighbor [to Anderton Road property] and in attendance. Mr. Hastings' two main problems with his neighbors are the alcohol and the music. He stated he has been over to 202 Anderton Road many times and asked them to quieten down.

- b) **TCAT and 231 Industrial business park updates** – Commissioner Vick said that Mayor Graham, Commissioner Vick and several others had a very productive meeting with UT President Randy Boyd regarding the TCAT project. Commissioner Vick said regarding the 231 Industrial Park will require, at some point, additional land.
- c) **Broadband** – Commissioner Vick said that Mayor Graham and he have been working with United and Tennova and anticipate on having something to bring to the committees over the next few months.



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11. NEW BUSINESS

- a) **Highway Department: Current Road Listing Approval** – Superintendent Mark Clanton requested three new roads be the January Commission Meeting for approval so that they may be added to the new roads list. The new roads are: Old Kingston Mill, South Branch Court and North Fork Drive 2. Chairman Farrar made the motion to place on January Commission Agenda (Epperson, Vick) unanimous
- b) **Planning and Zoning Fee Structure** – Commissioner Vick said that the Committee asked Director Chris White to look at the Planning and Zoning fee structure, which had not been reviewed since 1998. Commissioner Vick thanked the Planning Commission for their work on this request. The Planning Commission passed the proposal. Motion was made to place on the January Commission Agenda (Vick, Castleman), unanimous.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

13. ADJOURN: 5:59 P.M. (Farrar, Epperson)