

Minutes of  
**July 01, 2008**

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners held a special meeting in the conference room of the courthouse annex at 9:00 a.m.

Commissioners in Attendance:

Dewey Weaver, Stephen Bailey, Ronald Williams, and George Skinner.

Commissioner Absent:

Elizabeth Porter.

Others in Attendance:

County Manager Dale Williams, Attorney Marlin Feagle, IDA Director Jim Poole, Deputy Clerk Sandy Markham, Assistant County Manager Lisa Roberts, External Auditor Richard Powell, a representative of the Lake City Reporter, and Michael W. Harling, Executive Vice President of Municipal Capital Markets Group, Inc.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider an economic development project, and discuss whether the Board would issue a letter of support to a private corporation that has requested to locate and do business in Columbia County.

The details concerning the request have been held confidential in accordance with Florida Statute 288.075 and have been exempt from public records in accordance with Florida Statute 119.D7 (1) AND S. 24(A), ART. I of the State Constitution.

Michael Harling, executive vice president of Dallas, Texas-based Municipal Capital Markets Group Inc presented a proposal to build a \$60 million Federal Bureau of Prisons, low security facility. The prison would exclusively house up to 1,254 illegal aliens who have been arrested and convicted of committing a crime in this country. The facility may create up to 230 jobs. Commissioner Bailey pointed out that the proposed pay is less than a starting deputy's salary, and expressed concern that there would be problems with a lack of employees and/or employee overturn. Commissioner Weaver expressed concern with the fact that while Columbia County would not be legally committed to insuring the payment of the bond, that he feels there would be a moral obligation to do so.

After discussion, the County Manager concluded by saying there is obviously more questions than there are answers. If the Board should decide to do a letter of support, there would still have to be much more legal research, especially as it relates to liability. The Board will need more definitive answers before committing.

**MOTION** by Commission Williams to prepare a letter of support for the Chairman's signature that will clearly indicate that the Board is not making any type of final commitment regarding the project. Second by Commissioner Skinner. The motion failed with Commissioner Bailey and Commissioner Weaver voting against the motion due to a variety of concerns and unanswered questions.

**MOTION** by Commissioner Williams to prepare a letter of support for the Chairman's signature with the following conditions:

- a. This will be a private entity with no public financing from Columbia County;
- b. There will be no adverse impact on any other governmental entity in Columbia County;
- c. The facility as a private entity will pay ad valorem taxes and non-ad valorem assessments as levied by Columbia County, Florida; and
- d. Columbia County will have the opportunity to further consider the proposal and its impact upon Columbia County before giving their final approval on the project.

Commissioner Skinner made a second to the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

ATTEST:

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Board of County Commissioners

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P. DeWitt Cason  
Clerk of Circuit Court