

Alachua County Planning Commission/Local Planning Agency

September 19, 2018

Agenda Item Summary: Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Update - Topic Area

Discussion: Protection of Water and Natural Resources

Item Description:

This is the first in a series of meetings with the Planning Commission to discuss draft revisions to the text of the Comprehensive Plan, based on the Evaluation and Appraisal Issues adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and the discussion of general strategies subsequently developed by staff and reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. This agenda item will focus on the topic areas of Protection of Water and Natural Resources. Staff will provide a presentation, and is seeking recommendations from the Planning Commission on finalizing the draft policy revisions as part of the next step in the Comprehensive Plan update process.

In developing the draft policy revisions, Staff prepared a series of Issue Papers relating to the listed topic areas. The issue papers included a review of the issues that were identified through the issue scoping process, relevant data and analysis on the issues, and potential strategies for addressing the issues as part of the update of the Comprehensive Plan. This information was presented to the Planning Commission in the spring of 2018. Staff has incorporated the Planning Commission's recommendations and input into the drafting of Comprehensive Plan policy revisions.

Background:

On March 13th, the County Commission approved a letter from the Chair notifying the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity of the proposed amendments to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan that are needed to address statutory changes, as well as to address local issues, as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. The Issues letter followed a scoping process that lasted several months seeking input from the public, County advisory boards (including the Planning Commission), community groups, and the Board of County Commissioners to identify local issues to be addressed as part of the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Subsequently, staff has worked to draft revisions to the Comprehensive Plan that address the statutory changes and local issues, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Planning Commission and direction provided by the Board of County Commissioners.

Staff has attached a summary of the Natural Resource Protection Issues, the Adopted Natural Resource Issues submitted to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and the BoCC Motions providing staff direction regarding the proposed strategies to address the Issues.

Natural Resource Protection Issues Summary

Through this review process the County will update Comprehensive Plan policies related to the following:

Water Conservation: Maximize water conservation potential, reduce permanent irrigation and increase participation in the Florida Water Star program.

Landscaping: Encourage low water/chemical dependent landscaping and reduce the trend of landscapes dominated by irrigated turf. Strengthen policies for reclaimed waste water and treated effluent to avoid negative unintended consequences and inconsistencies. Update language to assist with overcoming the barriers of Homeowner Association (HOA) resistance to less water and fertilizer intensive landscapes and improvements to screening requirements.

Surface Waters: Policies related to Total Maximum Daily Loads, Basin Management Action Plans, and Minimum Flows and Levels that are out of date.

Stormwater: Provide consistent and specific language for the implementation of Low Impact Design (LID) techniques. There are policies in the Comp Plan primarily focused on the protection of existing geologic features and underlying Floridan Aquifer; staff will evaluate policies designed to minimize the formation of new sinkholes within stormwater treatment basins by the application of LID practices.

Groundwater and Springs: Establish Springs Priority Focus Areas and corresponding protections for Poe Springs consistent with the criteria developed by FDEP under the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act. Update the existing wellhead protection policies.

Wetland Protection: Increase protection strategies for Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW). Proposed changes increases the buffer requirements in COSE Policy 3.6.8 for OFWs to a 200 ft. average (previously 150 ft. average).

Permanent Protection: Identify additional tools for permanent protection of conservation areas related to new land development projects.

Air Quality: Consider incentives for development/redevelopment that reduce air pollution and promote clean air.

Tree Protection and Mitigation: Evaluate existing policy and code language related to tree protection and tree mitigation. Determination was made that changes will be made at a code level.

Open Space: Pull together conservation lands and parks information, open space requirements, ped/bike trail corridors, and other resources to establish a more comprehensive and cohesive open space strategy. This will be presented separately from other natural resource issues.

Land Conservation: Update Critical Ecological Corridors Map and include the Florida Ecological Greenways Network Priority 3 areas and those Priority 4 along the Santa Fe River.

Adopted BoCC Issues

4. Natural Resource Protection

- a. **Aquifer recharge and water quality standards; effectiveness of Low Impact Development** techniques.
- b. **Rural stormwater system impacts on private property and off-site impacts on adjacent conservation lands.**
- c. **Permanent protection of conservation resources** for certain situations as part of the development process.
- d. **Update Critical Ecological Corridors Map for consistency with Future Land Use Map; protect “Priority 3” conservation corridors to reduce potential for sprawl; and provide direction on land conservation and an urban defining greenbelt.**
- e. **Natural resource protections regarding:**
 - **Tree clearcutting, tree mitigation, and vegetation management;**
 - **Karst topography and sinkhole issues;**
 - **Expanding and strengthening wetlands protection and wetlands buffers on a countywide basis.**
- f. **Additional water conservation measures** relating to new development and redevelopment of residential and commercial construction.
- g. **Incentives for development and redevelopment to reduce air pollution.**

4-03-2018 BoCC Direction - Natural Resource Protection

MOTION:

1. Review and update policies on water conservation to reduce the need for permanent irrigation, increase participation in the Florida Water Star program, and strengthen policies on reclaimed water use.
2. Strengthen policies on landscaping practices and other upstream activities to reduce impacts to surface waters, stormwater, ground water and springs and add policies to promote sustainable landscaping.
3. Draft new policies on Impaired Waters and update policies on Total Maximum Daily Loads, Basin Management Action Plans, and Minimum Flows and Levels.

4. Update Low Impact Development policies in order to provide for consistent and specific language for the implementation of LID techniques, including updating policies to minimize the formation of new sinkholes within stormwater treatment basins by the application of LID practices.
5. Review existing policies on springs protection and consider the establishment of a priority focus area and corresponding protections for Poe Springs consistent with the criteria developed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection under the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act.
6. Consider additional protection strategies for Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) and further investigate options available, including increasing the buffer requirements in COSE Policy 3.6.8 that outline the default buffer requirements for all wetlands and surface waters, including OFWs.
7. Review policies on permanent protection of conservation resources and provide options for protecting open space with a legal instrument that remains with the land, is recorded in the public record, and assures the preservation and continued maintenance of the open space.
8. Review tree protection and mitigation requirements as part of the ULDC update.
9. Update COSE Objective 4.1 on Air Quality.
10. Review the existing Critical Ecological Corridors Map and update the map to include the current Florida Ecological Greenways Network Priority 3 areas and those Priority 4 and 5 areas that are adjacent to the existing Critical Ecological Corridor.
11. Review existing policies under COSE Objective 6.3 – Linked Open Space Network - and recommend language to establish an urban-defining greenbelt.