

**Glades Technical Advisory Committee (GTAC)
Meeting of November 18, 2010
9:30 – 11:00 a.m.
Pahokee Parks & Recreation Department Wellness Center
Behind the Historic High School Building
360 E. Main Street, Pahokee**

Minutes

Attendees:

Meredith Cruz, The Corradino Group
(Consultant for Florida Department of Transportation FDOT)
Sgt. Jermaine Ford, PBC Sheriff's Office (PBSO)
Duane Gainer, PBC Office of Community Revitalization (OCR)
Kaye Hughes, Church of the Harvest Glades Area Pantries
Janet Iderosa, Church of the Harvest Glades Area Pantries
Sgt. Mark Jolly, PBC Sheriff's Office (PBSO)
Dennis Lipp, Office of PBC Commissioner Jess Santamaria
Roy "Mike" McGinnis, PBC Department of Health
Angie Morlok, PBC Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
Ivory Paschal, City of Pahokee
Erica Redmon, City of Pahokee
Chief Curtis Rice, PBC Fire Rescue (PBCFR)
Lt. Robert Sandt, PBC Sheriff's Office (PBSO)
Stephen Stokes, Target Engineering Group
(Consultant for Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT))
Jeff Tarr, Citizen of Pahokee
Houston Tate, PBC Office of Community Revitalization (OCR)
Det. Kevin Umphrey, PBC Sheriff's Office (PBSO)
Rashonda Warren, City of Pahokee
William Wynn, PBC Office of Community Revitalization (OCR)

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Duane Gainer called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m., introduced himself, and welcomed attendees on behalf of the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners, Palm Beach County Administration, and Palm Beach County Office of Community Revitalization. He thanked the City of Pahokee for hosting the meeting and providing refreshments, and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

2. Review of Minutes:

The minutes of the October 28, 2010 meeting were delayed. Mr. Gainer stated that, when completed, the minutes can be found at <http://www.pbcgov.org/ocr/gtac/gtacmeeting.htm>

3. Discussion / Updates:

Pelican Lake – Houston Tate and Dennis Lipp

Mr. Tate reported that he and Dennis Lipp visited Pelican Lake on November 5 to see for themselves what was taking place there. There has been much discussion and speculation about the re-entering prisoners housing there and Matthew 25's involvement. They made some observations but did not take a position in the matter, because their role is to represent the community and its concerns. Mr. Tate was impressed from a general observation of the community. He said that in talking with Det. Umphrey, security seems to be going well. There appears to be some organization going on between the residents and Matthew 25 Ministries. Maintenance is going well. Things like stoves and refrigerators have been obtained for homes that needed them. Many of the residents are families who had been living there before Matthew 25 came into the picture. This is not a totally new community. There is community pride in their gardens. Matthew 25 have said that they will screen the re-entering prisoners coming into the area. They will not accept people with gun-related, rape or burglary charges. Pelican Lakes consists of 52 duplexes, six single-family dwellings and one church. The current population is approximately 70. There are homes comprised of husband and wife and others that may be roommates placed by Matthew 25. Transportation is provided by Matthew 25 with a bus to take people where they need to go. Mr. Tate suggested discussion with Matthew 25 about bringing in the bus route. There were concerns about what is being done for the re-entering prisoners in terms of therapy, medication, mental health assistance. Dr. Ben Taylor provides sexual therapy at the church.

Mr. Tate said that, because the re-entering prisoners are housed in one area, there is better monitoring by PBSO. It is also beneficial that Matthew 25 seems to be providing some services. He noted that these re-entering prisoners have served their prison time and are now free and have the right to find a place to live. He questioned if it is better to have them located in one area such as Pelican Lake, or to have them live throughout the community. He said that it is for the community to determine their comfort level and what the next step should be.

Mr. Tate stated that with the re-entering prisoners coming into Palm Beach County, many from other counties, he is interested in ways to relieve the burden of providing services from the county. He stated that there is a possibility of East Beach Family Emergency Depot (EBFED) obtaining funding to help provide some of the residents' needs. He stated that it is a chance for the community to be a part of their re-entry with EBFED being proactive with some of the services they can provide. He said that many of the re-entering prisoners are skilled in agriculture and other areas.

Dennis Lipp stated that less than half of the residents of Pelican Lake are sex offenders. There are families and couples. He said that there is a wide spectrum of people who fall under the label of "sex offender." He related the story of a young man who was approached in Downtown West Palm Beach by a youngster who said, "Give me money, or I'm going to say that you molested me." He refused. The young man was arrested, tried and sentenced. After he was released, he came to live at Pelican Lake. It was later found out that he was not guilty; he had been the victim of a scam. He decided to continue living at Pelican Lake because it is a nice place to live. Mr. Lipp said that Mr. Tate had been to Pelican Lake several years before ~~when it was a crack farm, with windows shot out~~. When they visited earlier this month, it didn't look like that.

There were no broken windows. Mr. Lipp said that he would be interested in learning the crime statistics from before and after Matthew 25 took over. Mr. Lipp stated that there are sex offenders living within all the communities, not just in Pelican Lake.

Mr. Tate said that for the next meeting, which will be held at Pelican Lake, there should be specific questions and concerns to bring up.

Sgt. Mark Jolly, of the PBSO Sex Offenders Unit, stated that the Unit is charged with monitoring and tracking all the registered sex offenders that live in Palm Beach County. There are approximately 900 in Palm Beach County, with about 60 in Pelican Lake. Many of them are on probation; they have been released from prison but still have the duty to report and comply with the terms of their probation. Some are not on probation; they are fully released with no restrictions except for where they live. As registered sex offenders, they cannot live in certain zones. He clarified that there is no "rape" charge per se; there are charges of sexual battery, lewd and lascivious behavior, etc. All of the sexual offenders have been charged with some kind of sexual act which in layman's terms could be almost considered as rape. Sgt. Jolly said that at first, the law enforcement community were very skeptical about Pelican Lake. However, after having been involved for almost two years, there have been only two absconders – offenders who do not comply properly. They may ~~move~~ or may have not gone into the Stockade to register at their scheduled time. In two years, with about 60 offenders, there have been only two who have moved and not properly reported it. Both have been arrested. One had gone to a family member's home in Riviera Beach; the other had gone to Tennessee. Matthew 25 Ministries has been very helpful. They are taking care of the people living there under their supervision. This has become a good working relationship between law enforcement and Matthew 25. They transport the residents to the Stockade on their scheduled dates to register. It has been a work in progress. For us, it is easier to monitor 60 offenders who live in close proximity. The community looks good. The residents are being given work to do in the community, so there is a sense of pride and they become better citizens. PBSO will continue to monitor, answer questions, follow up on tips.

Jeff Tarr wondered if, from a budgetary standpoint, Pelican Lake was having an impact on PBSO. Sgt. Jolly replied that, if anything, it is positive. PBSO has to go to only one place to check on 60 offenders rather than to have to go to 60 different addresses throughout the community. Lt. Robert Sandt stated that Pelican Lake is not putting any budgetary constraints on PBSO; just the opposite, it makes monitoring more efficient and keeps operating costs low.

Dennis Lipp? stated that there is positive economic impact on the community in that the 60 re-entering prisoners buy groceries, their rent is paid by family members or themselves – there is no public assistance money being used to support them.

Mr. Tate said that, after examining all aspects of the Pelican Lake issue, the community needs to decide what they want. If the community decides that they do not want the re-entering prisoners there, then the next step would be to determine what, if any, legal grounds there would be to make them move. He said that the community should visit Pelican Lake and see for themselves what is going on there. He said that there are grants that could be available for improvements because the community is working with the Pelican Lake project.

Mr. Tate asked the Pahokee city representatives particularly to get concerned residents to attend the December GTAC meeting for a bus tour of Pelican Lake. He said that having a greater number of citizens attend is the only way to come to a consensus.

4. Subcommittee Updates:

Houston Tate requested that during subcommittee updates, specific action items or concerns be presented, progress and actions be reported, and the next course of action be set.

Correcting Addresses in the Glades

Chief Curtis Rice reported that Capt. Craig Prusansky is still working on the addressing project. He noted that the cities have been notified again of the information needed from them. Due to annexing and other causes, some addresses are out of sequence and need to be re-addressed. Some of the problems with emergency responders finding an address have arisen from there being no visible address on the house or anywhere on the property. Residents are asked to assist by doing their part in complying with number placement.

5. Participant Updates:

Department of Transportation (DOT)

Stephen Stokes reported that he is currently working on the US Highway 27 project which starts in the City of South Bay and continues about 10 miles to the south. The first layer of structural asphalt has been applied. They are now in the process of installing the ground-mounted signs. Shoulder work will begin after the holidays. Completion is expected around the end of February.

Meredith Cruz reported that the State Road 700 project ended in September. Mr. Stokes reported that the road previously had a ride number in the low 3's, a very poor ride quality. The repaved road has achieved a ride number of 4.5, which exceeds the accepted criteria by 1.5.

Church of the Harvest Glades Area Pantries (GAP)

Janet Iderosa reported that GAP is planning to put a food pantry in South Bay. GAP is also working on partnering with the food pantry in Belle Glade. In Pahokee, they currently distribute food on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. People from Belle Glade, South Bay and even Clewiston go to GAP for food.

Pahokee / Canal Point

The City of Pahokee will host the Tri-Cities Barbecue on December 11.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Angela Morlok reported that eight years ago a bus system was put in place that goes from Belle Glade to Clewiston, primarily to get people to shopping and work. About 1/3 of the riders are bound for Palm Beach State College. The route averages over 1,000 riders a month. She said that Florida Department of Transportation has been a very helpful partner, and are looking to extend the route to LaBelle and Moore Haven. This will give residents a larger area to access for jobs and other opportunities.

Commissioner Jess Santamaria's Office

Dennis Lipp reported that he attended the Homeless Advisory Board Meeting on November 17, 2010. He stated that the Senior Center at the Glades County Complex in Belle Glade will become the Homeless Resource Center. In partnership with the City of Belle Glade, a new facility will be built to house the Senior Center at Lake Shore Park. This will probably take about 18 months. He also reported that Sheriff Bradshaw is going to launch a series of Public Service Announcements with the message that "it's OK to say No to panhandlers." Text 20222 and enter IGAVE20222 (no space), \$5 will be added onto your phone bill which will go to help the homeless. Removing the marketplace for panhandlers should eliminate panhandling. Donations should be made to proper agencies to best assist the homeless. There will be a taskforce going out with PBSO and volunteers to go to strategic corners throughout Palm Beach County to spread the word to the panhandlers of the OK to Say No champagne.

Miscellaneous

Jeff Tarr made the recommendation that someone from the Tri-Cities Coalition have a representative at GTAC. Duane Gainer suggested that people invite others to attend. Mr. Tate asked that attendees send him their concerns so that major topics could be covered in depth with the appropriate representatives.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

The next GTAC meeting will be held Thursday, December 16, 2010 from 9:30 until 11:00 a.m. at Pelican Lake / Miracle Village, 120 Pelican Lake Drive, Pahokee.

Minutes prepared by Duane Gainer and LJ Margolis.

Approved By Houston L. Tate, Director