

Bradford Board Verbally & Badly Battered

May 21, 2016



Your newsletter writer has attended dozens upon dozens of commissioner board meetings during the last two years, but has never, ever witnessed a public berating of commissioners (and their attorney) by their constituents such as the one in Starke, Thursday evening, May 19, 2016.



Carol Mosley
Had Scathing
Comments That
Blistered the
Ears of the

Board

The beating was relentless, personal, severe, emotional, rational, passionate, repeated, thorough, and long-lasting. The accusations included lying, withholding vital information, transacting business in the dark, not following procedure, possible illegal collusion, impartiality, personal interests, not allowing discussion, refusal to answer questions, and a host of other things.

Chair Eddy Lewis, gentleman that he is, endured the whipping with patience and stoicism and did not curtail a single speaker. Although at times he did silence the crowd, who occasionally expressed disagreement with one or two of the four advocates who spoke for the mine.

As has been the custom, the meeting was not a conversation, rather an opportunity for the public to offer opinion, but the board was not answering a single question. Nor County Attorney Will Sexton either. What has not been the custom, is that there were multiple uniformed police officers present during the entire meeting.



OSFR Policy Director Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson is Relentless and Consistent in Her Quest

As luck and bad timing would have it, Suwannee River Water Management District Noah Valenstein and Thomas L. Singleton were present at the meeting to present the district's Surface Water and Improvement and Management Plans (SWIM). (see OSFR's post [here.](#))



Alachua
Commissioner

Ken Cornell
is a Champion
for Our
Environment

Alachua County Commissioner Ken Cornell pointed out to the board that the Santa Fe is deemed an outstanding waterway, its condition is "impaired," some of its springs also fall under a threatened category, and that certainly, at one point or another, discharge from the mined area will flow into the Santa Fe.

Cornell also reiterated that Alachua has a solid vested interest in what happens immediately above their county on the river, as it definitely will affect the area downstream. Additionally, the million dollar plus SWIM program described above, caught Commissioner Cornell's attention and occasioned his comment to the effect that Bradford County would do well to think prevention rather than restoration, and thus save taxpayer's money.

Sierra Club Florida representative Whitey Markle told the board that wetlands are nature's kidneys that clean the water and mentioned the nitrate problem, already an issue in the Santa Fe. He noted that tourism is Florida's number one industry (not phosphate) and that 60 per cent of our tourism is water-based.



Paul Still
Suggests a
Few Jobs

Outweigh the
Risks to the
Santa Fe
River

One of only four proponents of the mine was Paul Still, who warned the board of the possible large expenses the county might incur if they did not tread carefully. Mr. Still has found himself in the position of being an environmental litigant and offered the board the benefit of his experience.

After the public input by the speakers, the butchered board managed to rally sufficiently so that some of the commissioners did express opinions.

Commissioner Reddick by far has the best insight into the situation. He pointed out that Chris Bird, Director of the Alachua Co. Dept. of Environmental Protection (present at the meeting) has determined that the mine will pose the most severe threat to the Santa Fe that he has witnessed during the long tenure of his position. The significance of this is self-apparent.

Reddick said that this fact should be taken very seriously. He also pointed out the inconsistencies of the board's recent procedural activity and thought that they should be reviewed. Speaking to the criticism by some that various opponents of the mine were "outsiders" and not from Bradford County, Commissioner Reddick said that the mine issue was not about Bradford County, but about water. This drew cheers from the crowd, including some of the "outsiders."

Commissioner Chandler also mentioned his dislike for the inconsistencies experienced up to this point, and also pointed out to the board that they "...have the right to correct what's wrong."

Commissioner Sellars, who was chastized by a speaker for not offering any eye contact, gave a very vague and general negation to what Commissioner Reddick had said, as did Commissioner Thompson. Neither had any negative comment as to the mine or the board's actions up to that point.

Chairman Lewis closed out the mine topic by directing his staff and attorney to review thoroughly the mine application, the county's current regulations for land use, and to investigate employing the use of outside experts. Alachua County has already offered any assistance they might be able to offer.