

DeFuniak Springs City Council

Smart Growth Workshop

August 31, 2009

The DeFuniak Springs City Council met in Workshop Session at 5:30 PM with the following members present: Mayor C. Harold Carpenter; City Council Members: Don Harrison, James Coffield, Henry Ennis, and Wayne Graham; and City Clerk Susie Campbell-Work. Mayor Pro-Tem James Huffman was absent, as well as City Manager Kim Kirby and City Attorney Clayton Adkinson.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Carpenter called the meeting to order and turned the meeting over to Greg Scoville.

**PLANNING DIRECTOR, GREG SCOVILLE:** Mr. Scoville introduced everyone in the room. He mentioned that Mr. Long came to DeFuniak Springs and met with the Mayor and City Manager regarding a Smart Growth Grant. He said that Mr. Long filled out an application to the Small Cities Outreach for Renewable Initiatives. He has brought out a photo montage and presentation. He then turned it over to Mr. Cliff Long.

**SMART GROWTH PRESENTATION, CLIFF LONG:** Mr. Long introduced himself and spoke briefly on the background of the Smart Growth Grant. Mr. Long described 'smart growth' as 'managed growth', 'planned growth'. He said there are a lot of unique opportunities that not many towns have. DeFuniak Springs has a raw template. He said that when he spoke with the Mayor, they talked about vision. He said this is the first of what he hopes is several meetings with the community to develop a better vision for what they want in the future for DeFuniak Springs. Mr. Long said that Bill Holloway definitely has a vision for this area.

They then talked about cities that did not have smart growth and identified areas that went wrong. He talked about L.A. and Atlanta and how they were not prepared for the growth. He also spoke about an area in south Walton that is crowded between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. He said this is what happens when you start to build a community and don't plan for the growth ahead. Mr. Long also gave an example of how growth problems can affect the landscape. He said that the Bayou in Pensacola has hazardous runoff that has polluted the water.

Mr. Long Said that DeFuniak Springs has a core and infrastructure to build right now rather than plow over farmland and pastures to put up more metal buildings. He said in Pensacola there is no where else to build. They are taking existing commercial buildings, renovating them, and building lofts on top of buildings. He said a lot of people would pay a lot of money to live in the middle of the city.

He said where there is water, there will be people. Directing attention back to DeFuniak, he said subdivisions and such would come and hover around the water. Planning for growth around those things is the smart thing to do right now.

Mr. Long asked the audience to direct their attention to the screen.

In picture 1, he asked if they could see a change. He said you will notice that the existing building now has a cornice and now there is shrubbery. He said urban sprawl is something that you do not want. In regards to the picture, he said it is amazing how a little bit of change can affect the overall appearance of the area.

Mr. Long said that he wants to draw people into this community. It will in turn draw business and money into the local economy. He said that he wants to build a montage for around the lakeyard and the downtown area. He wants to protect the lake and build around it.

Mr. Long directed their attention back to the montage. Greg Scoville added that the one thing he recognized about the picture before is that it is a blighted community. It is unattractive and unused. It looks like a hot, undesirable place to live.

Mr. Long went to the next slide. He added a bus stop and people sitting on the bench. He brought up the idea of mass transit. He said that he sat down Commissioner Pridgen and watched people in the north end of the county coming and going. He said that a 22 year old man asked the Commissioner if they county was hiring and he had to watch as Mr. Pridgen said there were no jobs available. Mr. Long said that he listened as the man said he was going to drive all the way down to the beach just for a job. He said Smart Growth begs you to take a look at this problem now, instead of in the future when it could be too late. Be proactive now instead of later.

In the next picture, Mr. Long added a new building. His point was that the façade was the look and the feel of the community. It was built to scale and had the same cornice like the other buildings. He said that there should be a zoning in place for those who come in to match you, not for you to match them. He said DeFuniak will have to define their niche.

He then spoke about Pensacola and how Santa Rosa Beach took a business away from Pensacola due to good planning. He said the Community that has a plan right now for the look and who we are going to attract to the community are the ones that will get the business and thrive.

He added the new building has character and looks like it was built when the other buildings were built. It has the same feel, charm, and look as the surrounding buildings.

In the next picture, he took away the power lines and made them underground utilities. Don Harrison spoke about how this is the first thing that Mr. Long has shown that government could do. Discussion followed about partnerships. Mr. Long said that he gave out hundreds of thousands in façade grants and mitigation grants. There is a lot of money out there for people who want to prevent catastrophes in the area. He said with ordinances and law, the City could change how things look in the area. He said the major cost is going to be retrofitting. Mr. Long added this isn't something that needs to be done next month or next week. He said that the community is going to grow. It is pushing everyday to grow. He said the best thing to do is to put these things in place, to shape the growth while you can.

Mr. Scoville added that under our current codes, you can't build property line to property line unless you get four variances. You have to go through the process or someone is going to build something that the City doesn't want. In order to get this to happen, incentives have to be there.

Cliff Long said that he wanted Mr. Scoville will talk about corridor management and access management. Mr. Scoville discussed corridor management. He asked how do you combine some of these accesses. He said you want to allow for an access road or cross-access easement. He said it would be designed to work together. Don Harrison gave the example of the access roads at Wal-Mart that allow cross-connection. It helps manage that corridor in a smarter way.

Mr. Long said he wants to hear ideas form the crowd. He brought up another slide. "As you look here, you start to see a community taking shape." He is not attracted to the hustle and bustle of 30A. He said that it sellss when people visit the community. It gives the allure that something special is happening. You get the sense of being home. he said you can capture the feeling of Christmas year round, so when people come here it feels like home.

The next slide he added curb appeal. He took away the blighted, unkempt look.

Kevin Crystal, interested citizen, asked, "How do draw people and they are not in this natural pattern at this point?" Cliff Long answered that you have to define DeFuniak's niche? What is your specialty? How will you draw people in? That will ultimately be what brings people here. He said you must have something that attracts them. Mr. Long said that it starts with building a harmonious look and force there eyes to be caught. Put something in place to capture them.

Mr. Scoville spoke about the changes in the sign ordinance and how that will help to achieve interest in the community.

Mr. Long put up the next slide: crosswalks. Mr. Long said that he just made them stop and brought up the fact that now people are stopping and having to look at the area. Sally Merrifield talked about Christmas reflections and how not many people did not know about the lake, and now they do due to the signage. She said this is one example of how signs can help bring people into the area.

Mr. Harrison spoke about other towns in the area and how he believes that our town has something that other towns do not. He said that we still have businesses in our downtown area. Mr. Long said it was because you are the county seat, but not everyone wants to come up here. He said they could relocate it if it were up to a lot of people. The City needs to capitalize on it and make them want to come here and make them want to see something other than the courthouse.

Kim Winneberg said they are already in Walton county, then they are already here shopping at Winn-Dixie and Lowes. She asked how to get people into DeFuniak that don't care about Lowe's and Winn-Dixie. She said there needs to be something else.

Alicia Leonard added they want big town convenience in a small package. She felt that is a problem.

Sally Merrifield commented unless you are downtown on Saturday morning, you don't realize how many people come into town to go to the Nook and Cranny. The little antique shops that offer coffee are very viable business for our downtown. MR. Harrison said that they need to be looking at 331 and Hwy 90, and the corridors, and figure how to capture people there and bring them into the downtown area. Alicia Leonard said that they need to figure out how to spread the ambiance of the downtown area to connect with the rest of the town. Cliff Long said to define your ambiance first. Discussion followed on how to create and define that ambiance.

Cliff Long said that in the south end of the county, they have done it right to an extent. The speed limit does not break 30mph. It draws your eyes in every direction. It is designed to capture your eye and make you want to stop. Smart growth is pedestrian friendly. It creates the want to get out of the car.

In the next frame, he added street lights that fit the time period. He said that this could enable businesses to be open at night. Kevin Crystal said that as you add a thing and take away a thing, he is creating an atmosphere.

Mr. Long said that you are suggestively selling DeFuniak. You are illuminating the stores and business while creating a friendly environment. All of a sudden, people begin to become attracted to the community.

Mr. Harrison added that over the past 50 years or so, we have enhanced the lake with ambiance by adding lights, brick streets, and the piers. Mr. Long said that on 30A, people during Christmas times are spending money there. They have businesses open at night. Mr. Harrison brought up the point that the City can't get any businesses to open at night or on Saturday. Discussion followed about how there is no weekend or nightly business in DeFuniak.

In the next frame, he added people and in the next frame, a building was created and the two upper floors were residences. Alicia Leonard asked how the City deals with the noise ordinance, as a whole, with the businesses and residents together. Mr. Scoville answered that if you move into something like that, you are saying you want that and you are accepting it and buying into that.

Mr. Harrison asked about the parking. Mr. Long said that laws could be made and residential parking could be made in the back. More discussion followed about providing incentives to build.

Mr. Long stated that the beauty of DeFuniak is that they have a blank slate to do what you want, but you will be around to see the change. It is possible. Mr. Long, directed their attention back to the screen, said that it looks too much like Florala. He asked the audience how to make it a place that makes people want to stop. In the next frame, Mr. Long added trees. With the trees, comes charm. HE said that it looks like something anyone would want to live in. It just takes a little bit of planning. He mentioned that it doesn't take millions of dollars, just good planning. Mr. Scoville said to offer good incentives too.

Mr. Long said that now they are competing with south Walton. He said you have captivated the traffic that has come through the community. He said that the final slide is what anyone would want to be a part of.

Mr. Long said that this will pay for itself in the long run. He said the man that fails to plan, plans to fail.

He said that DeFuniak Springs could easily be left behind. He asked how the audience wanted it to look. He told them to define their niche and petition the county to sell it. He said the people will come. Someone had a vision for Seaside and Watercolor. He said that plan, that vision worked. It has proven to work in Walton County. Mr. Long said that if you build it, they will come.

Mr. Harrison added that they could beautify Hwy 90 before 331 turns south and captivate their eyes to steer them in. He questioned what could happen if they just did two blocks in that area to get people to come into that area.

Mr. Long brought up the last frame. He added people, a baby in a stroller, a man walking home from work, and a lady walking a dog. He said that this is the future of DeFuniak.

Mr. Long Step number 2 is to set up a workshop and get our businesses on board. He wants the business input. The thing he wants to do is draw them in and show them possibilities in their lifetime and then gain the revenue that the City deserves. He said that you all have the leadership to do it. People are hungry for a plan in this community, to see the untapped potential. Mr. Long ended his presentation.

Mayor thanked Mr. Long for coming in and bringing this presentation. He asked if there were any questions.

There being no further business, Mayor C. Harold Carpenter adjourned the meeting.

ADOPTED this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of November, 2009

C. Harold Carpenter

C. Harold Carpenter, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

Elizabeth S. Campbell-Work

Elizabeth S. Campbell-Work, City Clerk