



BALDWIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PUBLIC HEARING

October 3, 2023

1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220

5:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Emily Davis

John Westmoreland

Kendrick Butts

Henry Craig

Sammy Hall

ALSO PRESENT

Brandon Palmer

Carlos Tobar

Dawn Hudson

Cindy Cunningham

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Emily Davis called the Public Hearing to order at 5:00 p.m. She stated the purpose of the Public Hearing is to present proposed amendments to the Baldwin County Code of Ordinances and to obtain public input on the proposed amendments.

County Manager Carlos Tobar opened discussion on sections of the Code as follows:

Article V: Property Standards-section 18-105; 18-107; 18-201; 18-207; 18-261.

County Manager Tobar reported a comment was received at the previous public hearing regarding Section 18.261 not clearly addressing "rental" property only. He stated revisions have been made to pages 8 & 9 to specify enforcement on "rental" buildings only. Under Section 18-261 Enforcement - Certain conditions to enter properties by enforcement officials are outlined as well.

Commissioner Sammy Hall reported he had spoken to the Solicitor General regarding prosecution of violators. He stated he could not support the proposed ordinance revision. He stated there are two other avenues for tenants to address these issues; i.e., Health Department and Magistrate Court. Vice Chairman John Westmoreland agreed.

Commissioner Kendrick Butts reported he receives numerous calls from citizens who are living in substandard rental units, and he feels the County should do something to assist tenants. Commissioner Henry Craig suggested a meeting with business organizations and landlords to further review the proposed amendment.

Ms. Cindy Humphrey, 158 Simpson Proctor Lane, stated she felt there has to be mutual responsibility from both tenant and landlord. The tenant has responsibility to notify landlord of things that need to be repaired and landlord also has responsibility to repair the property.

Mr. Anthony Byrd, 1863 Vinson Highway, stated renters are allowed recourse by making repairs and deducting the amount from their rent payment.

Mr. Timothy Evans, 237 Stembridge Road, stated the previous Code Enforcement Officer was diligent in making sure trash from the roads was removed promptly.

Chapter 34: Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions-Section 34-76, 34-77,

Mr. Tobar stated this chapter deals with Urban Camping making it unlawful for any person to set up tents, shacks, or any other temporary shelter on County or State property for the purpose of overnight or daytime camping without expressed written permission. It shall be unlawful for any person to leave any movable or temporary structure that could be used for overnight or daylight camping on County property outside the County property's hours of operation.

Ms. Stephanie Jett expressed her opposition to the Ordinance regarding Urban Camping. She stated this criminalizes homeless persons turning them into criminals due to the fact that they have no place to live.

Chapter 14: Unified Animal Control Ordinance-Section 14-37.

County Manager Tobar reported this section states it shall be unlawful to willfully and knowingly make a false, fictitious or fraudulent statement or representation to an animal control officer or other County employee regarding an animal.

Ms. Pam Peacock, 196 Montego Bay Road, stated she felt the proposed change in this ordinance will not work since reports are made through voice mail to Animal Control with no call logs of calls received. Also, there is no GPS in vehicles that track whether Animal Control actually responded to a call. She expressed concern about who and how a statement would be determined as false, fictitious or fraudulent.

Chapter 58: Utilities-Section 58-33.

Mr. Tobar stated this section deals with special metering requirements; i.e., master meters.

The following citizens provided comments on the proposed amendment:

Tyree Adams, 322 Colony Farm Road, stated master metering of mobile home parks puts landlords in the position of serving as utility operators who sell water but are not trained in testing, etc. causing tenants to drink unsafe water.

Jim Bonner, 218 Highway 49 West, Capitol Mobile Home Park, stated the County should change out meters to remotely read meters. He stated master metering has forced park owners into utility company business and now County wants owners to pay to get lines to right-of-way.

Jermaine Johnson, 105 Harrisburg Road, questioned landlord's liability when a tenant does not pay their water bill and landlord cuts water off. He stated when he doesn't pay a master meter bill for property water the County cuts off the water.

Anthony Byrd, 1863 Vinson Highway, Southwood Trailer Park, expressed concerns about costs to mobile home parks, and that park owners did not request master meters. He stated if he doesn't pay the bill for the park, the County cuts off the park's water but won't let him cut off water to the tenant.

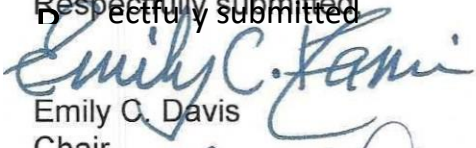
Brandi Rollins, 1863 Vinson Highway, stated master metering is a concern. She feels rules and guidelines should have been studied more before this was done and requires further discussion. She stated this is not fair to landlords.

Timothy Evans, 237 Stembridge Road, stated Magistrate Judge Geeter told him he could not turn off a tenant's water service. He said he felt the County replaced good water meters with cheap meters. He says EPD said master meters cannot be used, and he wants it back the way it was.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Henry Craig made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing at 5:40 p.m. Commissioner Kendrick Butts seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Emily C. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and "D".

Emily C. Davis
Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia K. Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "C" and "K".

Cynthia K. Cunningham
County Clerk