

LEGISLATIVE #

110374B



City of Gainesville

Craig Lowe, Mayor

September 19, 2011

Commissioner Lee Pinkoson, Chair
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
Post Office Box 5547
Gainesville, FL 32627-5547

Dear Chair Pinkoson:

The Gainesville City Commission has been informed that requests for potential use of Alachua County Tourism Development Tax (TDT) funds for proposed projects in the cities of Newberry and Alachua will be discussed at a special meeting of the Alachua County Commission on September 20, 2011. The City Commission recognizes the challenges and importance of insuring transparent and fair processes when considering proposals for the use of TDT funds. I am writing to inform you of the sentiment of the City of Gainesville Commission regarding the County Commission's consideration of these requests for TDT funds.

Overall, the City Commission believes the process for consideration and selection of projects for TDT funding should be transparent, fair and consistently followed. TDT funds should be distributed in an equitable manner consistent with the purpose of the TDT funds for projects that support tourism development in the areas where the majority of TDT funds are generated.

The City Commission supports the designated site for the new Alachua County Fairgrounds on property acquired by Alachua County off Waldo Road and believes it is consistent with Plan East Gainesville and the long-term partnership of the City and County to encourage economic activity in East Gainesville. The City Commission strongly opposes any relocation of the fairgrounds or reallocation of TDT funds intended to fund planning and development of the new fairground property.

The County fairground has a 40-year history as an economic driver in the East Gainesville community that should be continued as part of the future vision for sustainable development of the area. The factors that led the County Commission to reaffirm its initial decision to locate the fair in East Gainesville have not changed. The fair site is located in one of the populous areas of the County and features excellent public accessibility and a strategic location near major transportation corridors and the Gainesville Regional Airport and Industrial Park.

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The City Commission is concerned that a hasty decision to relocate the fairgrounds or to reallocate funds designated for use at the current designated fairground site would send the exact wrong message to citizens of the County who live in East Gainesville. Such action may well encourage public perception that there is a lack of commitment to revitalize economic development in East Alachua County or worse still, that an impartial, equitable and transparent allocation process has been arbitrarily compromised and circumvented.

The City Commission holds the view that any formal consideration of a request for potential use of TDT funds should occur only after rigorous review through the previously established public process for the allocation of TDT funds. This process should include opportunity for all eligible and interested parties to submit projects that best serve the goals and objectives for use of TDT funds.

In conclusion, the City of Gainesville Commission encourages the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners to reaffirm support for the TDT allocation process and the allocation decisions that were made as part of that process. We also encourage the Board of County Commissioners to decline any request relating to the use of TDT funds that does not include reopening the allocation process to all interested parties for submission of projects that best meet the goals and objectives of the County Tourism Development Tax Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig Lowe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Craig Lowe
Mayor

xc: Gainesville City Commissioners
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners