

Alachua County Local Planning Agency/ Planning Commission Meeting Minutes: December 13, 2023

The Alachua County Planning Commission held a public meeting on December 13, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held **in person**.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Ishmael Rentz, Chair

Kristen Young, Vice-Chair

James Ingle

Raymond Walsh

Jancie Vinson

Barry Rutenberg

Melissa Norman

Kay Abbitt—School Board Member-Absent

STAFF PRESENT:

Jeff Hays, Director, Growth Management Department

Chris Dawson, Principal Planner, Development Services, Growth Management

Mehdi Benkhatar, Planner, Development Services, Growth Management

Corbin Hanson, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, County Attorney Office

Patricia McAllister, Clerk, Development Services, Growth Management

Meeting Called to Order:

Meeting called to order by Chair Rentz at 6:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
Motion was made by *Commissioner Ingle* to **approve** the agenda.
Motion was **seconded** by *Commissioner Vinson*.
Action: The **agenda** was **approved** with a vote of **6-0**.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 15, 2023
Motion was made by *Commissioner Vinson* to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2023 meeting.
Motion was **seconded** by *Commissioner Ingle*.
Action: The **minutes** for November 15, 2023, Local Planning Agency and Planning Commission meeting were **approved** with a vote of **6-0**.

3. EX PARTE COMMUNICATION/PARTY STATEMENT/SWEARING IN
Corbin Hanson questioned if there was any Ex Parte Communications. None disclosed.
Corbin Hanson read the party statement into the record and stated are no party requests for tonight's meeting.
Patricia McAllister, clerk, sworn in staff, applicants, and public speakers for tonight's meeting.

Commissioner Walsh arrived at 6:04 pm

4. **QUASI-JUDICIAL ITEM: Z23-000007 (NexTower PWSF Special Use Permit)**

A request by Joel Rousseau of NexTower Development Group II, LLC, agent, for Rayonier Forest Services, LP, owner, for a special use permit for a 265' Personal Wireless Services Facility (PWSF). The site is located in the Agriculture zoning district and has a future land use designation of Rural/Agriculture (1 dwelling unit/5 acres). The site is a 0.23 acre portion of parcel 07605-000-000, located on N. County Rd. 225, to the northwest of the city of Waldo

Staff Presentation:

Mehdi Benkhatar presented this application. Mr. Benkhatar stated this personal wireless service facility is proposed to be Tier 3 tower with self-supporting lattice design, will be 265 feet in height and will require lights. Staff recommend approval of this special use permit with bases and conditions as noted in the staff report.

Chris Monzingo, Vice-President of Omnicom Consulting Group Inc., Alachua County RF (Radio Frequency) Consultant, was present on ZOOM, made a brief presentation and was available for questions.

Questions for staff:

Commissioner Young questioned whether the photo simulations are required as they are not helpful in this situation due to the surrounding land being timberland and the timber may be harvested at any time and she asked if the TV reception (over the air) would be impacted by this tower.

Commissioner Rentz questioned the adverse impacts or visual impacts of this tower.

Commissioner Rutenberg questioned if the height for each co-locator for this tower would go down with each one that is added, and the range would differ for those on the lower part of the tower.

Commissioner Walsh questioned if other towers in this area are higher than 200 ft in height and have lights.

Applicant: *Gary Hunter*, agent for NexTower, stated that if the height of this tower is lowered under 200 ft, more towers would need to be built in this area to cover the gap and that this area was clear cut in 2020 with the next timber clearing occurring in the next 20 to 25 years. *Mr. Hunter* also stated that the only tower in this area that is under 200 ft is the one close to the racetrack and that tower's primary users used by the racetrack.

Staff Response:

Chris Monzingo stated there would not be any impact on TV reception in this area due to this tower.

Mehdi Benkhatar stated the adverse impacts are seeing the tower and staff evaluates to determine ways to minimize the visual impacts, but the code does not mention elimination of towers just that for aesthetic reasons trying to reduce the visual impacts. *Mr. Benkhatar* stated a monopole tower is not feasible for a tower over 200 ft in height and if this proposed tower was under 200 ft, there would possibly still be a coverage gap in this area.

Motion was made by *Commissioner Walsh* to **approve** this application **with the bases and conditions as noted in the staff report.**

Motion was **seconded** *Commissioner Vinson*.

Public Comments: None

Action: Z23-000007 was **approved be with the bases and conditions as noted** in the staff report with a vote of **7-0** (unanimous vote)

4 ANNUAL WORKPLAN

After reviewing,

Motion was made by *Commissioner Vinson* to **approve** the annual workplan for the Local Planning Agency and Planning Commission (FY23-24).

Motion was seconded by *Commissioner Young*.

Action: By unanimous vote, the **Local Planning Agency and Planning Commission Annual Workplan (FY23-24)** was approved with a **7-0 vote**.

5. *Jeff Hays* acknowledged Chris Dawson as the **new** Principal Planner for Development Services.

6. ATTENDANCE REPORT: Distributed in packets. No attendance issues.

7. PLANNING COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:

Commissioner Rentz welcomed Commissioner Rutenberg.

Commissioner Young wished all Happy Holidays.

Commissioner Rentz wished all a Great and Safe New Year.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.