

A Joint Workshop Meeting of the Apalachicola City Commission was held on May 12, 2025 at 6:00 PM at the Commission Meeting Room located at 74 6th Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Commissioner Anita Grove, Commissioner Despina George, Commissioner Adriane Elliott, City Manager Michael Brillhart, Planner Bree Robinson, City Clerk Sheneidra Cummings

Mayor Ash and Commissioner Duncan- absent

The joint workshop was called to order by Commissioner Grove followed by invocation and pledge of allegiance led by Commissioner Elliott.

Agenda Adoption

Motion to adopt the agenda was made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner George. Motion carried, 3-0.

Public Comment

Dennis Winterringer, resident of 8th Street, spoke about stormwater management requirements. He noted his professional background regulating reclamation of coal mines and evaluating stormwater management plans. He explained that while state regulations exempt single-family residences, duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes from stormwater management plans, the City of Apalachicola requires them, which he felt was appropriate for an area of critical state concern. He found the Land Development Code sections regarding stormwater management confusing and potentially contradictory, particularly regarding when best management practices need to be structural and designed to contain a 25-year, 24-hour storm (which he noted is 10.3 inches of rain). He recommended the city address not only the specific agenda item but also consider revising stormwater management plan requirements more generally.

Kathleen Binder, 108 22nd Avenue, thanked the commission for holding the workshop and asked for clarification about whether "stormwater conveyances" referred to the ditch system and storm drains. She requested a regular maintenance schedule for existing ditches, noting that maintenance had not occurred before a significant rainstorm last year.

Betsy Graham, 72 Avenue G, reported that her property floods whenever it rains. She stated that the ditch behind Glen Casmaric's house (124 Fifth Street) has not been cleaned in over a year, and a new construction project is obstructing water flow by placing pallets and plywood across the ditch, causing water to back up onto her property.

Discussion – Stormwater Best Management Practices Incentives

City Planner Bree Robinson presented background information on the workshop topic. She explained that the Planning and Zoning Board had requested permission to workshop stormwater best management practice incentives that the city could potentially offer homeowners in exchange for installing stormwater systems beyond what's required. She outlined two options: direct the board to workshop incentives or leave the code as is.

Bree noted that based on public comments, there might be value in looking at stormwater requirements more generally rather than focusing solely on incentives. She expressed concern about enforcement and maintenance of stormwater systems, noting that many require yearly or bi-yearly maintenance. She pointed out that while some Florida municipalities have dedicated staff for tracking and inspecting these systems, Apalachicola might not have the resources for such oversight.

Bree explained that the discussion originated from two recent applications that requested to utilize the current stormwater best management practices definition to exempt structures from lot coverage requirements. In one case, an applicant wanted to build a garage on top of a stormwater system, and in another, an applicant wanted to build a covered deck. Both applications would have exceeded the 40% lot coverage limit. Neither application was successful, but the incidents prompted this discussion about potential misuse of the code's intent.

Commissioner Elliott stated that she did not support offering incentives, characterizing it as "pay to play" where wealthy property owners could afford to install fancy systems while others could not. She expressed concern that such incentives would primarily benefit new construction in the historic district and potentially harm the character of historic properties.

Commissioner George asked for clarification on the current code's definition of exemptions for best management practices. Bree explained that while the stormwater management systems themselves are exempt from lot coverage calculations, some applicants were trying to claim that structures built on top of these systems should also be exempt.

Several board members expressed concern about the city's ability to enforce maintenance requirements and the potential for systems to fail overtime. They noted examples of existing stormwater systems that had never been properly maintained.

After a lengthy discussion, there was consensus against offering incentives for stormwater best management practices. Instead, the commission directed the Planning and Zoning Board to focus on strengthening and clarifying the existing definitions of impervious surfaces and stormwater best management practices, and to address gaps in enforcement.

The Chair noted that the city has received \$300,000 recently to retrofit stormwater systems, indicating ongoing work to improve the city's stormwater infrastructure.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner George, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion carried, 3-0.

Meeting adjourned.

Brenda Ash, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sheneidra Cummings, City Clerk