

Calhoun Times

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City, county hire firm for planning process

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The Gordon County Commission and Calhoun City Council have jointly selected MACTEC Engineering and Consulting to guide them through the state-mandated comprehensive planning process over the next year.

The consulting firm may also help the county develop an impact fee ordinance, write new recreation and transportation plans, meet with local builders and developers to hone development-related ordinances and policies, as well as aid the county in negotiating a new series of service delivery agreements with local municipalities, as mandated by House Bill 489.

One thing the firm apparently will not be doing is paving the way for a joint city/county planner. Both MACTEC and unsuccessful rival bidder Robert and Company said that such joint planning departments almost never work out.

"There has been some talk in the past about having a city / county planner," Gordon County Commission Chairman Alvin Long said. "We wanted to know what they thought."

The consultants agreed that joint planning officers are only rarely a "viable solution" due to differing priorities and interests in city and county governments.

The only time it ever really works, the consultants said, is when there's a joint planning commission in place. Gordon County and the City of Calhoun do not have such a joint commission.

The consultants said that would leave a planner without anyone to really answer to, which is never a good situation.

The commissioners said they are undecided on whether or not the time is right for an impact fee ordinance. A committee that was formed recently to study the issue got nowhere, and it's not clear whether or not the amount of development currently underway in Gordon County would justify the implementation of such an ordinance, commissioners said.

Still, they said, there's no harm in looking at all the possibilities.



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I combine errands when driving.

I am thinking of carpooling.

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I'm thinking about buying a more fuel efficient vehicle.

It has not.

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The commissioners also expressed reservations about hiring a full-time county planner with a planning firm like MACTEC already on board for the next year or so.

That could be putting the cart before the horse, Commissioner Roy Davis said.

"You're saying hire the carpenters before you've got the blueprint," he said. "I don't agree with that."

The consultants said it might be beneficial to have a planner on board during the development of the comprehensive plan, however, because the planner would then be involved right from the start and would have less of a learning curve once the plan is adopted and ready to be implemented.

Headquartered in Atlanta, MACTEC is a leading consulting firm providing engineering, environmental and remedial construction services to public and private clients worldwide. Operating with 3,000 employees in 100 U.S. offices, MACTEC is currently ranked 24th among Engineering News-Record's top design firms.

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