

Committee to base UDO on county-wide conditional use permit for major subdivisions

At the meeting of the advisory committee for Polk County's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) on Jan. 20, the committee continued to work on background information needed to develop the UDO. A UDO is intended to simplify and streamline existing ordinances and zoning regulations through consolidation and update.

Dale Holland, of Holland Consulting Planners, reminded the committee that crafting a UDO is a process. It requires that committee members become familiar with land use issues and the ordinances used to deal with these issues.

In order to more clearly define the objectives of the UDO,

the committee chair, Mark Byington, suggested an informal discussion before proceeding to work on the proposed draft at the next meeting.

The Comprehensive Plan (Polk County 20/20 Vision Plan) adopted on March 15, 2010 by the Polk County Board of Commissioners is the basis for the UDO committee's efforts. It was developed in response to citizens' requests and desire to guide future development and long-term growth in Polk County.

Committee members expressed concern on how to incorporate the comprehensive plan into a UDO. It was pointed out that current zoning and existing land use ordinances have

proven inadequate to control major development. At present, developers of major subdivisions follow a process outlined in the subdivision ordinance. In contrast, a county-wide conditional use permit, as proposed in the draft UDO, will require an extensive review process to meet specified standards.

The committee, by unanimous vote, agreed that the cornerstone of the proposed UDO will be a county-wide conditional use permit for major subdivisions.

The committee recognizes that a UDO and conditional use permit for major developments will be an essential first step in planning for the future. Many of the other issues discussed,

such as the threat of an Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) expansion by Lake Lure into the Cooper Gap Township, allowed uses and accommodation for home businesses, environmental assessments, property rights, better control over development as the economy recovers, existing zoning and land use regulations, multiple use district definition and a host of other issues, can be addressed through the UDO.

The committee's next meeting will be on Thursday, Feb. 17, at 7 p.m. at the Polk County Senior Center/The Meeting Place in Columbus. All UDO meetings are open to the public and time is allowed for public comments.