

Indian River County Florida

*Indian River County Administration Complex
1801 27th Street, Building A
Vero Beach, Florida, 32960-3388
www.indianriver.gov*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Wednesday, October 30, 2024

2:00 PM

Special Call Meeting: Urban Service Boundary

Commission Chambers

Board of County Commissioners

*Susan Adams, District 1, Chairman
Joseph Flescher, District 2, Vice Chairman
Joseph H. Earman, District 3
Deryl Loar, District 4
Laura Moss, District 5*

**John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator
Jennifer W. Shuler, County Attorney
Ryan L. Butler, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Present: 5 - Chairman Susan Adams
Vice Chairman Joseph Flescher
Commissioner Joe Earman
Commissioner Laura Moss
Commissioner Deryl Loar

2.A. A MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES

2.B. INVOCATION

Commissioner Susan Adams, Chair

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Laura Moss

4. STAFF / CONSULTANT PRESENTATIONS

4.A. [24-0883](#) Presentation of the Indian River County 2024 Urban Service Boundary Study

Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners review the presentation and study materials, consider any public comment, and provide consensus direction on each of the five recommendations.

Attachments: [Consultant Staff Report](#)
[IRC USB Draft Recommendations](#)

Planning and Development Services Director Chris Balter reported that the County established the Urban Service Boundary (USB) in 1990, which designated specific public facilities and service areas to facilitate suburban growth. Since its establishment, the County's population has experienced significant growth. As part of the update to the Comprehensive Plan, the County engaged Inspire Placemaking Collective (Inspire) to assess the USB's capacity and propose necessary modifications. These recommendations would be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update, which was scheduled to be adopted in 2025, if approved.

Inspire Project Manager Eric Raasch utilized a PowerPoint presentation to show Inspire's analysis of the existing conditions within the 151,176 acre study area, explicitly focusing on approximately 42,659 acres of property within the unincorporated County and within the existing USB. He stated that the overall Comprehensive Plan update would extend the County's planning horizon by 25 years. Inspire evaluated the ability of the existing USB and Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to accommodate the projected growth through 2050. He noted that this carrying

capacity analysis was performed using existing land use data to determine how much vacant property was within the USB and the maximum build out of that property based on the densities currently adopted with the County's existing FLUM. Based on that analysis, it was determined that the existing FLUM could accommodate 51,049 potential new residents, surpassing the 42,698 new residents projected within the County through 2050.

Mr. Raasch stated that Inspire and the County conducted a public engagement initiative featuring a project website with a survey (over 4,100 views and 1,126 responses) and six workshops across the County. The key takeaways included:

- Preference for maintaining the existing Urban Service Boundary (USB)
- Concerns with growth, environmental impacts, infrastructure readiness, and traffic congestion
- Support for low-density, single-family housing and mixed-use development
- A need for affordable housing
- Emphasis on environmental preservation and natural resources

He recommended the following five (5) strategies for consideration as the County drafted policies for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update:

1. Targeted USB Expansion: While the existing USB could accommodate the projected growth through 2050, the County should consider a targeted expansion west of the new Oslo Road / I-95 interchange. This could be a catalyst for growth, similar to the interchange at SR 60.
2. Interlocal Service Agreements: Work with the municipalities on an annexation strategy and policies to address future growth within the central enclave area and beyond. These agreements should align municipal service provisions and annexation processes, streamlining development efforts and addressing land use conflicts.
3. USB Expansion for Affordable Housing: Create policies allowing USB expansions for developments that meet affordable housing criteria if they are close to existing USB lines.
4. Policy for Bisected Properties: Establish guidelines to include properties partially within the USB as fully within it if there were parcels of record before establishing the boundary. This is a clean-up policy that affected only a handful of properties.
5. Increased Densities for Affordable Housing: While this was not USB specific, policies that allowed for higher densities within the existing USB could assist in meeting housing demands and would limit the need for future boundary expansions.

5. BOARD COMMENTS / QUESTIONS

In response to a question by Commissioner Moss, Mr. Balter explained that environmentally sensitive lands were identified by analyzing wetlands and water bodies using GIS data, which outlined the boundaries of all wetlands within the County.

These areas were expected to remain undeveloped.

Vice Chairman Flescher sought clarity on how Inspire selected meeting attendees and ensured their demographics represented the community. Mr. Raasch explained that Inspire held a publicly noticed meeting open to all residents, attracting a diverse group. The survey included demographic questions and tenure in the area, but responses were anonymous, so he could not verify individual identities. Overall, the feedback reflected a wide range of County residents.

Commissioner Loar emphasized the importance of revisiting issues every seven years to benefit the state and county. He highlighted the bifurcation section near Oslo Road and Interstate 95 (I-95) as necessary, but less critical than other local concerns. He wanted to hear about their needs from residents in the aquifer area outside the USB. He discussed the potential costs for water, sewer, and fiber optic services. He pointed out opportunities for expanding water and sewer services at the intersection of I-95 and State Road 60, which could help support affordable housing in the County. Access to these services should be available to all residents. He sought information from County Administrator John Titkanich regarding a medical node.

Administrator Titkanich indicated that the board would be asked to approve the committee selection for the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan at the next meeting. This plan would evaluate the local economy and identify initiatives that align with the community's character. He noted that the agriculture and medical sectors were the second largest in Indian River County, suggesting capitalizing on these sectors could be advantageous.

Chairman Adams interjected that the Board was interested in public input. The meeting's main goal was to reach a consensus on the five proposed recommendations and discuss necessary policies. The Board must provide clear direction regarding whether to evaluate the Oslo corridor further and if the Attorney's Office should begin working on Interlocal Service Boundary agreements.

Commissioner Loar sought information from Utilities Director Sean Lieske before public comment about where current water and sewer lines existed west of the USB. Mr. Lieske stated that water and sewer existed from Oslo Road to I-95 and up to 82nd Street. He further noted that the USB ensured water and sewer services were provided to those specific areas. The South and Central Wastewater Treatment facilities have a combined capacity of about one million gallons, including reserved capacity for developers purchasing Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs). Mr. Lieske stated that the West Wastewater Plant has a capacity of 3.5 million gallons per day (MGD), with current usage at around 2.5 MGD, leaving some capacity. He added the Hobart Water Treatment Plant, could treat roughly 12 to 13 million gallons on

peak days, while the average daily treatment was lower than that.

A discussion ensued among the Board, staff, and Mr. Raasch on a plan to fill in both enclaves, covering around 20,000 acres, with potential expansion westward to the Oslo intersection. This USB expansion presented challenges, as the need to consider public facilities beyond water and wastewater, including transportation, parks, law enforcement, and fire services. Implementing these changes could take 10 to 15 years. When introducing new areas or enhancing service levels, the County must consider increased population densities and ensure immediate services were provided, even if full development took up to 30 years. A significant expansion could strain the system, impacting the road network, utility services, and public safety response times. Additionally, if the Board was considering expanding the USB, it was important to note that there was limited capacity. The County also has existing obligations to the current citizens within the USB. These factors should guide the Board's recommendations to staff regarding any potential expansions.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following spoke before the Board regarding the USB:

Joseph Garofalo, a developer with Capitol Building Group, inquired if the study considered minimum parcel sizes and whether wetlands and preservation areas were excluded from the study. Mr. Raasch confirmed they were not, with Mr. Garofalo pointing out that many available parcels were too small and undevelopable, making it harder to find suitable land within the USB for building a sizable community.

Sebastian Mayor Ed Dodd discussed the city's septic-to-sewer conversions and the burden the City of Sebastian was facing. The City had a total of 9,500 tanks needing replacement at approximately \$22,000 per tank. Chairman Adams responded that Sebastian residents were also County residents. The County must proceed cautiously when discussing the transition from septic systems to sewer services. While there was a state requirement to address this by 2030, it was clear that the County could not serve everyone within the USB due to logistical constraints. Consequently, some residents would need to upgrade their septic tanks, and the goal was to minimize the impact on as many residents as possible.

Health Department Environmental Advisor Julianne Price supported the five strategies, specifically strategies three and five related to affordable housing. She stated that during the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) meeting, all attendees expressed their support for the recommendations. She appreciated the County for conducting this study, as affordable housing was a top concern among residents.

Resident Rusty Banack urged the Board to clean up smaller areas within the existing infrastructure. He noted that several large parcels, not limited to five or ten acres, border the USB and were suitable for development. He asked the Board to consider these areas for potential expansion.

Resident Peter Robinson recounted the history of how the USB was initially determined.

Resident Robert Votaw discussed the USB, highlighting the importance of understanding development capacity related to densities, land use, and zoning regulations, whether it was for multi-family or other developments. He asked for clarity on what was considered affordable housing, noting today's complexities. Mr. Votaw also emphasized the importance of environmental preservation.

Attorney Pete Sweeney with Block and Scarpa Law Firm, thanked the Board for addressing the balance between quality of life and sustainability in the County, emphasizing the importance of planning for growth in the next 20 to 30 years. He expressed that the USB limits growth, and new hospitals, industries, or commercial projects may not be feasible without changes. He highlighted the potential for light industrial and commercial developments to enhance the tax base and improve county services while addressing environmental concerns. He stated that development outside the USB would not solve waterway issues, and he noted that impact fees of \$10,000 per single-family home could generate significant revenue. Mr. Sweeney acknowledged the competing priorities of environmental protection and low-density development, suggesting that these goals could co-exist and encouraged staff to develop ideas to meet these objectives.

Resident Richard Bialosky believed decisions should be based on environmental considerations from Resource Management rather than uninformed public opinion. He stated that many cities have improved after a decline or managed growth, but few had maintained their unique identity that people appreciate. Collaborating with experts would help the County make informed, long-term decisions about the future. Overall, he felt confident about the Inspire Report.

Resident Kelly Jackson addressed the role of agriculture within the USB. Chairman Adams emphasized Ms. Jackson's support for urban and small-scale homesteading. Mr. Raasch clarified that Inspire focused on properties within the USB to support the population until 2050, noting that the study's recommendations would not affect small farms outside the USB.

Joseph Paladin, Chairman of the Urban Services Awareness Committee, highlighted the importance of prioritizing quality over quantity in managing growth for the Indian River Neighborhood Association. He suggested that the County implement phased growth by breaking it down into four or five phases for better infrastructure management rather than extending the urban service line beyond I-95. Mr. Paladin noted that developer agreements could ensure developments were financially self-sufficient, requiring developers to cover infrastructure costs and pay impact fees. However, while impact fees could fund facilities like fire stations and schools, they do not cover ongoing salaries for firefighters or teachers, which was an important distinction to remember.

The Chairman called for a recess at 4:07 pm and reconvened the meeting at 4:25 pm with all members present.

Fly in Ranches Homeowners President Tom Cowen stated his community was opposed to expanding west of I-95 beyond the USB. After 35 years in the County, the residents did not want their airstrip threatened by nearby development. He noted that Vero Beach and Indian River County were unique in terms of its agricultural land and open space, and he feared that westward expansion would lead to unchecked growth.

In response to Chairman Adams, Mr. Balter stated that the timeline to include a recommendation for the Oslo corridor or Route 60 in the Comprehensive Plan and incorporating the Evaluation Appraisal Report (EAR) based amendments would be October 1, 2025. He noted that it was best to submit all amendments together, as the state reviewed the Comprehensive Plan each time changes were submitted. The reviewers could suggest restrictions or modifications with each update.

The five recommendations were further discussed between the Board and staff in the following order.

Recommendation 4: Addressed 15 bisected properties where the USB was drawn through the center. The boundary should be adjusted to include the entire property. The primary concern was that most of these properties were located on the eastern side, which may lack effective alternatives. It was important to avoid sacrificing someone's livelihood or housing affordability for the sake of expansion and growth. Staff was requested to provide a detailed list, an initial policy, and a map that included the bisected properties within the USB.

Recommendation 1: Addressed the proposed targeted USB expansion; the Board discussed conducting a specific analysis in the corridor to evaluate industrial versus

residential development while protecting existing rural areas. This corridor holds significant potential for economic growth. Still, there was concern about its impact and how it could be mitigated, considering how changes might affect existing lifestyles and living arrangements. Since the area was somewhat off the beaten path, it would require a mix of uses and infrastructure to support residential development, including commercial spaces and shopping options nearby. The development should be compatible with the adjacent agricultural land and carefully integrated. The study showed significant potential for residential development in that area over the next 25 years. However, job creation and opportunities would also be needed.

Mr. Balter stated that it was not necessary to complete this by October. It could be worked on gradually if preferred, considering a phased expansion or a more detailed examination. It was recommended that the corridor be included in the Economic Development Action Plan. While the initial suggestion was for a study, the Board could decide whether to expedite it. Conducting the study now would help the Board make informed decisions. There was a consensus to include the corridor in the economic development study and analyze its current situation and potential opportunities for future growth.

Commissioner Loar opposed outsourcing the new study, believing it could be completed by April by staff. He stressed the public's right to access this information and highlighted the need for a timely decision, stating the process had already been delayed too long. Vice Chairman Flescher agreed with Commissioner Loar.

Recommendation 2: Addressed Interlocal Service Agreements, Mr. Balter stated that the County Attorney would need to investigate and report on this recommendation at a future Board meeting.

County Attorney Jennifer Shuler explained that Florida Statutes govern annexations, enforcing rules such as contiguity and prohibiting enclaves. Interlocal Service Boundary Agreements could provide flexibility with these regulations, if the County and City work together on planning boundaries and service provisions. This process raised important questions and required careful long-term planning. She mentioned that she had contacted the Attorneys from Sebastian and Fellsmere, and would facilitate a discussion.

Commissioner Moss believed the Interlocal Service Agreements were the most important of the five recommendations. Although they may be challenging, they were essential. Current annexation practices determine the USB; the agreements were necessary to change it.

Recommendation 3: Addressed the USB expansion for affordable housing. The Board discussed that "affordability" meant a reasonable cost, requiring developers to include some infrastructure costs in home pricing. The USB should be adjusted through applications, not just by changing existing requirements. Without agreements, just shifting boundaries could lead to property owners increasing property prices.

Chairman Adams commented that no single entity, government or private sector, could solve the affordability problem alone, and collaboration would not yield quick results. It has taken years to reach this situation, so it would likely require another 10 to 15 years to address it. She noted this discussion highlighted that moving the USB was not a definitive solution for affordability. Pushing it westward, away from essential resources, may not be beneficial. However, many properties and individuals outside the boundary consistently approach the County for assistance.

Recommendation 5: Addressed increased densities for affordable housing. Chairman Adams stated that there was increasing interest in higher densities for affordable housing, which fell under Land Development Regulations (LDR). Staff would like to gauge the interest in exploring this topic further. She noted it had been discussed in the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) meetings and could be presented as recommendations from the AHAC, if that worked better. Chairman Adams was open to this approach since there may be other related topics to discuss. Addressing this separately would allow Mr. Balter to focus on the issue in the Oslo corridor without it complicating matters.

The Board directed Mr. Balter and staff to investigate the area further, mainly looking for key areas for commercial development within the USB, where affordable housing could be built along the corridor, and the roles Vero Beach, Fellsmere, and Sebastian could play in providing utilities. Mr. Balter was to present his findings to the Board in May 2025.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 5:27 p.m.