

## **P.C. commissioners: Public input, please**

[By MATT DIXON / News Herald Writer](#)

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PANAMA CITY — After being battered recently for not doing enough to notify residents of public projects, commissioners Tuesday night decided to err on the side of public input.

They unanimously decided to send to public workshop, as opposed to passing, plans that dictate the type of work that can occur in two of the city's four Community Redevelopment Agencies.

"I think we do need to have a workshop ... and have all of the people should be notified and they can come and give input," Commissioner Jonathan Wilson said.

The city's four CRAs collect funds through incremental increases in property taxes and use the money over a period of time for improvements in those areas. The two CRAs in question encompass areas that include downtown and just north of downtown. Combined, the two areas have more than \$1.6 million in budgeted expenditures during fiscal year 2010.

"I think there are some issues ... that probably need to be straightened out as we move forward," said Kurt Easton, a consultant with IBI Group, which crafted the plans.

The city had recently taken heat from a group of vocal group of downtown property owners over an unrelated plan that would have created sub-districts downtown. Opponents charged the city did not do enough to notify residents of the changes.

In other business, the commission approved re-zoning for a site that could become a home for foster children who grow too old for traditional foster care. The proposed location is at the corner of 10th Street and Magnolia Avenue and is currently a parking lot.

The residences, for those aged 18 to 24, would include 12 duplexes with 24 total units, half of which would be filled by former foster children and the other half with those who meet income-based thresholds.

The plan would be funded by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, an agency that helps "Floridians obtain safe, decent affordable housing" and spearheaded by Big Bend Community Based Care.

"There has been a huge concern for housing for young people in the foster care system who age out," said Jeff Sharkey, a lobbyist with Big Bend Community Based Care.

The project, which is in its infancy, has faced some opposition because of the proposed location.