

Hall.County.Cuts.Off.Tommy.Craig.2.8.12

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(Hall) County cuts ties with Glades consultant

Work on reservoir permit cost \$1 million

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With a \$64,000 check, Hall County is ending a longstanding relationship with Glades Reservoir consultant Tommy Craig.

The Hall County Board of Commissioners voted 3-2 at Monday's work session on a change order agreement ending Craig's work on the project.

Commissioners Craig Lutz and Ashley Bell voted against paying Craig \$ 64,515.46 for expenses, services from the attorney and part of a monthly retainer.

"While I'm ready to be done with Mr. Craig's services, I don't think we need to pay him this," Lutz said at the meeting. "I haven't seen the work that's been done."

Craig, an attorney who has performed consulting services to numerous Georgia organizations looking to build reservoirs, was retained by the county to help it get permits to build Glades. The county has paid him \$ 1,005,875 in permitting consulting fees since he began that work.

In December, the county contracted AECOM, an engineering, design and program management company, to prepare an environmental impact statement that will help federal permitting officials determine whether to approve the construction of the proposed reservoir. County officials are not expecting a decision on the permit for another 18 months.

Glades Reservoir, if completed, is projected to provide 72.5 million gallons of water per day to Northeast Georgia residents and address concerns of local control of water supply.

Some, like Bell, have questioned the amount spent on Craig's services during the process. Bell has said he's been disappointed that despite the money the county paid Craig's firm, it still hasn't won a permit to build the reservoir.

Two weeks ago, the county signaled it was moving on without Craig when it approved extending consulting contracts for Joe Tanner and Associates and Project Manager Jock Connell. County Administrator Randy Knighton said Craig did not submit a proposal to be part of the next phase of the Glades project.

While commissioners approved ending Craig's services with the county, Knighton said the county would seek to acquire research performed by the consultant on behalf of the county.

"We want to make sure we have everything we need before we close it out," Knighton said.

Knighton said Craig will still have to turn over the "intellectual property" from his work. Before officially cutting ties, county officials told The Times they had been waiting on Craig's firm to submit an environmental mitigation plan as part of the county's application for the environmental impact statement.

County Public Works Director Ken Rearden said the plan turned in by Craig's firm last week was incomplete and will need to be "tweaked."

Craig was not present at Monday's meeting and The Times was unable to reach him.