

CHAPTER 2016-94

Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 971

An act relating to community development districts; amending s. 190.005, F.S.; amending the acreage threshold for the establishment, by rule or ordinance, of a community development district; revising criteria for requiring a petition for a proposed district to be filed with the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission; amending s. 190.012, F.S.; authorizing a district to contract with a towing operator to remove vehicles or vessels from specified facilities or properties, subject to certain requirements; amending s. 190.046, F.S.; revising the criteria necessary for amending the boundaries of a district; authorizing up to a certain number of districts to merge into one surviving district, subject to certain requirements; providing for membership of the surviving merged district board; providing requirements of the merger agreement; providing for public hearings subject to certain requirements; prohibiting a petition to merge from being filed within a specified timeframe; conforming cross-references; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 190.005, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

190.005 Establishment of district.—

(1) The exclusive and uniform method for the establishment of a community development district with a size of 2,500 ~~1,000~~ acres or more shall be pursuant to a rule, adopted under chapter 120 by the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission, granting a petition for the establishment of a community development district.

(a) A petition for the establishment of a community development district shall be filed by the petitioner with the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission. The petition shall contain:

1. A metes and bounds description of the external boundaries of the district. Any real property within the external boundaries of the district which is to be excluded from the district shall be specifically described, and the last known address of all owners of such real property shall be listed. The petition shall also address the impact of the proposed district on any real property within the external boundaries of the district which is to be excluded from the district.

2. The written consent to the establishment of the district by all landowners whose real property is to be included in the district or documentation demonstrating that the petitioner has control by deed, trust agreement, contract, or option of 100 percent of the real property to be

included in the district, and when real property to be included in the district is owned by a governmental entity and subject to a ground lease as described in s. 190.003(14), the written consent by such governmental entity.

3. A designation of five persons to be the initial members of the board of supervisors, who shall serve in that office until replaced by elected members as provided in s. 190.006.

4. The proposed name of the district.

5. A map of the proposed district showing current major trunk water mains and sewer interceptors and outfalls if in existence.

6. Based upon available data, the proposed timetable for construction of the district services and the estimated cost of constructing the proposed services. These estimates shall be submitted in good faith but are not binding and may be subject to change.

7. A designation of the future general distribution, location, and extent of public and private uses of land proposed for the area within the district by the future land use plan element of the effective local government comprehensive plan of which all mandatory elements have been adopted by the applicable general-purpose local government in compliance with the Community Planning Act.

8. A statement of estimated regulatory costs in accordance with the requirements of s. 120.541.

(b) Prior to filing the petition, the petitioner shall:

1. Pay a filing fee of \$15,000 to the county, if located within an unincorporated area, or to the municipality, if located within an incorporated area, and to each municipality the boundaries of which are contiguous with, or contain all or a portion of the land within, the external boundaries of the district.

2. Submit a copy of the petition to the county, if located within an unincorporated area, or to the municipality, if located within an incorporated area, and to each municipality the boundaries of which are contiguous with, or contain all or a portion of, the land within the external boundaries of the district.

3. If land to be included within a district is located partially within the unincorporated area of one or more counties and partially within a municipality or within two or more municipalities, pay a \$15,000 filing fee to each entity. Districts established across county boundaries shall be required to maintain records, hold meetings and hearings, and publish notices only in the county where the majority of the acreage within the district lies.

(c) Such county and each such municipality required by law to receive a petition may conduct a public hearing to consider the relationship of the petition to the factors specified in paragraph (e). The public hearing shall be concluded within 45 days after the date the petition is filed unless an extension of time is requested by the petitioner and granted by the county or municipality. The county or municipality holding such public hearing may by resolution express its support of, or objection to the granting of, the petition by the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission. A resolution must base any objection to the granting of the petition upon the factors specified in paragraph (e). Such county or municipality may present its resolution of support or objection at the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission hearing and shall be afforded an opportunity to present relevant information in support of its resolution.

(d) A local public hearing on the petition shall be conducted by a hearing officer in conformance with the applicable requirements and procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act. The hearing shall include oral and written comments on the petition pertinent to the factors specified in paragraph (e). The hearing shall be held at an accessible location in the county in which the community development district is to be located. The petitioner shall cause a notice of the hearing to be published in a newspaper at least once a week for the 4 successive weeks immediately prior to the hearing. Such notice shall give the time and place for the hearing, a description of the area to be included in the district, which description shall include a map showing clearly the area to be covered by the district, and any other relevant information which the establishing governing bodies may require. The advertisement shall not be placed in that portion of the newspaper where legal notices and classified advertisements appear. The advertisement shall be published in a newspaper of general paid circulation in the county and of general interest and readership in the community, not one of limited subject matter, pursuant to chapter 50. Whenever possible, the advertisement shall appear in a newspaper that is published at least 5 days a week, unless the only newspaper in the community is published fewer than 5 days a week. In addition to being published in the newspaper, the map referenced above must be part of the online advertisement required pursuant to s. 50.0211. All affected units of general-purpose local government and the general public shall be given an opportunity to appear at the hearing and present oral or written comments on the petition.

(e) The Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission shall consider the entire record of the local hearing, the transcript of the hearing, resolutions adopted by local general-purpose governments as provided in paragraph (c), and the following factors and make a determination to grant or deny a petition for the establishment of a community development district:

1. Whether all statements contained within the petition have been found to be true and correct.

2. Whether the establishment of the district is inconsistent with any applicable element or portion of the state comprehensive plan or of the effective local government comprehensive plan.

3. Whether the area of land within the proposed district is of sufficient size, is sufficiently compact, and is sufficiently contiguous to be developable as one functional interrelated community.

4. Whether the district is the best alternative available for delivering community development services and facilities to the area that will be served by the district.

5. Whether the community development services and facilities of the district will be incompatible with the capacity and uses of existing local and regional community development services and facilities.

6. Whether the area that will be served by the district is amenable to separate special-district government.

(f) The Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission shall not adopt any rule which would expand, modify, or delete any provision of the uniform community development district charter as set forth in ss. 190.006-190.041, except as provided in s. 190.012. A rule establishing a community development district shall only contain the following:

1. A metes and bounds description of the external boundaries of the district and any real property within the external boundaries of the district which is to be excluded.

2. The names of five persons designated to be the initial members of the board of supervisors.

3. The name of the district.

(g) The Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission may adopt rules setting forth its procedures for considering petitions to establish, expand, modify, or delete uniform community development districts or portions thereof consistent with the provisions of this section.

(2) The exclusive and uniform method for the establishment of a community development district of less than 2,500 ~~1,000~~ acres in size or a community development district of up to 7,000 acres in size located within a connected-city corridor established pursuant to s. 163.3246(14) shall be pursuant to an ordinance adopted by the county commission of the county having jurisdiction over the majority of land in the area in which the district is to be located granting a petition for the establishment of a community development district as follows:

(a) A petition for the establishment of a community development district shall be filed by the petitioner with the county commission. The petition shall contain the same information as required in paragraph (1)(a).

(b) A public hearing on the petition shall be conducted by the county commission in accordance with the requirements and procedures of paragraph (1)(d).

(c) The county commission shall consider the record of the public hearing and the factors set forth in paragraph (1)(e) in making its determination to grant or deny a petition for the establishment of a community development district.

(d) The county commission shall not adopt any ordinance which would expand, modify, or delete any provision of the uniform community development district charter as set forth in ss. 190.006-190.041. An ordinance establishing a community development district shall only include the matters provided for in paragraph (1)(f) unless the commission consents to any of the optional powers under s. 190.012(2) at the request of the petitioner.

(e) If all of the land in the area for the proposed district is within the territorial jurisdiction of a municipal corporation, then the petition requesting establishment of a community development district under this act shall be filed by the petitioner with that particular municipal corporation. In such event, the duties of the county, hereinabove described, in action upon the petition shall be the duties of the municipal corporation. If any of the land area of a proposed district is within the land area of a municipality, the county commission may not create the district without municipal approval. If all of the land in the area for the proposed district, even if less than 2,500 ~~1,000~~ acres, is within the territorial jurisdiction of two or more municipalities or two or more counties, except for proposed districts within a connected-city corridor established pursuant to s. 163.3246(14), the petition shall be filed with the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission and proceed in accordance with subsection (1).

(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subsection, within 90 days after a petition for the establishment of a community development district has been filed pursuant to this subsection, the governing body of the county or municipal corporation may transfer the petition to the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission, which shall make the determination to grant or deny the petition as provided in subsection (1). A county or municipal corporation shall have no right or power to grant or deny a petition that has been transferred to the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission.

Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (2) of section 190.012, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

190.012 Special powers; public improvements and community facilities. The district shall have, and the board may exercise, subject to the regulatory jurisdiction and permitting authority of all applicable governmental bodies, agencies, and special districts having authority with respect to any area

included therein, any or all of the following special powers relating to public improvements and community facilities authorized by this act:

(2) After the local general-purpose government within the jurisdiction of which a power specified in this subsection is to be exercised consents to the exercise of such power by the district, the district shall have the power to plan, establish, acquire, construct or reconstruct, enlarge or extend, equip, operate, and maintain additional systems and facilities for:

(d) Security, including, but not limited to, guardhouses, fences and gates, electronic intrusion-detection systems, and patrol cars, when authorized by proper governmental agencies; except that the district may not exercise any police power, but may contract with the appropriate local general-purpose government agencies for an increased level of such services within the district boundaries. However, this paragraph does not prohibit a district from contracting with a towing operator to remove a vehicle or vessel from a district-owned facility or property if the district follows the authorization and notice and procedural requirements in s. 715.07 for an owner or lessee of private property. The district's selection of a towing operator is not subject to public bidding if the towing operator is included in an approved list of towing operators maintained by the local government that has jurisdiction over the district's facility or property.

Section 3. Paragraph (e) of subsection (1) and subsection (2) of section 190.046, Florida Statutes, are amended, subsections (4) through (9) are renumbered as subsections (5) through (10), respectively, and a new subsection (4) is added to that section, to read:

190.046 Termination, contraction, or expansion of district.—

(1) A landowner or the board may petition to contract or expand the boundaries of a community development district in the following manner:

(e)1. During the existence of a district initially established by administrative rule, the process to amend the boundaries of the district pursuant to paragraphs (a)-(d) shall not permit a cumulative net total greater than 50 ~~40~~ percent of the land in the initial district, and in no event greater than 1,000 ~~250~~ acres on a cumulative net basis.

2. During the existence of a district initially established by county or municipal ordinance, the process to amend the boundaries of the district pursuant to paragraphs (a)-(d) shall not permit a cumulative net total greater than 50 percent of the land in the initial district, and in no event greater than 1,000 ~~500~~ acres on a cumulative net basis.

(2) The district shall remain in existence unless:

(a) The district is merged with another district as provided in subsection (3) or subsection (4);

(b) All of the specific community development systems, facilities, and services that it is authorized to perform have been transferred to a general-purpose unit of local government in the manner provided in subsections (4), (5), (6), and (7) (6); or

(c) The district is dissolved as provided in ~~subsection (7)~~, subsection (8), ~~or subsection (9)~~, or subsection (10).

(4)(a) To achieve economies of scale, reduce costs to affected district residents and businesses in areas with multiple existing districts, and encourage the merger of multiple districts, up to five districts that were established by the same local general-purpose government and whose board memberships are composed entirely of qualified electors may merge into one surviving district through adoption of an ordinance by the local general purpose government, notwithstanding the acreage limitations otherwise set forth for the establishment of a district in this chapter. The filing of a petition by the majority of the members of each of the district board of supervisors seeking to merge constitutes consent of the landowners within each applicable district.

(b) In addition to meeting the requirements of subsection (3), a merger agreement entered into between the district boards subject to this subsection must also:

1. Require the surviving merged district board to consist of five elected board members.

2. Require each at-large board seat to represent the entire geographic area of the surviving merged district.

3. Ensure that each district to be merged is entitled to elect at least one board member from its former boundary.

4. Ensure a fair allocation of board membership to represent the districts being merged. To that end:

a. If two districts merge, two board members shall be elected from each of the districts and one member shall be elected at-large.

b. If three districts merge, one board member shall be elected from each of the three districts and two board members shall be elected at-large.

c. If four districts merge, one board member shall be elected from each of the four districts and one board member shall be elected at-large.

d. If five districts merge, one board member shall be elected from each of the five districts.

5. Require the election of board members for the surviving merged district to be held at the next general election following the merger, at which

time all terms of preexisting board members shall end and the merger shall be legally in effect.

(c) Before filing the merger petition with the local general-purpose government under this subsection, each district proposing to merge must hold a public hearing within its district to provide information about and take public comment on the proposed merger, merger agreement, and assignment of board seats. Notice of the hearing shall be published at least 14 days before the hearing. If, after the public hearing, a district board decides that it no longer wants to merge and cancels the proposed merger agreement, the remaining districts must each hold another public hearing on the revised merger agreement. A petition to merge may not be filed for at least 30 days after the last public hearing held by the districts proposing to merge.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.

Approved by the Governor March 24, 2016.

Filed in Office Secretary of State March 24, 2016.