

**AT AN ENTERPRISE ZONE WORKSHOP/MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN
AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON APRIL 16,
2013 AT 4:30 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS
WERE HAD, VIZ:**

Present: **Doug Croley-District 2, Chairman**
 Eric Hinson-District 1, Vice Chairman
 Gene Morgan-District 3 (arrived late)
 Brenda Holt-District 4 (arrived late)
 Sherrie Taylor-District 5 (arrived late)
 Robert Presnell, County Administrator
 Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

INTRODUCTION

Chair Croley called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

OVERVIEW OF FLORIDA ENTERPRISE ZONE

Henry Grant, Enterprise Zone Coordinator appeared before the Board and explained the Workshop was to discuss the Florida Enterprise Zone and how it related to Gadsden County. He introduced Mr. Burt C. Von Hoff of the Department of Economic Development, Division of Community Development and Mr. Lee Garner, Chairman of Gadsden County Enterprise Zone Development Agency. Mr. Howard McKinnon and Mr. David Gardner were also present.

Dr. Grant explained that the Florida Enterprise Zone was enacted to provide the necessary means to assist local communities, residents and the private sector in creating the proper economic and social environment to induce the investment of private resources in productive business enterprises located in severely distressed areas and to provide jobs for residents of such areas. In achieving this objective, the state will seek to provide appropriate investments, tax benefits and regulatory relief to encourage the business community to commit its financial participation.

Commissioner Morgan appeared at this juncture of the workshop.

Dr. Grant informed the Board that at local levels the Enterprise Zone is governed by an Enterprise Zone Development Agency and the Enterprise Zone Development Agency also would appoint a local Enterprise Zone Coordinator that would maintain the day-to-day operations of the Zone. He further explained that the Coordinator was responsible for verifying the Enterprise Zone addresses, all tax incentives, and all tax incentive applications must be certified at the local office before the application is sent to the Department of Revenue. Dr. Grant explained that the Enterprise Zone was a designated area within a county or municipality and the Florida Enterprise Program offers financial incentives to businesses that invest and are located in the designated areas. The incentives are offered to encourage private investment in the zone.

Chair Croley asked what made the enterprise zone in Gadsden County different from other enterprise zones in other counties and Dr. Grant stated nothing, the incentives were the same all over.

Commissioner Holt appeared at this juncture of the workshop.

Dr. Burt C. Von Hoff, Department of Economic Development, Division of Community Development, appeared before the Board and explained in the urban Enterprise Zone, both the business and employee must live within the enterprise zone and in the rural enterprise zone, the business must always be in the zone, but the eligible employee may be any employee in a rural area. He added that the tax credit for the jobs' tax credit in the urban area is 20% or 30% and in the rural, it's 30% or 45%.

Dr. Grant said Gadsden County is allowed up to 3 zones, Chattahoochee, Gretna and Greensboro make up one zone, Quincy and Midway make up the second zone and Havana made up the third zone. Dr. Grant stated the tax incentives are offered to all businesses that are located in an Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Zone residents, or to purchase business equipment to be used in the Enterprise Zone.

He explained that the financial incentives that have been taken advantage of in Gadsden County have been Enterprise Zone job tax credits, building materials sales tax refunds, business equipment sales tax refunds, enterprise zone property tax credits and exemptions for licensed child care facilities that operate within the Enterprise Zone.

Commissioner Holt asked if there were a way to know how many or what businesses had submitted applications.

Dr. Grant said yes because he had to sign off on all businesses that have applied, he just would not know what had been approved by the Department of Revenue.

Commissioner Morgan asked how many businesses would the county have without an enterprise zone.

Commissioner Taylor arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

Dr. Grant stated he was not sure how many businesses there would be.

Dr. Von Hoff stated that the Enterprise Zone incentives would not override the basic need of the business.

Chair Croley asked him to explain the role of the enterprise zone.

Commissioner Taylor stepped out at this juncture.

Commissioner Holt said she was the one that asked for this workshop and stated this needed to be marketed for the businesses in the area, possibly to be combine with tourism, economic development to use as many incentives as possible.

Chair Croley asked who was responsible for the marketing plan.

Dr. Grant stated "We are."

Chair Croley asked him to explain and answer Commissioner Holt's question/statement.

Dr. Grant stated they had asked the Board for \$2500 for 4 years in a row and finally stopped asking. The money was to be used for publications and hand-outs for the public.

Commissioner Morgan stated there was a very strong marketing plan if it were implemented.

Mr. Von Hoff stated on the State level, there were 65 enterprise zones and the biggest challenge was marketing.

Commissioner Holt stated it took no money to Facebook, Twitter or use any of the other social medias that were available to put the word out there.

Chair Croley stated "what we need and what we are getting are two different things" and there needed to be a better game plan so things could be better funded.

Commissioner Taylor stated she agreed with what the Commissioners were saying, there were some great ideas, but what she was hearing was fragmented, they (pointing to the audience) needed direction from the Board and the Board needed to decide whether or not they wanted Gadsden Development Council to move forward as the Chamber so to speak and put everything under it.

Lee Garner appeared before the Board. He said when the Enterprise Zone started around 1999 or 2000; the County applied for a federal enterprise zone and it would have gotten the County \$50 Million, but Jackson County received it and that was the difference in Jackson and Gadsden County. He commended Mr. Presnell since he had become Administrator saying he had worked with their Board and had been very involved.

Commissioner Holt said she went to Jackson County when a parent company was looking at a site and when she got there, they had a banner across Highway 90 letting everyone know they were waiting on that company and welcoming them to the area. She added that she was impressed as to how everyone was working together. She said they needed to apply for grants, etc. that could help the County.

Chair Croley said while nothing could be decided at this meeting; he thought there was a consensus that the Board needed Mr. Presnell to continue to work with the groups, come back to the Board with a plan of action that they could consider funding, along with funding participation from the municipalities. He added that something was needed that would be supported by the Town Councils and partner with the Board to move this forward.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Chair Croley stated they could dwell on the problems from the past, but the focus needed to be on a new day.

Mr. Presnell said this County needed a focused economic development plan and stated there were commitments from Gretna and Quincy so far.

Mr. Von Hoff added that from a State perspective, the County was not alone, and further added that they have been working for quite some time to offer a county "Community Competitive" program and

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informed the Board that it was designed to help a county such as ours to go through a process with assessments, building sites, i.e., and was geared to be what the County was striving for.

Chair Croley added that he would like to see someone making calls to outside businesses and asking if they had ever considered relocating to our area.

ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE WORKSHOP WAS ADJOURNED AT 5:45 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

DOUGLAS M. CROLEY, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

MARCELLA BLOCKER, Deputy Clerk for
NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk