

**AT A BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON AUGUST 22, 2013 AT 4:00 P.M.,
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

Present: Doug Croley, Chair-District 5
Eric Hinson, Vice-Chair-District 1
Gene Morgan, District 3 (arrived late)
Brenda Holt, District 4 (arrived late)
Sherrie Taylor, District 5 (arrived late)
Jeff Price, Budget Director
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court
Robert Presnell, County Administrator
Deborah Minnis
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

INTRODUCTION BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Chair Croley called the meeting to Order at 4:07 p.m.

Commissioner Holt arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

Mr. Presnell said the re-appropriation for the jail locks were included, \$400,000 was included and had to add an additional \$120,000 from Medicaid funds, but it was already appropriated, just rolled into the new budget. Mr. Presnell stated that the budget was balanced. He also stated there were additional requests that would be addressed later in the workshop. He did want to mention that at the last meeting there were additional requests for marketing dollars for economic development efforts and signage for a trail park.

Commissioner Morgan arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

Mr. Presnell explained the requests were in the budget but they had been reduced, clarified some things had to be cut to make the budget balance. He explained money was cut from the Senior Citizens and a cap was placed on employee raises, that anyone over \$75,000 would not receive a pay increase.

Chair Croley asked about the money budgeted for mowing and thought the privatization in the one district was to save money. Mr. Presnell explained it would increase services in the other districts but would not save money.

SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICES

Commissioner Morgan asked if the Senior center in Chattahoochee was being funded equally as Havana or the other Senior Centers.

Mr. Presnell said he had talked with the Center in Chattahoochee and the executive director in Quincy; Chattahoochee is funded and has been through the Quincy center.

Commissioner Morgan asked if all the senior citizen centers throughout the County were funded through the County on an equal basis and what the funding would be used for in Havana.

Mr. Presnell stated the only two centers were in Quincy and Chattahoochee.

Commissioner Morgan again asked if they were being funded at the same amount that Havana was being funded and stated he would not support one center receiving more money than the other centers. He added that the meals were separate dollars and asked what the money would be used for in Havana.

Mr. Presnell said there was a request for some building upgrades and to purchase a van.

Chair Croley asked if Chattahoochee back feeds from Quincy and if the other centers received money in the same fashion.

Commissioner Hinson said there was no need to argue over this, but added if the Havana Center was not funded, he refused to fund the Chamber. He added he was going to fund the Chamber \$100,000 this year.

Chair Croley stated the County, as a whole, has a county senior center building that was supposed to be a county-wide service, \$50,000 has been going to support that center county-wide and asked if Havana was a separate center and received no funds from the Gadsden County Senior center funding.

Commissioner Hinson said he was in support of a lot of things the Board had done and this was \$10,000 and would possibly hurt the Chamber, hurt the attorney, hurt everything that they "are in concurrence with". Commissioner Hinson then said he had given his word to Havana after they had decided it would be funded.

Chair Croley asked if Commissioner Hinson was stating that the Senior Citizen Center in Havana was owned by the Town of Havana.

Commissioner Hinson said that on September 3rd he would make a motion that there would be a new attorney and that they would not fund the Chamber of Commerce if they do not fund the Senior Citizens.

Commissioner Morgan stated Commissioner Hinson would not threaten him from this day forward on what he would do and what he expected of Commissioner Morgan.

Chair Croley said they were trying to understand the perimeters of what was being asked for and asked Commissioner Holt for her input.

Commissioner Holt said the Senior Citizens center in Quincy was originally built and funded for the County, when the funding started getting cut, they couldn't offer as much, a lot of places did not have a Senior Citizens Center and they would try to come into Quincy. She added it was good to

find out what services each one offered so the Board would know what they needed to provide and added if anything was going to be funded out of the reserves, that was good cause, but they needed to look at what services were already offered.

Chair Croley said he was trying to understand, there was a Gadsden Senior Citizen center that was supposed to be county-wide, there were satellite centers, and asked if it would be logical for the money to be funded to Gadsden and then be distributed throughout to the other senior centers.

Commissioner Holt said first they needed to find out what the needs were, and added the majority of the funding came from the Department of Elder Affairs.

Commissioner Morgan said Commissioner Holt was correct and the funding agencies had very strict guidelines and would run the risk of losing the funding if the guidelines were not met and added there was a right way that they had to go about doing things.

Commissioner Holt said that if the Havana Senior Center could follow the law, she had no problem with that, she only had a problem that they could not fund Quincy and fund the others.

Commissioner Taylor arrived at this time.

Commissioner Holt said it was not their \$5 Million, it belonged to the people they were serving.

Mr. Presnell said there was only Quincy, Chattahoochee and Havana Senior Centers; one was on drawing board for Midway.

Commissioner Hinson said he was perturbed about the situation.

Commissioner Taylor apologized for her tardiness; she informed the Board she has taken an 8-5 job and was just coming from her job and asked the Chair for a quick update on what she had missed.

Chair explained that in order to achieve some of the funding objectives and to balance the budget, there were cuts made across the board and Commissioner Morgan didn't think Chattahoochee was receiving equal support as Havana for the Senior Citizens and therefore he wasn't supporting Havana receiving the funding of \$10,000 and it set off a "conversation and with the use of the gavel, order was restored".

Commissioner Morgan asked to clarify his position because he did not believe Commissioner Hinson understood what he was saying. He said he had no problem with the additional funds for senior services, but it needed to go through the Gadsden County Senior Services and added if \$50,000 was not enough to get Havana their money, then maybe it needed to be raised to whatever the appropriate amount needed to be. He wanted to make sure he was understood.

EMPLOYEE RAISES

Mr. Presnell said he wanted it on the record, in order to balance the budget, employee raises were capped at \$75,000 and no-one over that amount would receive a raise.

JAIL LOCKS

Mr. Presnell said that \$400,000 for jail locks was re-appropriated and had been in the budget for two years and they had to add an additional \$120,000, but it was not costing them anything, the dollars were in the current year budget and they were rolling them forward.

TRANSPORTATION FUND BALANCE

Mr. Presnell said the Transportation fund balance did require subsidization of the operational budget.

Commissioner Holt asked what a good operational budget was.

Mr. Presnell answered that there was enough in reserves to fund operational deficiencies and told the Board that gas revenue were down.

Chair Croley said SCRAP and SCOP were separate funds and the situation may improve and added that the Bond was due to be paid out in four years.

Clerk Thomas said cash in the transportation fund as of August 6, was \$1,145,000.

Chair Croley asked, historically, what the fund had been at this date.

Clerk Thomas said revenues ran a little behind, the fiscal year would end September 30th, and they were estimating \$1.7 Million on that date.

Chair Croley said as the economy improved, revenues would go up.

ITEMS THAT NEED BOARD DIRECTION

- Ambulance service in Midway
- Request for \$5,000 for Alzheimer's Project
- \$11,000 for Habitat for Humanity.

Chair Croley asked about the report on ambulance calls and where the bulk of calls came from.

Tommy Baker, Gadsden EMS Director, appeared before the Board to give his report on the ambulance calls and stated 85% of the calls were in the central area of the County and there was between 25-30% dry runs system wide.

Mr. Baker said they had eleven fire responders, three ambulance sites, and added Midway and Havana might be able to be consolidated into one, and they had looked into centrally locating one between the two areas. He further explained that they were on a 24 hour shift now and Leon County was working a 12 hour shift working six days straight and conducting a survey on the efficiency.

Chair Croley asked if they were successful in moving to a new site, could they move the ambulance from the hospital to the new site.

Mr. Baker said the twenty-four hour shift was designed to get rest but with the call volume increasing, it was making it harder for EMT's to get the needed rest.

It was pointed out by Mr. Baker that Midway was not yet ready; there were logistical things that needed to be done.

Commissioner Morgan suggested a trial run of six months and monitor moving the ambulance to Midway. Mr. Baker said if they tried that on a six month basis, who was to say Greensboro or Gretna would not want to try same thing.

Chair Croley asked if the new trauma center at TMH located at I-10 & Thomasville Road would be receiving ambulance calls.

Mr. Baker said yes.

Commissioner Taylor said she agreed with the Clerk to not put it in Midway at this time because of the budget problem. She added she wanted to figure out how to do it and suggested having Midway employ someone with EMT training at the fire station to help cut costs.

Commissioner Hinson stated only one ambulance covered the whole east side of Gadsden County and they have \$5.3 Million, if they drew out \$300,000, it would take it down to \$5 Million and they would still be in great shape.

Commissioner Taylor said the problem was if they drew out \$300,000 the first year, it would reduce \$300,000 each year.

Commissioner Hinson said if the reserve was at \$5 Million, they would still have \$5 Million every year. He said Chattahoochee had no call volume, only every blue moon. He added that people in the Quincy area would not call the ambulance, but would get in their car and go to the hospital and that a lot of the seniors in the area are excited about the ambulance coming to Midway.

Commissioner Taylor said he was explaining that the revenue would replenish itself because of their thrifty ways and the way they operate their budget; but the problem was the way to increase their revenue would not exist in the next two-three years because of the gas taxes, economy, etc. She added the only way to have this was to raise taxes and cut employment, both she was against.

Commissioner Holt said she agreed with Commissioner Hinson on the need, but not on the numbers and added that logically, it made more sense to put one further away from a facility for better response.

Commissioner Hinson said that earlier Commissioner Morgan had said it was their job to provide public service for the people.

Chair Croley said he didn't know if an ambulance was logistically needed in Midway, Havana, or Chattahoochee, but did know that everybody in those communities and across the County needed access to the ambulance. He felt the smart way to handle this was to allow the professionals like Mr. Baker to run a proper report, and allow them to make the recommendation and then the Board

could make an informed decision.

Chair Hinson asked for clarification from Commissioner Taylor.

Commissioner Taylor said while it was not fiscally smart to agree with this, but she was voting with her heart, not her head.

Commissioner Morgan said the quote Commissioner Hinson called him out on earlier about providing quality services, that was their number one objective and the point was, without being financially sound, you were unable to provide needed services on a consistent basis and asked them to look at how long they could provide services if they continued to spend money they did not have. He said if they looked within their own county, there were municipalities that would be in situations they would not be able to recover from and the reason the country was in the shape it was in was it has continually spent money it didn't have. This Board, as a whole, has put together a budget and has worked very hard to stay within that budget. He added we could not make bad decisions now that would lead to worse decisions in the future.

Mr. Presnell said if the Board decided to do this, it did not have to be on a permanent basis, they were not obligating for ten years, they would vote on this next year and this would relieve the call volume issue that had been brought to his attention in the area.

Commissioner Holt said if the money was not there, she would not vote for it in the future. She said the budget was not in trouble years ago, libraries, fire stations, etc. got built. She asked Mr. Baker to show them some good numbers, good, bad or whatever, geographically so the Board would be able to see where the need was.

Mr. Presnell said the report could not get done in time for this workshop, but the report and map was to come.

Chair Croley stated he was not supporting anything without seeing the numbers.

ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT AND HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Mr. Presnell said there were two requests:

- Alzheimer's project was requesting \$5,000
- Habitat for Humanity was requesting \$11,000.00

Mr. Presnell said there was nothing budgeted for these two projects and if the Board wished to fund the two, it would have to be cut from elsewhere in the budget or come from the reserves.

Commissioner Hinson said Tallahassee had a GPS tracking system for Alzheimer's patients and thought this needed to be looked into and considered for Gadsden County.

Commissioner Taylor said they had just taken ¼ Million from the budget and not in favor for this at this time, but would like to revisit this in January.

LEGAL FEES BUDGET

Chair Croley said the next item was the Professional Services budget and the budgeted amount was \$215,000, the same it had been for the past three years.

Commissioner Holt stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Taylor asked what the retainer covered.

Commissioner Holt returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Mrs. Minnis explained the current monthly retainer is \$7,750 and this included 50 hours of service per month for that amount and it was not a task based retainer, but instead was an hourly retainer. She further explained that anything over the 50 hours would be then billed and there were different rates for the different attorneys involved.

Commissioner Taylor said there should be a set rate over the 50 hours covered by the retainer and they needed to renegotiate the terms going forward.

Chair Croley reminded everyone the workshop was about the budget and the budget for the legal services was budgeted at \$215,000, the costs has been running around \$160,000. He said if the Board wanted to reduce or increase it, this was the time to do so.

Commissioner Taylor said one thing she had asked for was the privilege of discussing the contract for the attorneys.

Commissioner Hinson said he would like to bring back at the next meeting was fees that Mr. Glazer had charged.

Clerk Thomas said the County had given money to GHI earlier, but the unspent \$13,000 had been returned to the County.

Commissioner Holt felt the legal budget should be reduced to \$150,000 and she wanted to re-bid the contract.

Chair Croley said the Administrator had put \$215,000 in the budget for the coming year and that amount is the same it has been the past years, and that could be reduced or they could wait until they received RFP's back.

Commissioner Taylor asked when their contract expires.

Mrs. Minnis responded it was June 30, 2014.

Commissioner Taylor asked the Board to be mindful of what has been expended because of trying to put an ambulance in Midway.

Commissioner Morgan recommended following the Administrator's advice.

Chair Croley asked if there was anything the department heads were missing and said this would be the time to speak up.

Commissioner Holt said Probation had not been updated with software and was interested in asking for \$20,000 for them to be able to upgrade their system to give them the opportunity to increase their payment ratio.

Mr. Presnell said they had just received the first quote for software and it was for \$18,000.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Croley called for public comments and there were none.

ADJOURNMENT

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR CROLEY DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:11 P.M.

**DOUGLAS M. CROLEY, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk