

**AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF  
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR  
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MARCH 17,  
2020, AT 6:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING  
PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:** Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2  
Brenda Holt, Vice Chair, District 4  
Eric Hinson, District 1  
Gene Morgan, District 3  
Sherrie Taylor, District 5  
Wesley Hall, Interim County Administrator  
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court  
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney  
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

**INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Viegbesie called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and asked Pastor Charles Colston, Calvary Primitive Baptist Church, Quincy to give the Invocation, then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

**AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH AMENDMENTS WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER MORGAN. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE TO APPROVE.**

**AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS AND APPEARANCES**

Dr. Adrian Cooksey gave an update on the Corona Virus. She introduced the Board to the COVID-19 Dashboard that will give current information. She noted that the dashboard would have Counties that had cases and would be updated twice a day. She stated mitigation strategies were primarily to protect individuals 65 and older as well as the healthcare system to be able to respond. She stated she was feeling safe at the time but needed an emergency response plan in place. She further stated people need to be keeping a safe social distance as well as washing hands and disinfecting surfaces as well as getting medication to last 30-90 days, anything to keep the at-risk population home and safe.

She gave screening criteria saying it was widening to a broader base and some expansions were specific to travel advisories. Other criteria were based on close contact with a person with Covid-19, having been hospitalized with acute lower respiratory illness, over 65 years old or immune compromised. LabCorp and LabQuest were on board and have testing kits. Each County has been required to incorporate something into the community for testing. She stated the Health Department would be working to make sure Gadsden County would have a similar site for testing and every health care provider in Gadsden County was prepared, if you are symptomatic, to be able to screen.

The Call Center number is 1-866-779-6121 available 24/7, email COVID-19@FLhealth.gov or call 850-875-7200 option 1. Citizens may want to be aware to call health providers ahead of time.

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Commissioner Taylor asked about monitoring the site that shows cases, or where cases were developing and wondered if there would be someone that can contact the Administrator's Office to alert them in the event cases arrive in the County.

Dr. Cooksey said she called the County Administrator this morning and currently have updates that come from the Department of Health at 10:00 and 4:00. She stated the intention was, as the cases come in, they push them out through emails daily and stated a call was easy for her to do as well.

Commissioner Taylor said she thought about supplies and materials and wanted to make sure healthcare providers have ample equipment to protect themselves in event of an eruption. She asked if there were ample supplies on hand or was Dr. Cooksey comfortable where they were.

*Chairman Viegbesie excused himself at 6:31 for Canvassing Board and gave the gavel to Vice Chair Holt.*

Dr. Cooksey said they had enough tests but the concern would be asymptomatic people, and have asked out for more PPE moving forward.

Commissioner Taylor asked if she had been speaking with CRMC and was pretty sure they were well stocked with items.

Dr. Cooksey said there had been 3-4 conference calls with healthcare providers and they were all on board and knew to call with any questions. The goal was not to turn a client around if they were symptomatic and a specimen needed to be collected at that time.

Commissioner Taylor stated she was concerned with screening and not being able to adequately provide testing.

Dr. Cooksey said with the people who had symptoms, they had what was needed.

Commissioner Taylor stated at the last meeting there was talk about what would happen if there were so many positive, what would be used as an overflow.

Dr. Cooksey stated that was a running question and she knew what the current capacity was for CRMC in Gadsden County and would be contending with Leon County and what their current capacity was. One strategy was to slow the positive cases down as to not over burden the healthcare system with positive cases.

Commissioner Taylor stated in the past, during emergencies, surrounding counties were not available to Gadsden County because they were experiencing the same difficulties. She stated she would not rely on having to go to Tallahassee because the population was far greater and if Gadsden County had a large impact, they would have the same affect in their area and that probably would not be an option. She asked Dr. Cooksey to look into locations like the Gadsden Senior Citizens location and the part of the Hospital that was not being used.

Dr. Cooksey stated there was a need for a Special Needs Shelter in Gadsden County. If tomorrow something happened and there was a need for ventilators, they were located in Tallahassee but she was looking for alternatives within Gadsden County.

Commissioner Morgan thanked Dr. Cooksey for coming. He said the County was prepared, will respond and will adapt as necessary. It was important to understand this will be for a few weeks, perhaps longer and will be an inconvenience. Everyone will have to change the way we approach our daily lives. He stated this has been around for almost 6 months and it was important to be proactive. He stated he liked the Dashboard and it would be a good resource to use. He further asked if it would follow ones that recover.

Dr. Cooksey stated yes, she would find out where that information was listed and she also thought it was important to share that information as well. She further stated that 95% of positive cases would recover.

Commissioner Hinson thanked Dr. Cooksey. He asked what the turn-around time for testing results was.

Dr. Cooksey stated it was taking about 3 days to get tests back.

Commissioner Hinson stated he was on the crisis team for the school board years ago when 9/11 occurred. He asked if there was anyone representing the school board present.

Dr. Cooksey said yes, they had been at the table, they worked with the Chair and the Superintendent. The Staff for the school health clinic are Department of Health Clinic staff and know what was going on with COVID-19. There were weekly conference calls with different people in different places to make sure the system felt secure and the kids would go back to school after Spring Break to a clean environment. She further stated a lot of screening was happening at long term care facilities so nothing was brought in from outside the facilities.

Commissioner Taylor asked about food sites for students.

Dr. Cooksey said Major Wood may have an answer for that. She knew there were locations set up and ways to deliver to the students as well.

Major Wood appeared before the Board and said all public schools were now closed until April 15<sup>th</sup> at the earliest. The school board was doing the USDA Food Replacement Program and were looking for volunteers to take it out into the community. He further stated there was a possibility that school may be closed down the rest of year. Restaurants were encouraged to lower to 50% and bars to close for 30 days. Communication between leaders would be important. There are a lot of critical moves that the Board, as policy makers, will need to address.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there were any states that looked like they may come out without too much impact and Major Wood replied, no. He further stated we need to figure out what we can do to help ourselves.

Vice-Chair Holt said she had questions, not necessarily to answer, but things that needed to be addressed looking forward. If the County did a quarantine, we would need equipment like beds, oxygen, etc.

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Major Wood said there was a lot of concern and the rumor mill was that people would be taken to quarantine and they have that fear but he was explaining that quarantine would be self-imposed.

Vice-Chair Holt said you would not have to take people anywhere because they would be willing to get well. She stated she would like to attach to the website, a map of Georgia and Alabama. People who did not have a healthcare provider would not go to the doctor and she stated that needed to be looked at and some places would not have internet connection. She said essential services for government, like parking tickets or speeding tickets and the offices were closed, Vice-Chair Holt told them to call the Clerk and he could let people know what his plan was. She thought drive-by testing would be a good idea if you had symptoms. She stated she listened to the Governor of Ohio and they were opening hospitals that had been closed. She stated she had called Congressman Lawson and spoke with his Aide, Mr. Tolar, she called Senator Scott's office and mentioned to them that Gadsden County had a facility sitting here, except the Emergency Room, and we could get funding for that. She called the Governor's office and spoke with his Aide. They are getting funding for these hospitals from the Federal Government to get them up and running, so this may Gadsden County's opportunity that does not have to come out of the County Budget and help citizens at the same time.

Dr. Cooksey said if residents did not have a provider or Insurance, call the Health Department. 850-875-7200 option 1 and they would coordinate care for them.

Commissioner Hinson said when there is crisis there is also opportunities for other things. He said the County needed to create another plan. Have a conversation on how to create a focus group among the community on how to address needs, how to generate revenue to off-set costs. The citizens want protection. He asked how the kids were all doing their assignments at home and that was a serious issue in Gadsden County.

Vice Chair Holt said when the children go back to school, some schools have a nurse on certain days and certain days they do not, they may need more staff to monitor the kids at least for a certain number of weeks to see if there are symptoms or reactions.

Commissioner Taylor said there were still a lot of unanswered questions, she was still feeling it was "just a matter of time" kind of situation because COVID-19 had not yet been contained and people were still going in and out of the County. She asked if there will be a follow-up meeting. She wanted to get more comfortable with supplies on hand and things the County would need. She wanted to get more comfortable with different triage centers in event there is over-flow and also food sites. Most Counties are opening the schools for this but they are located strategically in the community. She did not like the idea of people having to go door to door and she stated there were a lot of unanswered questions.

Mr. Hall said there would be follow-up meetings and will probably have a meeting Thursday afternoon or Friday morning to answer questions.

Commissioner Taylor stated she was not trying to rush Mr. Hall and wanted him to take his time and get something together to get put out to the community that would have an impact.

Commissioner Hinson said he thought Commissioner Taylor was on to something, BOCC needed to have frequent meetings so citizens could be abreast of what was going on. He stated

he did not mind meeting every 2 days until this was figured out, or 2-3 times a week and more information would get out to the community.

Mr. Hall said he wanted to make sure, when have a meeting, there were updates and information to get to the public so they felt safe.

Commissioner Hinson said the BOCC did not have to meet in Commission Chambers since no voting was going to happen. He stated there could be a conference call. Just like today, there was a conference call with Florida Association of Counties at 5 p.m.

Attorney Knowles spoke up about sunshine. He stated they were elected officials and with more than one of them in the same room, they may have a sunshine problem if it was not open to public.

Commissioner Hinson said it could be open to public, he was saying maybe a conference call where they appear by phone. At a workshop, they do not have to meet anyway, just takes one person to come to the workshop and you can still hold a meeting.

Mr. Knowles reminded the Board every seven days, they had to reaffirm the (emergency) Resolution and they did not necessarily need to meet for that, the Resolution allows the Chair or who he designates within the commission to re-up that. But he thought if the BOCC was going to have discussions, it needed to be in a public forum. If citizens wanted to call in that was okay.

Commissioner Hinson said he wanted to ask about that, it may need to be addressed with the Governor if it got too intense about how could they meet.

Mr. Knowles said the Governor's Executive Order waives all formal requirements typically of Sunshine and even possibly quorums, if it were a true emergency, the steps could be taken to deal with that. If it got really bad, BOCC may have to have one or two here and rest phone in and the public could participate on Facebook. He further stated they should not take up massive County business that way.

### **CONSENT**

Mr. Hall asked to pull Item 16.

Commissioner Morgan asked where they were adding the Business Crawl and Expo Item. Mr. Hall stated it would be Item 7A. Commissioner Morgan asked to pull Items 3, 4, 5, and 7a to discuss.

**COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH ITEMS PULLED WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER MORGAN. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

- 1. Ratification Memo**
- 2. Gulf Power Easement, North Florida Resiliency Connection**
- 3. ~~Approval to Accept the Special Warranty Deed for the W.A. Woodham Justice Center~~  
Pulled for Discussion**

- ~~4. Training Funding Request National Conference on Preventing Crime~~
- ~~5. Training Funding Request Pat Thomas Law Enforcement Academy Law Enforcement Basic Recruit Program~~  
Pulled for Discussion
6. Approval of 2020 Small County Consolidated Waste Grant Amendment with Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
7. Approval of Resolution 2020-007; Supporting the Designation of Rural Area of Opportunity
- ~~7a. 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Business Crawl and Expo~~  
Pulled for Discussion
8. Approval of Minutes
  - a. August 27, 2019-Joint Special Meeting
  - b. October 29, 2019-Joint Meeting
  - c. August 15, 2019-Special Budget Meeting
  - d. January 20, 2020-Private Roadways Workshop
  - e. January 23, 2020-Special Meeting

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE ALL MEETING MINUTES AS LISTED WITH A SECOND BY VICE-CHAIR HOLT. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

#### **ITEMS PULLED FOR DISCUSSION**

3. **Approval to Accept the Special Warranty Deed for the W.A. Woodham Justice Center**  
Commissioner Morgan posed a question regarding the building stating it was going to continue to expose the County to a potentially great cost in regard to up-keep and things of that nature and he encouraged the Board to not approve this. He understands the reason TCC would like the Board to accept and they had been very good to our County but from a taxpayers' standpoint, it did not make sense to assume ownership of one of the most inefficient buildings due to its size. The utility bill consistently runs \$15-16,000 per month and \$400,000 was just invested in a new roof and there could be other major concerns like plumbing or anything else.

Vice-Chair Holt asked if Commissioner Morgan was interested in continuing to lease the building and he said the County had a \$1.00/year lease and it continues for a while (through 2049); He encouraged the Board to carefully consider what they were talking about doing.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION 2. (DO NOT APPROVE)**

Commissioner Hinson said he had talked with Dr. Murdaugh over the years and Eugene Lamb, and one thing he had heartburn with, even when leasing was \$400,000 had to be put into it for certain things and Commissioner Hinson thought it made more sense to own it if those investments are going to be made.

Commissioner Taylor said at one point the County was looking to build a facility for the Sheriff Department near the Jail. Obviously, the County was not in shape to do so, this building they are now in needs upgrades and she said she was in a position that the County was too far in the middle to go back. She stated if the County could get a building that was effective and efficient for less than \$1 Million versus \$5 Million, she was willing to go that route. Her position was staying where the County was, at some point the County can sell and she was willing to move forward where they are with it being offered to purchase and come up with a better direction at a later date. She thought the Board should go with Option 1.

Commissioner Taylor called for the vote.

Vice-Chair Holt stated Commissioner Morgan was not interested in purchasing, Commissioner Hinson was in favor, Commissioner Taylor was also in favor and stated she herself was in favor of building a building but that ship sailed a long time ago when the Federal government was going to pay for it. If the County was going to lease it and fix it up, Vice-Chair Holt explained that the County was fixing it up for TCC and not for the County. She said \$400,000 was already spent on it and she thought the County would be able to get that much out of it and then be able to do something with it after that.

Commissioner Morgan said he would consider the situation from TCC's point if it was a valued asset, why would they not want ownership of it and consider selling it. He stated about the Sheriff's building that the BOCC changed course on it at the direction of the Sheriff. This was a long-term liability the County was about to under-take.

**COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT OPTION 1 WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HINSON. THE BOARD VOTED 3-1 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE. COMMISSIONER MORGAN OPPOSED.**

**4. Training Funding Request National Conference on Preventing Crime**

Commissioner Morgan asked of Items 4 and 5, he had no problem but wondered if the items were still scheduled with the current environment we are in right now.

Major Woods appeared before the Board and said it was scheduled so far ahead, one was an out of town travel they had looked at today and they will be looking at it. Commissioner Morgan asked if it would be money the County could get back if it was canceled. Major Woods said yes, if it was canceled.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY VICE-CHAIR HOLT. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**5. Training Funding Request Pat Thomas Law Enforcement Academy Law Enforcement Basic Recruit Program**

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HINSON. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**7a. 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Business Crawl and Expo**

Commissioner Morgan said he had no issues. Commissioner Hinson mentioned this and it was mentioned before this virus. Commissioner Morgan stated he would not recommend the BOCC approving any activity at this point. His position was option 2. (Do Not Approve) just due to the current risk.

Commissioner Hinson said to approve it and look at it in 30 days. People understand it may get canceled.

Vice-Chair Holt said she had no problem in approving but would like it to come back.

Commissioner Hinson said with marketing, and getting the word out was the issue last year and he wanted to approve it now.

Commissioner Holt said her concern was the County would market an event and the Governor, President, everyone said they could not. She would not want the public to start making arrangements to come.

Commissioner Morgan encouraged them to put this back to the folks hosting the event. Right now was not using good judgement to approve something and send mixed messages.

Commissioner Hinson said people had to have faith also. He felt giving them the ok was not putting things in harm's way.

**COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION 2 WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR.**

Commissioner Taylor said she wanted to approve but the comments made were true. The County cannot have gatherings of more than 50 people. They probably shouldn't have approved the participation of the two County representatives as well as from the Sheriff's Department. She agreed with Vice-Chair Holt, she would support it when she knows she has the support of the Governor. She stated she wanted to support it, but she did not want to do things when the Governor clearly has stated 30 days' notice and 50 people. She would have to err on the side of caution.

**VICE-CHAIR HOLT CALLED FOR THE VOTE. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE OPTION 2. (DO NOT APPROVE)**

**CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

**Amy McBride, 917 Schwall Road, Havana, FL/Cemetery**

She said a solution to COVID-19, no-one mentioned prayer and why not have focus prayer groups or a call line for prayer.

Ms. McBride stated she belonged to the Chandler Family. Years ago, there was a Chandler Cemetery in Jamison Florida, owned by the Chandler family. One family member sold it. When they sold it, she stated the family had problems getting back there. They had to call the Sheriff because there were guns pulled on them by the people who bought it. She stated there is Florida Statute that governs cemeteries and access and easements to cemeteries for property when people have bought it out of the family. They had a controlled burn and should not have.



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Once you find a cemetery or graves, there should be notification and everything should stop and that did not happen. According to rules and regulations, that could be a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree felony charge. Statute says, Counties or Municipalities have been given authorization to maintain and secure abandoned cemeteries or one that had not been maintained for more than 6 months.

*Commissioner Taylor stepped out at 7:35 p.m.*

Ms. McBride further explained that private funds may be solicited and spent on such maintenance and such efforts are exempt from civil liabilities or penalties connected with damage to the property being maintained. County or municipality may sue the owner of the property to recover such costs.

She said when they went with the Sheriff the other day, there was a man there and he said he was the manager of the property and he had spoken with someone on the BOCC and a controlled burn should never had happened. She was asking for the County Commissioners to do what they were supposed to do for the cemetery. She stated she wants all bodies recognized; the area surrounding maintained; easement given to the family members; graves upkeep.

Vice-Chair Holt asked her to speak to the County Manager because they cannot address items unless agendaed. Commissioner Hinson stated he was not spoken to about this either.

Mr. Hall asked her for the address of the cemetery and she said there was no set address, it was at the end of Jamison Road. There was a locked fence with surveillance cameras and they have a controlled license deer game camera. The Cemetery was on 40 acres of land. The man she was having trouble with says his part was owned by a company called (inaudible) House out of Georgia.

*Commissioner Taylor returned at 7:38 p.m.*

*Commissioner Morgan stepped out 7:38 p.m.*

Juanita Baker-Sailor appeared before the Board. She stated she bought a house 8 years ago and it looked nice to her and it was in her budget. She did not know at the time her husband had congestive heart failure. The bathroom floor was now gone. Her daughter and her granddaughter moved out because of it. She heard about the SHIP Program; she stated Ms. Burns told her she was approved and told her to catch up on her taxes. Jack McLean referred her to Ms. Burns because her roof needed to be done and he told her a roof was not going to help and that she needed the whole foundation. She stated Ms. Burns told her to take everything out of her home. She did that and had been sleeping on a mattress on the floor ever since. (3 months) She stated she asked Ms. Burns when her house would be fixed and claimed Ms. Burns told her she would not get her house fixed if she came to the office again.

*Commissioner Morgan returned 7:39 p.m.*

Ms. Baker spoke but was inaudible telling her story.

Vice Chair Holt interrupted and said it was sad what she was saying but this item was not agendaed; they could not solve it today.

Mr. Knowles said it was on the Agenda and she said not under "Citizens Requesting to be Heard", it did not have a number. She asked her to wait and they had to have both sides.

Ms. Baker spoke but it was inaudible.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### **9. PUBLIC HEARING-APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION 2020-008 FOR FY 2020 Budget Amendments**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item and said it was for Board approval for Resolution 2020-008 and authorization for the County Administrator, Finance Director and Sr. Management & Budget Analyst to complete and execute all budget amendments necessary to adjust the fiscal year 2020 BOCC budget.

Commissioner Morgan said from his reading of the item, all three were on Board for approving the amendment.

Mr. Hall answered yes.

Vice-Chair Holt asked if anyone wished to speak from the audience and there was no one.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION 1 WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HINSON. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **10. Generators for Radio Towers and Green Shade VFD**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item and said it was presented for approval to purchase 5 generators and to upgrade the fuel tanks capacity. The County has 4 tower sites and Green Shade VFD and are in need of generators for power redundancy if power was lost. Generators were budgeted to be financed initially through Motorola and could have been purchased from FL Sheriff Assn. with cost savings. All tower sites & facilities are critical in providing life safety for citizens of Gadsden County.

Commissioner Taylor said she was hearing 2 things, reading one, when build-out of Green Shade was said, was that strictly generators or towers, or generators, towers and build-out all in one.

Allan Meeks appeared before the Board to address this question. HE stated there will be 4 tower sites and the fire station and 2 EMS staff at site at all times. Fire Code states it needs a generator.

Commissioner Taylor said again, she was hearing three things, cell towers, generators and build-out of fire department.

Mr. Meeks said generators was all that was being purchased to be utilized at cell towers and fire station.

Commissioner Taylor asked where the money was coming from.

Mr. Meeks said some coming from Fire Tax and a while back the BOCC did the 74-1 Resolution and budgeted money to do the dispatch center and some of that money was budgeted but could not use would go towards that and explained why.

Mr. Hall said it was coming from the EMS fund not from the General Fund.

Commissioner Taylor said it was soft money and could have been used anywhere.

Commissioner Morgan said he appreciated the questions and had conversations regarding funding and appreciated Clerk's Office pointing out the County could use those funds and he had no issues with that. He stated it appeared to be an opportunity to save money and he would move approval.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR.**

Vice-Chair Holt asked if the County had applied for money through FEMA for generators for the towers and Mr. Hall answered no.

Mr. Meeks said there was one generator that they had time to do for Butler Building and would not have them in time to get these projects going through the FEMA process.

**THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**11. Ratification of Payment to SynergyPACT for FEMA Public Assistance Consultation Services to Manage Hurricane Michael Documentation to Ensure Proper Reimbursement**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item and said it was to ratify payment to SynergyPACT for FEMA Public Assistance Consultation Services for managing Hurricane Michael documentation to ensure proper reimbursement with FEMA, also Staff requesting approval of a Professional Services Contract and ratification of the contract and for the ratification of payments to SynergyPACT starting in mid-February until completion.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there were any guarantees and Mr. Hall answered no. Commissioner Taylor asked if there was any history on being able to collect or success rate they have. Mr. Hall said they were experts and have done this many number of times. She asked what percentage of applications submitted to FEMA have they gotten approved. Mr. Hall said he could not give a percentage but he can call them and can give her exact numbers. He further stated they were highly recommended. Commissioner Taylor said it was subjective and she was not comfortable at this time not knowing the facts. Mr. Hall said he would get her the facts.

Commissioner Morgan said it appeared from the Agenda Item that there were businesses promoted through the Florida League of Cities but shared some of the same concerns that Commissioner Taylor brought up. He thought there would be plenty of information the BOCC could look at and could talk with Pat Thomas and Associates and they might be able to provide

more information. Unless the BOCC was under the gun to approve, he asked this be brought back following the gathering of information.

Mr. Hall Stated he could bring it back to the Board along with the details the Board was looking for.

Commissioner Holt said she also spoke with Apalachee Regional Planning Counsel, they had 2 recommendations. One was Synergy and another was working to the west of us in the Panhandle. She stated both had good pedigrees as far as success rates. They suggested another company that had dealt with disasters and go after funding that had the history of getting money, and they did not move on it at that time.

**COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE A MOTION TO TABLE UNTIL NEXT MEETING WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER MORGAN. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**12. SHIP Housing Rehabilitation-Bid Recommendation and Award**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item.

Commissioner Hinson wanted to disclose he had a conversation with Auburn Ford, Ford Construction, and Mr. Ford had some reservations about some things but it was just general conversation.

**Sonya Burns, Housing Administrator**, appeared before the Board and said they had the bid process and had 12 homes to bid out. Even though the lowest bidder for construction was not selected because of unsatisfactory references and evaluations with workmanship, fact sheet and photos were provided. It listed each one of the homes that Mr. Ford conducted work for the County under the program. She gave the addresses and read the evaluations. She explained Gadsden County will lose approximately \$340,000 in funding from DEO because of repeated failed inspections, unsatisfactory workmanship and non-compliance of change orders.

**Andy Easton, Andy Easton and Associates, CDBG Administrator over Grants**, appeared before the Board and said he provides guidance to County as what rules and regulations were as far as how the Grant was administered. One key requirement of the program was that the City or County will pick the contractors that have shown good jobs in past and it was up to the County how they want to pick the contractors and past performance was a key indicator. What was presented was important issues to consider.

**Auburn Ford, 249 Peters Rd. Midway, FL**, appeared before the Board. He said Ms. Burns came prepared because she knew he was coming. He said it started when Ms. Lex was here and he was given bad contracts and bad information, bad dates and he was not responsible for that, staff was responsible for that. The evaluation was done before he was finished with Ms. Robinson's house and he questioned that. He states he was not at the meeting to bash anybody. He came before the Board and complained about being discriminated against and since then, he thought he had been targeted. He did not know what had happened with current staff now and did not care. His point was when he was told he did not get something done and he does not get paid. He said last week he turned invoices and stuff in on time and was told he might get paid Friday but if not, then Monday. He was almost finished building a

house out of his pocket and could not even get phone call from staff to let him know he was not getting paid. He knew the Administrator was busy with COVID-19 going around but Mr. Hall depends on Staff to take care of business, Mr. Ford was Administrator in Midway and had Staff and thinks Mr. Hall expects same from his staff. But he could not even get a phone call. He stated that he had been jumping through hoops trying to get paid. He was never told his invoices were not on time. The complaint was always that the Clerk's Office has a problem with you giving supporting documentation. (No pictures, Receipts) He said he was low bidder on half of the projects, all new houses, one contractor was \$40,000 different from his and not fair. He stated if he was not going to be picked then at least #2 should of, but number 5 was awarded. He further states that this leads to corruption.

Mr. Hall said he had 100% confidence in his staff, they do everything by the book, no discrimination, no improprieties at all, but when losing \$340,000 because projects are not being completed in timely matter, that was very alarming. Mr. Hall said he was very supportive of staff and proud of them and try to make sure the County does not lose funding because it was critical with the number of houses that need to be repaired, the County needed every dime it could get.

Commissioner Taylor said she did not know where to begin with so many red flags and to hear the Manager's final statement with regards to total confidence. She stated she did not know if there was a \$40,000 difference in the bid, but if there was any validity to the statement that the award went to the highest, there was a problem

*Vice-Chair Holt stepped out at 8:15 and passed the gavel to Commissioner Morgan.*

with that, coupled with the item, it should have been before them weeks earlier. Commissioner Taylor said she did not know why the discussion with the calamity with the contractor and was not part of an agenda item. Hearing total confidence concerned her. She stated the Clerk sent out a memo with over \$1 Million for Housing and the money was still sitting there and to hear total confidence, the Manager lost her and she did not understand. She further stated they are too complacent where they are. Too many people are living in poor conditions because they have total confidence.

*Vice-Chair Holt returned at 8:16 p.m.*

Commissioner Taylor stated Seniors and people with disabilities could not do any better. She stated she was lost at the comment the Manager made and wished the item had been before them longer and it could have been approved longer and may have gotten services. She stated she did not know what going on and stated not to indulge her into day-to-day, but to hear of people going through conditions they did not have to and could have a conversation with the citizens, but he has total confidence. There are millions of dollars sitting there and contractors were ready to go to work and she was only hearing the bashing of contractors and people not getting services, but the Manager has total confidence, so she was a little off. As soon as she can, she wants to move approval on these that have been vetted through process so the people can get work done and relief in their homes.

Commissioner Holt said she wanted to hear from Staff on that one.

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Commissioner Hinson said everyone knew how he felt about senior citizens and disabled people and he hated to get into it and hear of delays, if that was the case. He stated he had some issues. He said not one house on the list was from Havana or Midway and he asked why the fifth highest person got the bid.

Mr. Hall said he would have to bring up Ms. Burns to explain because he was not involved in that process.

Ms. Burns appeared again before the Board to explain. She said that in the agenda request, the item was completed for the February 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 meeting and was submitted timely. At that meeting the hospital discussion was also on the agenda and the Chairman decided not to place this on that agenda because he thought it would be a very lengthy meeting. Then the March 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting was canceled and that was why it was coming back to the Board. It was prepared on-time. She further stated there were community meetings at the Midway Fire Station and she sends letters out to each municipality/manager for a meeting stating if they could not attend to please send representation, and no-one from Midway attended any of the meetings. She stated she set up shop with her personal printer. The times were 9am-2pm and 3pm-7pm to make sure they could reach the people who were working the first round and even went to people's homes to help them complete applications, all this while in the process of hiring additional staff and a Rehab specialist.

Commissioner Hinson asked anytime anything was going on in Midway or Havana and they could not reach people, call him because he can reach people and can make sure they have a full house.

Ms. Burns said she even pulled in the Code Enforcement Officer to take applications to people, left them the applications and referred them to Legal Services, and the County Attorney was working with them and the Deed restrictions some of the people had. She stated she was working with the citizens of Havana.

Commissioner Hinson said he was not trying to take her job, he said they would have a full house and he would make sure the people were there if Ms. Burns let him know.

Commissioner Taylor asked Ms. Burns and Mr. Hall, when an item was prepared for the Agenda, how far in advance must they get the item for it to go on the Agenda and Mr. Hall answered 2 weeks. Commissioner Taylor asked Ms. Burns if her item was prepared 2 weeks in advance and Ms. Burns answered yes, it was submitted February 4<sup>th</sup> and the meeting was the 18<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Taylor asked if they knew the amount budgeted, why could they not tell Ms. Baker. Ms. Burns said in the preliminary application, each home owner was told that the maximum amount for SHIP was \$80,000. If your home is beyond the \$80,000 approved amount, you would be placed on a waiting list. She stated she does not tell until the item and amount is approved by the Board and she did not want to give any information to a homeowner before it was approved. She further explained if the applicant had been approved for SHIP assistance, they are told at the walk-through, pack up all the things you are not using, not move out, pack up things you are not using so once it was all approved by the BOCC and the contractors were ready to start, they do not have to wait for the homeowner to pack all their stuff. Be ready.

Commissioner Taylor told Ms. Burns she gave a ballpark amount and some exceeded \$80,000. In a County like this, simple conversation and explanation to Ms. Baker, "We cannot give you an amount until it is Board approved." would have helped. She stated she did not know if maybe staff needed customer service training.

Vice Chair Holt interrupted and said that Ms. Burns was Mr. Hall's employee and the Board cannot say what she needs.

Commissioner Taylor said she did not call out anyone specifically, but when constituents come before the Board with concerns, they as a Board, need to do something. "It is insane to expect change if you let everything remain the same." Commissioner Taylor stated a conversation should have been had. She asked once approved, to give Ms. Baker the amount approved for her house and give a timeline if possible, as well as the other 10 or so names on the list.

Mr. Hall said that he would do that.

Vice-Chair Holt said to Ms. Burns that they were discussing two different items. A bid process and a complaint about the bid process and they should not be combined. In the bid process, it was delayed because this Board delayed it. It was no one's fault it was delayed but this Board. Ms. Burns was not given the opportunity to say what had happened in that situation.

Ms. Burns said she had communicated with Ms. Baker as had Marvin Tribue, the rehab specialist. Every time Ms. Baker came and when the February meeting was canceled, that was discussed with her several times and each time she would give a different phone number and recently, there was no correct phone number for her so the rehab specialist was sent to her home to let her know where they were in the process.

Vice-Chair Holt said she was not willing to lose \$340,000 and possible CDBG money because the County needed that in order to do more houses. CDBG was how the houses were done. She stated she would vote in favor of keeping the money. She further stated it would damage the County's approval rating in the future.

Commissioner Hinson said local participation was needed to make sure to have local participation. He stated even with the contractors, the money should stay in Gadsden County.

Commissioner Morgan said Ms. Burns had a tough job and he appreciated her consistently providing the Board complete, accurate information, and her efforts to follow the guidelines that keep the County in a positive light with the SHIP funds. He remembered Phyllis always saying she was going to do what was right. And he believed in Ms. Burns' efforts. If the Board needed to have conversation, go by Ms. Burns office, the dais is not always the right place to have that discussion. He stated the Board needed to adhere to the agenda item which was to approve the recommendation.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVAL OPTION 1 WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR WITH A QUESTION.**

Commissioner Taylor said one thing she wanted to do and wanted to ask to the Board. She wanted to make sure to have transparency and treat the public right. She wanted to make sure

problems were being addressed and they would be resolved at some point. She stated she was ready to carry the vote.

Vice-Chair Holt said this was an item that could be workshopped, along with anything in Housing.

**THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**13. Professional Services Task Order with Dewberry Engineering (Jail Tower Site)**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item and said it was for approval to execute a Task Order with Dewberry Engineers.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION 1 WITH A SECOND BY VICE-CHAIR HOLT.**

Commissioner Hinson had a disclosure. He stated a month ago he talked with someone from Dewberry but not about this particular item.

**THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**14. Cochran Road SCRAP Agreement**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION FOR APPROVAL WITH A SECOND BY VICE-CHAIR HOLT WITH A QUESTION.**

Vice-Chair Holt said when the Board agreed to move funding for bridges, they agreed if we pulled out of a district, we would look at replacing it, not sure how it would be done, but agreed to that.

Mr. Hall said he would be working on that and was with her 100% on that.

**THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**15. Hurricane Michael State Recovery Grant Program**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item.

Commissioner Taylor said if they received this money, they would get monies back in their coffers. Mr. Hall stated that was correct. Commissioner Taylor said not Commissioner Morgan. Commissioner Hinson asked when, and Mr. Hall said he was working it out.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there had been any work done on the Hutchinson Ferry Bridge to date and Mr. Hall answered no actual work. Commissioner Taylor stated that the money should not have been moved then. It could have been moved on the ledger but not physically moved because there were no expenses or invoices.

**COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HINSON. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**



**16. Approval of Federal Funding Action Plan for Gadsden County and Congressional Partner**  
Item Pulled

**17. Hutchinson Ferry Road Repairs-Bid Award**

Mr. Hall introduced the above item.

**VICE-CHAIR HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER MORGAN. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

Commissioner Hinson said the Chair cannot make a motion. Mr. Knowles said based on Roberts' Rules, she cannot. Vice-Chair Holt said they have always done it.

**COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY VICE-CHAIR HOLT. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**CLERK OF COURT**

**18. Updates**

Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court had updates dealing with Indigent Tax & the hospital. He stated he forwarded information to the Board from the former Hospital Attorney last month and a couple of things were resolved. One was the effective date of the new agreement was March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and also confirming that CRMC was entitled to indigent Tax money collected through February.

*Chairman Viegbesie returned at 8:50 p.m.*

He further stated the money was distributed approximately two months after that. He stated the issue was, in the agreement, they now give CRMC \$200,000 for indigent hospital care and that leaves approximately \$600,000. He stated the BOCC did not have that \$600,000 yet because CRMC is entitled to money collected through February. The Clerk said it raised a question of what the BOCC was going to do with that money and the issue was it could only be used for indigent care. The attorney mentioned during the course of the meetings, Craig McMillian mentioned the possibility of the Board considering accelerating the debt service. That was looked into briefly and the Bond holders do not really want to accelerate it, there is a 1% penalty, but even with that, they could still save hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Glazer also mentioned in an email, a proposed agreement that during the course of negotiations, CRMC had at one point agreed to, but backed away from, and then the deal was closed with a 15-year contract with two 5-year extensions. That deal potentially included a build-out of unfinished area, according to Mr. Glazer, he thought that was potentially still on the table, which included 6 Emergency Room Bays and potentially 10 rooms. In light of the current situation he thought this may want to be considered. He stated this proposal could not help with the current situation but it could potentially help in the future. This did not change the model; it was all about being potentially prepared for Emergency events or a change one day in the model. Mr. Glazer also talked about potentially, if you were going to use the money for anything else for indigent care, the potential to take a look at the ordinance and the health plan and maybe consider reformulating it at this time. The Clerk's Office was under the impression, and language in Statute that Legislature put in, and he sees language in this

statute that he had seen before and deemed it to mean "This money is to be used for your office, but really it is our money." They declared it was State money, which means they can call it back. The Clerk stated the BOCC may want to give it to the new attorney to look at. He stated the BOCC had to be careful where that money was spent and it could not just be spent anywhere.

Commissioner Holt felt all three were good options. She asked how long it could sit until the Board workshopped it or looked at it to figure out some good options.

Clerk Thomas said the BOCC did not have the money yet and it could be May, based on the current distribution. You cannot sit on the money indefinitely.

Commissioner Holt stated with the current Emergency right now, she thought it was very important that it was looked at.

Commissioner Taylor said when the Board was having the discussions with the Hospital and GHI, she thought it was understood, by the Clerk's office especially, she understood \$200,000 rent from CRMC would be used for the build-out because those dollars were not restricted. She stated the Clerk was correct on what was collected was going straight to Indigent Care. As far as the rent, she understood it was going to be used for the build-out that the County needs to look at and pursue. That is what she liked about the contract.

Clerk Thomas said the \$200,000 for rent would go into the General Fund and that did mean they could use the rent for what they wanted. The real issue was the Indigent Tax money. There was discussion about the agreement and there was an email that eluded to the fact that they agreed to that, but seemed they backed away from that in the final product. Mr. Glazer confirms in his email, in his last bullet point, that both parties have interest in finishing out portions of the building that are within the area that is leased by CRMC but currently unfinished space. Someone from the County would have to be assigned to work through the details and the appropriate documentation developed if the Board wanted to pursue. It could have been made a part of the agreement but was not.

Commissioner Taylor said she agreed that CRMC should get the money due to them up until the contract was signed. She was not following the Clerk on the \$600,000. She stated it sounded like there was a pot of money and \$600,000 and what it can and cannot be used for or who did and did not have access to it.

Clerk Thomas explained in the final year, the revenues went up and by the distribution that was in place, CRMC will receive approximately \$800,000 and now under the new contract, they will only receive \$200,000 which leaves a difference of \$600,00 going forward from collection from March forward. \$600,000 will not be disbursed until the Board decided how they wanted it disbursed.

Commissioner Taylor said the Clerk also sent other memos and asked if he was going to address them. He stated he would if they wanted him to.

Commissioner Taylor stated according to one of the memos, there were 3 projects that were online, but documentation, competition and all else are behind which was causing concern with reimbursement.

Clerk explained they were public works projects. Livestock pavilion was waiting to receive FEMA money and he asked if that was received. Clerk Thomas stated in terms of the project at the livestock pavilion, he said the Board was using the money first that was appropriated by the State because there was a deadline and that \$1.2 Million was being used first and after that the loans would be used and it was financed by USDA after that was completed. There may be an issue with a match that was needing to be looked into that may not have been addressed and he told the Commissioners he would get back with them on that. Hurricane Michael Reimbursement was coming in totaling \$65,000, but \$35,000 was due to the School Board and the rest of that was spent on some buildings, including the Livestock Pavilion and some work at Pat Thomas Park.

### **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

#### **19. Updates**

### **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

#### **20. Updates**

Mr. Knowles said he was trying to get in the swing of things and was going to give everyone his cell number when the meeting was over. Summer break spot was coming up and it enabled students who get their lunches at the school to get them at designated spots and he did not think any were set up yet for Gadsden County. By Friday the Board will need to re-up the COVID-19 Resolution as it was good for a week. He said Comcast had offered free internet to low-income houses and have opened up all the Xfinity Wi-Fi hot spots for next 60 days, and Spectrum Communications was doing the same thing.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS**

#### **21. Report and Discussion of Public Issues**

##### **Commissioner Eric Hinson, District 1**

He thanked the Board for coming together last Friday regarding the Corona Virus and for the Attorney's first day. He said Mr. Knowles did a great job. He also thanked the Health Department for their approach as well towards this serious issue. He hoped a lot of folks can take Vitamin D3, B12, Fish Oil & One-a-Day (consult your Dr. first) to strengthen their immune system.

He also thanked the BOCC for their support on February 29<sup>th</sup>. There was a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the Black History Parade and Festivities. Partnered along with Alpha-Alpha Fraternity as well as the Gadsden County Black History Cultural Organization along with the city of Quincy, as they sponsored some of the events as well. There were almost 2000 people in attendance. He stated a lot of local vendors made a lot of money.

##### **Commissioner Gene Morgan, District 3**

No items

**Commissioner Brenda Holt, District 4**

Commissioner Holt said she was not willing to move one penny in Housing, very difficult to get CDBG to come back. She did research and calling and need to look at how they get approved. She said they knew after the hurricane they needed more people in Housing. She said they have to do the work and abide by FEMA and CDBG.

She spoke with Senator Lawson today, Scott's aide and the aide in the Governor's office to see if they could get funding to see about getting money to open the hospital.

She said she also asked about critical access designation.

Commissioner Hinson said he would like to see \$600,000, maybe this could be a start, got \$600,000 maybe could place that money there. Interest rate at an all-time low, need special need shelters. The more we meet, the more we get things done.

Commissioner Holt said if they drop interest rate, there would be bonds

**Commissioner Sherrie Taylor Vice-Chair, District 5**

She said regarding the County Administrator's job, she thought it was time to start advertising and asked what was the intent. Either look for someone or offer this job to this young man. (Mr. Hall) She thought at some time, she would like to have it agendaed.

Chairman Viegbesie said it will be agendaed as soon as possible.

Commissioner Taylor said something happened while the Chair was gone and she asked for his undivided attention for a half a minute so she could share with him. She shared the story Ms. Junita Baker shared with the Board earlier in the meeting and told the Chair that he pulled the item 5 weeks ago because there was a heavy agenda with the hospital.

*Commissioner Morgan left meeting at 9:13 p.m.*

Commissioner Taylor explained the item was pulled and there were 12 families that were impacted because of such. She asked in the future, the BOCC think about some of the items that get pulled and how they impact people.

Mr. Hall explained it was when the hospital item was on the Agenda and because it was so contentious, they moved it to the first March meeting but that meeting was cancelled.

Chairman Viegbesie said if he had known it was such a pressing item, he should have been told and it would have not been cancelled.

Mr. Hall said he did not know it was so pressing either.

Commissioner Taylor said in the event, given the sensitivity, she would have put that item before the hospital bill and got it moved through so the families did not have to wait the extra time.

Commissioner Taylor said they found money tonight, out of nowhere for generators, \$157,000 that they did not know they had, but when it comes to the Summer programs, they could not find the money. She prays they find the same soft money from somewhere for the program. She said she did not want to put any more money into Housing until it gets better. She stated it needed improvement. She was not sure if they set themselves up for a lawsuit tonight, the way one contractor was exploited, and it was not even an agendaed item. There were facts but stated she did not know if this was the forum to discuss the deficiencies from this particular contractor.

She stated the Manager needed to find out about the food sites.

**Commissioner Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2**

Chairman Viegbesie said hearing what he heard about the Housing, Commissioner Taylor interrupted and informed him it was discussed and approved tonight.

He asked for an approval of a motion for Resolution of Accommodation for Odell’s. He said he was there and was pleased how Odell’s was ran and how much opportunity he had given to those that would not have been given an opportunity to work.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MOVED FOR A RESOLUTION OF ACCOMMODATION AND CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE OWNER OF ODELL’S WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HINSON.**

Commissioner Holt said she was not willing to move one penny in Housing because it was very difficult to get CDBG to come back because what happened before was, as they told the County, was a mis-use of funds. You cannot do that with Federal government. She said she did research and calling, she wants to look at how the County gets approved. If the Federal Government allow us to put stipulations in it for qualifications, let’s do it. She further stated the BOCC knew that after the hurricane, we needed more people in Housing and only have 1 extra and that was 2 years ago. They told us we would need up to maybe 10 people to bring us back to where we were. They are not there and we did not put them there. Stressing out 1-2 people does not work. She stated the BOCC needed to look at Synergy and see about getting FEMA money and if the County can use part of the money to look at staff, then we need to do that, even if it was temporary. When the Federal Government says we may lose \$340,000, they were serious. Once you go on that list, she stated, it was like a poor credit rating. Everyone needs to do what they need to do to keep this funding.

She stated again that she spoke with Congressmen, Governor and Senator’s Aides about the hospital and trying to get funding to re-open the hospital.

Commissioner Hinson stated Dr. Cooksey said something about a special needs shelter and the County has \$600,000 and that may be something the County could place that money into. The interest rate was at an all-time low.

Chairman Viegbesie said to wait until you see the trickle down to the commercial banks and they lower their rates as well. Commissioner Hinson stated the BOCC could be meeting and planning so they are ready.

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Commissioner Holt stated the \$600,00 could only be used for Indigent care. If the interest rate is dropped, the County has Bonds that may be able to be refinanced knocking off several hundred thousand.

**Receipt and File**

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**WITH NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO BE HAD, CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE CALLED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:30 P.M.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**ANTHONY O. VIEGBESIE, PHD., Chairman  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**