

AT AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MAY 1, 2020 AT 10:00
A.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
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

****Please note: There were difficulties with the audio/video equipment during the meeting with the video freezing****

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m., asked everyone to bow their heads for the Invocation.

Commissioner Holt arrived at 10:07 a.m.

He asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Citizens Requesting to be Heard

Due to COVID-19 and the efforts of Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners to continue the practice of social distancing, Commissioners want to continue to hear from citizens under the Citizens Requesting to be Heard section of the agenda.

If citizens have any questions, comments or concerns, please email CitizensToBeHeard@gadscencountyfl.gov and anticipate receiving a response within 48 hours.

The Board of County Commissioners would like to thank everyone for their patience and flexibility during this time.

Chair Viegbesie asked citizens to email their concerns to the email address given.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Resolution Update

Chair Viegbesie then announced he may be leaving the meeting early, depending on how long the meeting goes because there will be a walk-through/drive-through at the hospital at 12:00 for testing about to materialize. He stated they have received 1,500 test kits and are currently at EOC and testing will be at the Hospital.

Chair Viegbesie said a draft of the Resolution was emailed to the Commissioners last night for their review. He said one thing he would like in the revision was a relaxation of the curfew of 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. He also wanted to mention Gadsden County is the State with the highest per capita positive rankings in testing.

Commissioner Morgan said to his direct point about the higher percentage, that was due to the fact of the higher risk population than the other counties. He also wanted to mention he would like recommend a change in Section Q regarding the masks from “mandate” to “strongly recommend”.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO CHANGE WORDING FROM “MANDATE” TO “STRONGLY RECOMMEND” AND MOTION DIED FOR LACK OF SECOND.

Commissioner Holt said they upped testing and that will up their percentage of positive results. She stated she had no problem with the curfew.

Chair Viegbesie said he felt wearing masks, especially in this community, was good. He added that the continuing of wearing of the masks was something that was needed to be done for the next couple of weeks and do a gradual re-opening.

Commissioner Morgan said he agreed with the Board but strongly felt they should change the wording to “strongly recommend”.

Commissioner Taylor said listening to the numbers in place in the County but it did not match what they were doing. Why would you ease back in the curfew when you have a rise in cases? The two do not coincide with each other to remedy the situation. She said they were not in a position to grant or even consider that. She added she was very proud of what has been done thus far, it was working and she was appreciative of it. She added she did see comments where the Sheriff’s Department has a version and then there is the Board’s version and that needed to be looked into.

Chair Viegbesie said they need to look at the section added on cleaning and disinfecting of retail stores and suggested that section be added.

Commissioner Holt asked if the attorney could go over changes from last week.

Mr. Knowles said restaurants could now open at 25% permitted seating capacity as long as they maintain social and personal distancing and encouraging carry-out. That also applies to retail essential businesses. He added they would look at how the Governor introduces Phase 2. He said the bar area of restaurants will remain closed. He said the main changes will be in Section C, D, S and the curfew is contained in Section G and that was the main substantive changes.

Commissioner Taylor said she wanted to see if she could get consensus moving forward on a concern from one of the Commissioners where the Chair was makes decisions without the consensus of the Board where it was written in to the Resolution where the Chair had received authorization to make such decisions for the Board without the consensus of the Board. She wanted to have that revisited by the Attorney. She said in many cases it was a requirement that the Chair take positions for the Board without the consent but in this situation, they were able

to meet and had three or four Friday meetings and all five Commissioners have been present on those meetings and there were no constraints where they could not talk and give directions like done in a regular Board meeting. She said she was asking that the Attorney revisit where the Chair makes decisions without the consent of the Board because the Board needs to know and to give some directions between the five of them. She also said she appreciated what the Attorney did with the cleaning of retail and she did not agree with the curfew.

Chair Viegbesie said for them to understand COVID-19 was not the only emergency they were going to have and with Hurricane Michael they were unable to meet. A tornado came through just Wednesday and they were unable to meet. Now they were about to make testing available for the citizens. He added he has no problem with revisiting the section that gives Chair the power.

Taylor said point of clarity, when a letter is written from the Board, that letter or information should be vetted by the Board if it was written on behalf of the Board. She said to modify responsibilities of the Chair, not take all the powers away when opportunities come that they do not take advantage of it, you do, but you do not send out communications without the consensus of the Board. She added this is a democracy and knew he was the point of contact.

Commissioner Holt said this was a conversation for another meeting, not for an emergency Resolution. This was not the County's business at this time. They needed to move on with the item.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT AS MODIFIED AND CHAIR VIEGBESIE MADE THE SECOND WITH A QUESTION.

Mr. Knowles asked, for record purposes, what the revisions were.

Commissioner Holt said she wanted to include the draft the way it was written as far as new standards set by the Governor, approve for the new curfew of 10 pm to 5 am, approve the mandatory wearing of masks and the cleaning/disinfecting in the retail stores.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE CALLED FOR THE VOTE.

COMMISSIONER HINSON	NO
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	YES
COMMISSIONER HOLT	YES
COMMISSIONER MORGAN	NO
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	YES

MOTION PASSED 3-2 COMMISSIONER HINSON AND COMMISSIONER MORGAN OPPOSED

2. Interim County Administrator Position

Chair Viegbesie said they have a draft of the contract for the Interim County Administrator before them.

Commissioner Morgan made one recommendation under paragraph 2a to change the advanced written notice from 90 days written notice to terminate the agreement to two weeks.

Chair Viegbesie said he had no problem with 30 days, two weeks was too short a window.

Commissioner Morgan said that would allow them to work together for 14 days. Commissioner Morgan said that was for notification.

Commissioner Taylor asked if that was 2 weeks after someone was hired?

Commissioner Holt asked the attorney if this required 90 days total for the length of time for them to find a replacement. Mr. Knowles said the contract was open-ended until the position was filled permanently. He said the goal was that both parties had adequate notice. Commissioner Holt said they were now at the notification part; they select a Manager; would the notification be at the date of hire of the Manager?

Mr. Knowles said his thought was, his concern was when they make the decision, they give Dr. Grant and the new Administrator enough notice. This was dealing with notice; the Board could do whatever they wanted to effectively do to make sure that person was indoctrinated into the system.

Chair Viegbesie said if he understood the explanation the attorney gave was the reason he heard Commissioner Morgan say 90 days was too long and then read from the contract.

Commissioner Holt said that was what she just said.

Commissioner Taylor said to move with the 30 days and thought everything else was good with the contract.

Commissioner Holt said to put it in a motion.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR SAID SO MOVED AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. COMMISSIONER TAYLOR ASKED IF DR. GRANT HAS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE CONTRACT AND HE STATED YES.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE CALLED FOR THE VOTE AND STATED THERE WAS A MOTION AND SECOND TO RATIFY THE CONTRACT WITH THE CHANGES FROM 90 DAYS TO 30 DAYS.

COMMISSIONER HINSON	YES
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	YES
COMMISSIONER HOLT	YES
COMMISSIONER MORGAN	YES
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	YES

MOTION PASSED 5-0

Commissioner Holt said regarding the tornado that struck in the St. John's area and damaged several houses on Wednesday evening, Road and Bridge and the Interim Manager did a marvelous job and thanked everyone involved.

Commissioner Taylor asked that the item with regards to the Chair be added to the next agenda.

Mr. Hall said Old Federal Road should be completed by June 30th but there were some issues and that needs to be brought before the Board, they could lose funding.

Commissioner Holt said with the Interim Manager coming in on Monday, it would be good for them to meet with Peavy to see what they could do, that was usually part of a “clean-up” list and if there were other things they needed to be notified of, would be good to have a list.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR VIEGBESIE DECLARED THE EMERGENCY MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:10 A.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**ANTHONY VIEGBESIE, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk