

**AT AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MAY 8, 2020 AT 10:00
A.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

Present: **Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2**
 Sherrie Taylor, Vice Chair, District 5
 Eric Hinson, District 1
 Gene Morgan, District 3
 Brenda Holt, District 4
 Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator
 Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
 Beth Bruner, Deputy Clerk
 Jeronda Robinson

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie called the meeting to order at 10:24 a.m. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and led in Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (3-Minute Limit)

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@gadscdencountyfl.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.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Resolution Update (Henry G. Grant, PhD, Interim County Administrator)

Chairman Viegbesie stated the Commissioners had a chance to preview the Resolution and asked Mr. Knowles to explain the changes.

Mr. Knowles said the changes in the Resolution were on Pages 11 & 12, section R. He stated there was clarification to the definition of vacation rentals, pursuant to Florida Statute 509.013(4)(a)1. He further stated the curfew was still in effect as well as mask usage requirement and there were no other changes.

Chair Viegbesie said he was asking policy makers to use common sense over emotion when making policies.

At 10:31 a.m., Commissioner Holt arrived.

Chairman Viegbesie stated if the positivity rate goes down, he would be willing to ease curfew hours and wearing masks, but benchmarks were needed to be set for this. Starting Saturday, May 9th, the community wide, free testing would start. If the positivity rate dropped below a certain percentage, the BOCC would ease the curfew and masks. For example, if it went down 10% for two consecutive weeks, the BOCC may completely remove all masks and curfew.

Commissioner Holt asked if the BOCC was doing what the Governor said to do.

Chairman Viegbesie said everything done was in accordance with the Governor. The Governor had a re-opening plan and the County should not do anything that was in conflict with the Governor.

Commissioner Holt said she wanted to let the citizens know exactly what they should or should not do.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO CHANGE THE WORD MANDATE TO STRONGLY RECOMMEND FOR WEARING A MASK. WITH NO SECOND, THE MOTION DIED.

Chairman Viegbesie said as of May 7, 2020, Gadsden County had the highest positivity rate of the surrounding counties at 15.1%. He stated that should be considered in the decision to relax and eventually eliminate the requirements.

Commissioner Hinson said he understood both sides, and stated several people had no masks. He purchased 320 masks with his own money. People who work in stores needed masks. He stated it was difficult to mandate citizens if they had no mask. He was trying to get 2000 more masks and encouraged non-profits and churches to purchase masks for their members. He stated he had support for Commissioner Morgan's motion on masks, but he hoped people in stores would wear masks.

Chairman Viegbesie stated that Commissioner Morgan's motion died with no second. He said the Board gave each Commissioner 300 masks to hand out, if that was not enough, the County Administrator would be asked to order more to distribute to citizens.

Commissioner Holt asked people to protect other people by wearing a mask. She stated no deaths meant everyone was doing something right. She said people could use a cloth to make a mask. She encouraged a mask and stated people were not being arrested, she did not want people to die.

Chairman Viegbesie said the policy was about lives and livelihood, and the Board needed to do a cost benefit analyst to prioritize one over the other. Gadsden County had the highest positivity rate at 15.1% without community wide testing. Calhoun was at 12.5%, Liberty-15%, Jefferson-14%. On May 9, 2020 the Community free testing drive thru, walk by, started. He stated the BOCC needed to establish benchmarks before mandates were lifted. The Wall Street Journal said Florida dodged the worst prediction during COVID-19 and it could have been worse than New York if the government did not take the drastic actions it took to prevent the spread of the virus.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the County could buy additional masks, if possible, with no fiscal restraints. She stated someone had called from the Courthouse and said that they need masks. She stated she supports the mandate for masks.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE A MOTION TO ADOPT WITH THE UPDATE, WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HOLT.

Commissioner Hinson said distributing information to the citizens was important so they could make informed decisions about their health. The more the County pushed testing and provided testing sites, the more information there would be available as the State reopened. He further stated testing would help to save lives and protect citizens. He further stated he highly recommended a mask.

Chairman Viegbesie said Gadsden County COVID-19 Community Drive-thru/walk by testing site had a trial run on May 7, 2020. Chair Viegbesie was tested, and said it was not in the nose, it was a mouth swab and painless. The test would start Saturday May 9, 2020 from 9am-1pm at the Gadsden County Campus of CRMC, 23186 Blue Star HWY, Quincy, just follow the traffic signs. He stated no referral was needed and there was no charge. The testing days were scheduled for Monday and Wednesday 1pm-4pm, Saturday 9am-1pm, for 30 calendar days. He further stated information did not have to be collected and you could make an appointment by calling 850-329-0685 Monday-Friday, 9am-12pm where your info would be taken and you would be registered. He added there was no charge and no referral.

COMMISSIONER HINSON- NO
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR- YES
COMMISSIONER MORGAN- NO
COMMISSIONER HOLT- YES
CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE- YES

COMMISSIONER HINSON AND COMMISSIONER MORGAN OPPOSED. MOTION PASSED 3-2

Commissioner Taylor spoke about the call-in number and stated 80% of the County would not know or hear the call-in number. She asked if citizens could register at the site and would all who showed up be served.

Chairman Viegbesie said everyone would get in. People were calling and registering already and the Department of Health wanted to register 50 a day but were prepared to test more.

Dr. Cooksey appeared by phone and said in the first 45 min yesterday, the first 50 appointments were scheduled for Saturday. Staff was tripled for Saturday, May 9th and she expected more than 50 tests to be completed. (3 times more) She stated they would do as many as possible between 9am-1pm on Saturday. She said they wanted to stop at 1pm because the tests needed to get to the pick-up zone by 2pm.

Commissioner Taylor asked if any documents were needed for pre-registering.

Dr. Cooksey said no, she would like to have ID but it was not needed to get tested. She further stated they would ask for a name, date of birth and an address. She also asked the citizens to please wear a mask or get one at the site.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the number of cases was decreasing? Dr. Cooksey said they needed a unified definition for recovery and that it was a nationwide conversation but they were working on figuring that out. The estimate was 40% recovered, but it was not definitive.

Commissioner Holt said for people to please bring their Social Security Number when being tested and stated CRMC was not requiring hospitalization anymore.

Commissioner Morgan asked what the test turnaround time was and Chairman Viegbesie answered 3-5 days.

Dr. Grant asked how many masks to order and Chairman Viegbesie said 5,000 for now. Commissioner Morgan asked for the fiscal impact for that cost. Chairman Viegbesie said it would be temporary because it would be part of the next item on the agenda. He stated the staff had submitted the application for registering for COVID-19 reimbursement for expenses due to COVID-19. He said it was FEMA public assistance, and the County had already registered for the reimbursement program and he hoped all of it would be reimbursed to the County, but it was not a guarantee.

Commissioner Holt said all of the Constitutional officers could apply for assistance and they could order and get reimbursed.

Dr. Grant asked if there was a mask requirement in churches.

Mr. Knowles said if distance could not be kept, then yes. Churches could stay open and had not been mandated to close, just maintain social distance and wear a face mask if they could not manage social distancing.

2. Funding for GCSO Security at COVID-19 Testing Site (Henry G. Grant, PhD, Interim County Administrator)

Dr. Grant explained this was for security at the COVID-19 testing site, \$20,000 for no more than 30 days.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND FROM COMMISSIONER TAYLOR WITH A QUESTION.

Commissioner Taylor asked if it was 30 consecutive days or 30 testing days.

Captain Collins answered that it was calendar days.

Chairman Viegbesie stated depending on the crowd and need for security was what the money would be used for, up to \$20,000. GCSO would be providing an invoice that would break down what had been paid for each security provider at the time security was provided to determine the payment.

Commissioner Taylor said security was needed with walk up and drive up available and she figured it would be 10-15 hours per week.

Commissioner Morgan asked what the funding source was.

Commissioner Viegbesie said it was going to be from the FEMA reimbursement that was already there for emergency and this expenditure was part of the COVID-19 reimbursement (Disaster relief fund) expenses from the FEMA Public Assistance. The money would be money from Hurricane Michael Reimbursement Money and when the County files for the reimbursement of that, that money would be put back into appropriate coffers. That was how Mr. Price explained it to Chair Viegbesie.

Commissioner Morgan asked why the deputies on duty could not be used?

Chairman Viegbesie said the Sheriff's Office told him they did not have the man power and they were using those who were off and paying them overtime for security.

Captain Collins appeared before the Board and said his officers were needed to meet mandates and this was not planned. He stated US Highway 90 could not get held up, and they would manage traffic flow and any unruly people. He stated they were using reserve officers and officers on their days off. He further stated he personally had over 100 hours of work put into this just coming up with an operational plan and that was not costing the County anything because it was done during his work hours.

Chairman Viegbesie asked Commissioner Morgan if his concern was addressed. There was no answer from Commissioner Morgan.

Commissioner Taylor said with regards to the funding source, make sure the Clerk gives a thumbs up because sometimes the funds are restricted. She stated the Board would come up with the money and they may need to take it from the General Revenue. She said she was ready to move the question.

COMMISSIONER HINSON- YES

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR- YES

COMMISSIONER MORGAN- NO

COMMISSIONER HOLT- YES

CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE- YES

MOTION PASSED 4-1

COMMISSIONER MORGAN OPPOSED

3. Fire Ban for Gadsden County

Mr. Grant said he had a request from Major Wood at Emergency Management for the County to put into place a burning ban for Gadsden County to prevent wild fires and forest fires.

Chairman Viegbesie stated he thought it was a good idea. He would not want to go through what Santa Rosa was going through with all the houses burning.

Commissioner Holt said she was under the impression the last burn ban was still in place but she thought the County would need a Resolution written up.

Commissioner Hinson said he would also support a burn ban.

At 11:23 a.m., Chairman Viegbesie handed the gavel to Vice-Chair Holt and stepped out.

Mr. Knowles stated the County had an Ordinance on the books banning the burning of waste. (Ordinance 87-009) He further explained he could work up a Resolution and have it addressed at the next meeting. The County may not need to do anything other than the Sherriff's office to enforce the Ordinance. (Section 70-37)

Vice-Chair Holt said she called the Forestry Department about a burn ban and was told Gadsden County Burn Ban was never lifted; it was more restricted.

Mr. Knowles said he would look into it for the Commission.

Dr. Grant said the state puts on burn bans and then they take them off, and recently, another was put on because of the recent fires.

Vice-Chair Holt stated Gadsden County's ban was not taken off and that was what she was told three weeks ago.

Commissioner Taylor said the Board could not discuss this item because it had not been advertised and if there was something in place, let the Sheriff enforce it. She asked it be advertised and put on the next agenda.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Vice Chair Holt called the meeting adjourned at 11:26 am.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

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

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk