

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MAY 19, 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
Henry G. Grant, Interim County Administrator
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone to the meeting and called it to Order at 6:03 p.m. He asked the Interim County Administrator to give the Invocation and then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Dr. Grant asked to pull Item 10 from the Agenda.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE. (COMMISSIONER HINSON WAS NOT ON ZOOM AT THE TIME.)

AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS AND APPEARANCES

CONSENT

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS 1-9 AND COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE. (COMMISSIONER HINSON WAS NOT PRESENT ON ZOOM AT THIS TIME.)

1. Ratification Memo
2. Approval of Minutes
 - February 18, 2020- Regular Meeting
 - February 4, 2020 – Regular Meeting
 - January 21, 2020 – Regular Meeting
 - January 21, 2020 Workshop
3. Approval of Proclamation Honoring Public Works Week and EMS Week
4. Approval and Signature for Satisfaction of Special Assessment Lien
5. Gadsden County W.S. Stevens School Renovation Task Order

6. **Stevens School Cafeteria Renovations Proposal**
7. **Pat Thomas Park Survey Task Order**
8. **Replacement of Roof at the Quincy Public Library**
9. **Approval of Letter of Support for Havana Main Street**

ITEMS PULLED FOR DISCUSSION

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

There is a statement that is normally on the Agenda that the Chair reads off for the benefit of the public and it was not printed on the Agenda for his reading.

He asked if citizens have any questions, comments or concerns, please email CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov and anticipate receiving a response within 48 hours.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

GENERAL BUSINESS

~~10. Approval to Purchase Heavy Equipment for the Public Works Department~~
ITEM PULLED

11. Approval to Replace and Upgrade Video Equipment in the Commission Chambers

Dr. Grant introduced the above item and said it sought Board approval to replace and upgrade video equipment in the Commission Chambers. He added that presently, the video solution in place did not have the capability to continue with the definitive reliability to support the needs of the BOCC. The current solution has been modified to support the emergency actions brought on by the Covid-19 Emergency. He further stated that due to Covid-19, all travel has been eliminated. Funds allocated to travel can be repurposed to fund this project resulting in no additional Fiscal impact.

A MOTION FOR APPROVAL WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER HOLT AND SECOND BY CHAIR VIEGBESIE AND A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN.

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

MOTION PASSED 5-0

CLERK OF COURT

8 Updates

Mr. Thomas was present and said there needed to be a number of budget amendments done and approved that may not have already been in the budget and a number of grants that

needed to be brought forward. He also wanted to mention there probably will be a decline in revenue due to the COVID matter during the month of April. He said he was not asking the Board to take any action, he simply wanted them to be made aware of the situation. He said typically when there is a decline and there is no reduction on the expenditure side it means it eats into their Fund Balance and he wanted to make them aware.

He said Commissioner Hinson asked a question at the last meeting and he sent an email and the short answer at this moment was \$26,736. He said the question basically was, how much money as a result of the new agreement with CRMC but after the new contract started in March and at this moment that figure was \$26,736. At some point the Board will need to make decisions, based on the Statutes, as to how they want to allocate the money going forward.

Commissioner Taylor said he said there may be concerns with revenue, the pandemic started in part of March, had he looked at March 2019 and how things looked then versus now. He said March was a good month, May will show the impact. She asked if the \$27,000 was accumulating each month. He said that amount varied each month, depending on the amount that was collected each month.

Chair Viegbesie said that money was specific for indigent health care only and Mr. Thomas agreed.

Mr. Thomas said prior to the new agreement, all the money that came in under this tax was sent out each month to pay the debt service, CRMC, etc., it is now coming into our coffers each month. Now the portion going to CRMC has been reduced under the new agreement and stays with the County until they decide what to do.

Commissioner Holt said she knew they were looking at the particular pot of money from the hospital but during the recession, did not know how the revenue was going to come out and was pretty sure that was what he was saying. He said it would be lower and she said they did not know how low.

She said they were going to have to look at things in the budget at how they plan on making the difference up and the budget session may “take a minute”.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

9. Updates

Dr. Grant said the masks were here and ready for pick-up, there were 1000 masks for each commissioner.

He said Thursday, May 21st at 4:00 will be their first Budget Special Meeting.

Commissioner Morgan asked if was a special meeting and Chair Viegbesie said was a workshop.

Chair Viegbesie asked the Administrator to remind the Commissioners of the Public Works Week and EMS Week recognition they will have on Friday. Dr. Grant said they would be observing EMS and Public Works Week on Friday.

Commissioner Holt said she did not question Item numbers 5 & 6 to be pulled for discussion. She said Joel Sampson has already written up a plan for a shelter for the Stevens School site. As she has mentioned before, the County does not handle schools, the County was not licensed for that. She said they were trying now to get a location for a special shelter since there are cases of Covid-19 and if there was a hurricane, the cases could not be combined and they have to look at other facilities. The only place they currently have is the high school. They need to look at those things. She said they need to look at three different types of shelters, general needs, special needs and one for virus patients. She said Mr. Sampson was the County architect and gets all in-house contracts that was done. But they were also supposed to do bidding at a certain point and they have to look at other companies to be fair.

She stated they need a grant writer.

She said on the masks and issues, there is a Health Council and they need to be contacted. They have to look beyond the cases and look at economic development of the County and how things can be spun in a positive light once this thing is over.

Commissioner Taylor said two things: With regards to items 5 & 6, Stevens School, she wanted to make sure they were moving forward on those items, work should have been done months ago.

She asked if there was a sizeable donation of masks to the County and she asked that it be looked into. Freddie Figgers said he made a donation of 50,000, said he had given to Health Department, River Chase, Sheriff Department, and the City of Quincy.

Commissioner Taylor then asked things were coming with regards to head hunting for the Administrator. Dr. Grant said he was told today was the deadline for applications and did not know how many applications had been received.

Commissioner Taylor said some of the Department heads that used to come to meetings cannot come but could participate through Zoom and they could get answers. She said she did not know if it was an inconvenience, but thought would be a great idea if they were available.

Dr. Grant said he would take the blame; he asked the ones that had agenda items to join in the meeting but he could ask that they all attend.

Commissioner Holt said if they were on Zoom, they could still answer questions and was better to have the directors available. She asked if there was anything new from the Governor's meeting on the re-opening of the State that affected them.

COUNTY ATTORNEY

10. Updates

Mr. Knowles said there had not been a substantive update since last week; they did receive a request from one short-term vacation rentals in town to re-open and that is permitted pursuant to Executive Order 123. He said it required for Dr. Grant to provide a Plan and letter authorizing such action to Secretary Beshears. He said Pat Thomas Park was open for fishing and the boat dock but not currently open for camping and has been requested that the Pavilions be opened

for Memorial Day but people maintain personal and social distancing and guests could park RV's at that location.

Commissioner Holt said Chair Viegbesie stated if percentages went up, they may need to re-address things on Friday and she asked if they were. Chair Viegbesie said since she referred to that comment, he said percentages have gone down. He said percentages were at 11.1%.

Commissioner Holt asked compared to what and he said percentages compared to tested to positivity. She said not percentages of tested to percentages of non-tested, so they still did not know what was out there; the number of cases had gone up.

Commissioner Holt said she was talking about the number that increased since last week.

Commissioner Taylor said she was a little off-centered because the meeting time was moved because the Chair could not be there, but they have a Vice-Chair, at times she is a little heavy-handed, but she knew how to run a meeting. At that meeting, two things were announced. Could they bring up things now that happened Friday? Chair Viegbesie said that question was for the Administrator and Commissioner Taylor said she was asking the Attorney.

Mr. Knowles said he would direct that to the Chair, it was their dais, but he was happy to answer.

She wanted to make sure they were not outside Robert's Rules and not outside their scope of items to be discussed because it was not an agendaed item and felt it was a legal question she wanted answered.

Mr. Knowles said if they were taking board action, it would need to be noticed but if they were having a discussion it was their chambers...

Commissioner Taylor said she wanted to take a vote because she thought that was an option tonight. She said going back to her point from last Friday, they just became the laughing stock of the County. She said two or three things happened at that meeting; 1) they announced there had been a fatality from the virus, and an increase in the number of cases and then they relaxed the mask mandate. What made people start laughing was the fact that after they took down the mandate and then "strongly recommend", they ordered more masks and they became laughing stock. She said "I have to give it up, I am not a fan, never been of Commissioner Holt, but I must salute you, young lady, for what you did, or tried to do to keep this County safe, the argument from my understanding you put up. Again, that's why I'm coming from up here because I got upset that the meeting was moved instead of us doing what we normally do. That's why I'm leaving. The meeting was moved instead of us going on with the Vice-Chair. I did not come. I want to put it back on the floor for another vote and that makes it look even worse because now we are flip-flopping and I don't want to be a part of that." She said she could not understand how intelligent people could vote that item down with the indicator that was mentioned at the past meeting was so clear that bringing the mandate down was not an option. She said the only word she thought of was political posturing. She said she was not going to relax the rules. Everyone with good conscience was putting masks on their face. She asked if they were spending County money smart and being frugal. She said "they" talked about how strong Commissioner Holt was and how disappointed "they" were and said she was too and

would like to bring this back for a vote. She asked what were they telling the public. She said she would wait until Friday but wanted to be able to say she wanted the masks back to be mandatory. She added she cared about the safety of people. To do anything else right now was asinine.

Commissioner Hinson said this was on point with Commissioner Taylor. He said normally the meeting was scheduled for 10 am and was moved to 1 pm and it changed the whole dynamics and complexity of the Board. His heartburn was the week prior to that was the mask issue. The Board stated they were going to bring in 5,000 more masks for the citizens and thanked the Board for doing that.

Chair Viegbesie said the meeting was moved to 1 pm, there was nothing constitutionally that stated the meeting was to always be at 10 am. The regular meetings are 6:00 p.m. on first and third Tuesdays of the month, constitutionally. This was not the first emergency this County has had. He said he could not recall during the hurricane that the Commission had a regular meeting to review the Ordinances were being made. If the meeting time changes, there was no violation of the policy of the Board. He said he was not able to make the meeting at 10 am and staff made the change. If that gave someone heartburn, they could call him whatever they have called him before, that was not something secret because some of them have referred to him (when he wrote the letter) as “dictator”. He said they have their opinion and the right to it and he was not going to allow that to be (inaudible).

Commissioner Morgan said he would share with the Board what the citizens were looking for was for the Board to be unified and put together a common sense plan, move forward; everyone has the best interests and well-being of the citizens in mind. He added just because someone did not believe in a mask mandate did not mean it was a stupid opinion in his opinion. He did not think they needed a mask mandate because it was something they could not afford, if someone wanted to wear one, they would. He said he did not vote to buy more masks because Dr. Cooksey said there were enough masks on hand. He added it was ok if they disagreed on decisions, to just do so in a professional manner with the leadership everyone was looking for them to have.

Chair Viegbesie said he also wanted to point out morality was something you could not legislate. Morality was how people see right from wrong. Smoking marijuana was legislated as illegal but people still saw as a right thing to do. He further stated he believed that they, as people, did not need legislature to make them do what was right, no legislation that says when you go to the bathroom, when you come out, wash your hands, it was just the right thing to do. It was good for them to wear masks to be safe. Before the mandate there was people having block parties all over the County without masks and because of that, we had a mandatory mask in place.

Commissioner Taylor said they took an oath of office to protect this County to the best of their abilities as a primary, not secondary. This pandemic is something this County has never seen before. If there is a divide, it must be professionally done. She maintained a professional décor when she spoke what she felt with regard to the masks being considered highly recommended. She said shared public comments and remained professional. She stated it was uncanny to her that all of a sudden, asking people to wear masks was uncalled for when there was a majority vote with the exception of Commissioner Morgan for three to five meetings where they joined in asking people to wear the masks. She said it made no sense when reporting data that being

reported at that meeting and then take such a vote. Stores are saying unless you have a mask on, you can't come in. She said there is no Statute on meeting time but there was a Statute in Robert's Rules that when the Chair was not available, the Vice-Chair takes over the meeting. That is a Statute, that is in Robert's Rules, that is what they follow. She said they have the right to be in disagreement and she was in disagreement. She said they need to look at the proxy where all the position is given to the Chair. She said this was a functioning, active Board that was to hear situations that they were supposed to hear, not one individual. She added they have had opportunities to meet, they could discuss the items and they need to look at them, bring them to the Board and not to an individual. Then said she had to go to work.

Chair Viegbesie said to the attorney, the policy and procedure of County says the County Administrator is one that determined items that was to go on the Agenda. He said if anyone wanted the gavel, they could have it and they could run the County the way they thought it should be run right now. He said if his being Chair becomes an issue for anyone, anyone could have it.

Commissioner Holt said if they were not voting on the item, they needed to move on.
Commissioner Morgan said Amen.

Commissioner Holt asked what guidelines were they going to use for businesses to reopen?
CDC has guidelines, they need something in place.

Commissioner Taylor left the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

She said she had two candidates for Planning, Charles Hayes and Ms. Lee. She said people needed a training program in place for them.

She wanted to reiterate, this (masks) should go to the Health Council.

Building Inspection.

She said there were real problems there. She said they need a board to look at issues in that department. Maybe use a check-off sheet.

Mr. Knowles said he would be happy to get with the Administrator and get back with the Commission on Friday with more information on re-opening.

Commissioner Holt asked what guidelines the Administrator would use to submit for vacation rentals, assumed would be CDC. Mr. Knowles said he would try to get clarity from DBPR, his understanding was if they wanted to re-open short-term vacation rentals, the County Administrator was legally required pursuant to that Executive Order, to submit a plan to DPR, which detailed how the County planned to re-open. She said that was why she asked what guidelines he would use to write that up, she assumed it would be CDC. Mr. Knowles said so far what they had received was a potential plan from the operator of the short-term vacation rental where they detailed their plan. What they proposed was what they (County) would work from in addition to the CDC guidelines. She stated she was interested in the Healthcare part and check CDC to make sure the County was in line because if anyone sued, the Board would be the one sued.

DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS

11. Report and Discussion of Public Issues

Commissioner Eric Hinson, District 1

Commissioner Hinson said as they focus on physical health, May was National Mental Health Awareness Month. He asked if the Health Department could share on Friday what perimeters were in place to help residents that were battling mental health.

He said the County Administrator also shared with him the progress of the bridge between Midway and Quincy and asked him to expound to the Board of the progress. Dr. Grant said he thought the schedule was for it to be completed by the end of July.

Commissioner Hinson asked about the road project between Midway off Brickyard Road that runs into Quincy.

Chair Viegbesie said the Public Works Director was not available, but thought now he would be requiring all the Directors to attend meetings in the future.

Commissioner Hinson said the County Administrator gave him all the information, he wanted to share it. He said they also discussed the mosquitos in Gadsden County and hoped they could resolve that problem too because he had a lot of citizens call him to find out when they would be spraying the area.

Chair Viegbesie said he thought the policy was if a citizen wanted their property sprayed, they make a request and then the property was sprayed.

Commissioner Hinson asked the County Administrator to look into the status of EMS in Midway.

Commissioner Gene Morgan, District 3

Commissioner Morgan said he had no comments.

Commissioner Brenda Holt, District 4

Commissioner Holt said one other thing they had available and had not applied for, was the Criminal Justice Department has several grants. She said she was told there were different categories that may be applied for and they may be able to get funding. She said they need to look at how they could get creative with funding.

She said Commissioner Hinson mentioned mental health, they need to look at marketing for the County for economic development. People were out of jobs and there was nothing saying companies have to re-hire people back.

Commissioner Sherrie Taylor Vice-Chair, District 5

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

Chair Viegbesie said his only comment was, “I would rather most of us don’t attend, don’t run with the rabbits and bark with the dogs. There is no reason for us to be talking from both sides of our mouth. You just heard Commissioner Holt talk about grants and how much money was

out there and there was a lot of money out there. If we really care for the citizens of this County, we all will approve some organization or someone who will help is look for grants, there's millions and millions of dollars out there. So, there is no reason for us to come pontificate, act like we really care but when it comes to voting for what's good for the County, we go the other way. If we really love this County, we'll do the right thing for the citizens. Not just pontificating and posturing and grandstanding. Let us do what is right for the citizens. Again, O said it before, a few minutes ago, if anyone is interested in this gavel to be the Chair and would run it better, I'm willing to let them to have it. So, Mr. Administrator and Mr. Attorney, if you want to explore how to change the policies on election of leadership on this Board, let us consider that. O know election is normally in November. Of you want to consider that, that someone else thing they could do it better, I have no problem letting the gavel go, but I will vote the way my conscience tells me as a Commissioner elected by the people until I decide not to run again or until the citizens decide to not re-elect me. Let's explore that so we can move this gavel to the people who think that they can do a much better work in the leadership of this Board. That is my ...(hitting gavel) and meeting adjourned."

Receipt and File

UPCOMING MEETINGS

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR VIEGBESIE DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:30 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

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

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk