

AT AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MAY 22, 2020 AT 1:00
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
Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Beth Bruner, Deputy Clerk

This meeting was had over audio/conference call during the COVID-19 shutdown.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Viegbesie welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:18 p.m. He asked for a moment for silent prayer, then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

Citizens Requesting to be Heard (3-Minute Limit)

Due to COVID-19 and the efforts of the 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@gadsdencountyfl.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.

1. COVID-19 Resolution 2020-023 Update

(Henry Grant, PhD., Interim County Administrator)

Mr. Knowles explained there was no changes to the Burn Ban Resolution.

The COVID-19 Resolution had 3 proposed changes; 1) Reopen vacation rentals to conform with the Governor. He stated the County would submit a plan to the Governor's office if the Commissioners approved. He stated he was working with the County Administrator to try and get a plan to get vacation rentals reopened as soon as possible. 2) Updating the capacity of retail and commercial businesses from 25% to 50%. 3) Raising the capacity for Restaurants from 25% to 50%. No other changes were proposed.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN MOVED FOR APPROVAL WITH THE UPDATES WITH A SECOND FROM CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE, WITH QUESTION FROM COMMISSIONER TAYLOR.

Commissioner Taylor stated the last time the Board met at 1:00 there were changes with regards to mandatory was changed to strongly recommend the face mask and she wanted to go back

and revisit that particular item. She asked if the change was in the document that was in front of them.

Mr. Knowles said no, it was just presented in the document from last week with updates from the Governor, with the intention of having the Commissioners discuss and vote, and if the Board wanted the change, it would be made.

Commissioner Taylor stated she was in favor of the mandate of the mask. She also asked for updates on test results before she could decide going from 25% to 50%.

Dr. Grant said the count yesterday was 249 positive cases.

Chairman Viegbesie asked Mr. Knowles, with regards to capacity, if the County was changing the capacity from 25% to 50% in accordance to the Governors executive orders.

Mr. Knowles stated it was not mandatory, it was just a suggestion and could stay at 25%.

Commissioner Taylor said the State just started to open and now was talking about 50%. She further stated each County was different and she was glad about the flexibility. She asked if anyone was tracking the increase as the months went past. For example; How much had the positive cases gone up in the past 3 weeks? Is there tracking? Is there a data line to measure? She further stated she did not think there should be more community participation if cases were increasing.

Dr. Grant said he received updates on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesday was 242 and Thursday was 249.

Commissioner Taylor said the BOCC needed to look at the tracking to see where cases were going. She stated a month and a half ago, Gadsden County was at one, and now the number was 249. She said the Board needed to look to see if the trend suited what the Board was doing or if the Board needed to hold their position until a flat curve was hit, like other counties.

Commissioner Holt said the numbers 212-249 was just a few days. People could have gotten infected 14 days from the testing day and just got tested. She thought the BOCC needed a graph to track and asked if Dr. Cooksey was on the line.

Ms. Hannigon, from the Health Department, was on the line and said she would find out Dr. Cooksey could respond.

Commissioner Holt said regarding the time frame of when a person was infected, to the time they were tested, the number went from 212-249 and it looked like it was all in two days but it really was not two days. She stated they could have been infected 14 days ago. The people they were near before they were tested could now be infected. She said she was apprehensive about not having more masks being worn. There stated there was no vaccine, and we need to make it

until there was a cure. She did not feel encouraging people was working. She stated there was a lunch for Public Works and people still wore a mask while getting food and sat separately to eat, showing you can wear a mask into a restaurant. She was still in favor of more people wearing masks and pointed out the CDC and doctors were saying to wear a mask.

Chairman Viegbesie said wearing a mask was the right thing to do. A law was not needed to wear a mask because people knew a mask would save them. Laws do not make people wear masks just like a speed sign does not make people stop speeding. He further stated the County had a mandate and there were still house parties with 500+ people. In his point of view, putting the word mandate on the Resolution was symbolic and there were some things in life where a law was not needed, common sense was needed. He was convinced the citizens of Gadsden County were full of common sense and knew how to do the right thing. Saying you must, would make people rebellious. He thought the word in the Resolution needed to be, "strongly encouraged" and not "mandated".

Commissioner Holt asked Dr. Cooksey about tracking data on the cases reported each day and Dr. Cooksey said yes, she could get that information to the Board. Commissioner Holt stated just like the burn ban, people may burn and break the law and not get caught, but that was law enforcement. If it causes a forest fire, then they cost lives. She stated it was harder to get masks back into place than it was to get rid of them because people did not want to go back. Someone told her the BOCC could not determine what was worn or not worn on her body. She told them that was true and she was not trying to determine what people wore, she was trying to save as many lives as possible until there was a treatment. She said she was ready to vote.

Commissioner Taylor stated no mask was harmful to others. She said 500 people having a block party while there was a mandatory law in place, the law official had the right to go in and break it up and she hoped it was happening. The Board should be driven by data. She wants to move strongly recommend back to mandate and stated she would attend the rest of the meetings from now on. She said common sense should play a part but people were not showing common sense and asked why the mandate was removed during the last meeting, just to turn around and buy masks. She said her primary goal was public safety and wanted the Board to track data before the County was opened any more.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN CALLED THE QUESTION.

COMMISSIONER HINSON- Y

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR- N

COMMISSIONER HOLT- N

COMMISSIONER MORGAN- Y

CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE- Y

MOTION PASSED 3-2 COMMISSIONERS TAYLOR, HOLT OPPOSED

THE CALL TO QUESTION WAS APPROVED 3-2 BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

Chairman Viegbesie stated a vote on the motion of the item would take place now.

Commissioner Taylor asked what item was being voted on.

Chair Viegbesie said they were voting on the motion made by Commissioner Morgan to approve Resolution 20-23 as presented, with a second.

Commissioner Taylor asked what was in the Resolution the Board was voting on.

Chair Viegbesie said the Board was voting on Resolution 20-23 and asked the Attorney when the draft was emailed to Commissioners.

Mr. Knowles answered yesterday evening.

Chair Viegbesie stated everyone had an opportunity to preview the document and Commissioner Taylor stated she had not.

Commissioner Hinson asked if Commissioner Taylor could amend the motion made by Commissioner Morgan.

Chairman Viegbesie said it was up to Commissioner Morgan.

Commissioner Taylor made a friendly amendment to reinstate the mask mandate and stay at 25% capacity until further data was in.

Chairman Viegbesie stated the document had to be completed today and if there was a part that Commissioner Taylor wanted changed, she could make a friendly amendment on specifics to the entire document or make a motion with the changes she wanted and get a second.

Mr. Knowles stated there was no friendly amendment, it was just an amendment.

Commissioner Morgan said he was not interested in an amendment and he would like to see the vote go through.

Mr. Knowles stated what the steps were for votes and amendments. He stated the motion that was on the floor by Commissioner Morgan with a second by Chairman Viegbesie needed to be voted on.

COMMISSIONER HINSON- N

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR- N

COMMISSIONER HOLT- N

COMMISSIONER MORGAN- Y

COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE- Y

MOTION FAILED 2-3 COMMISSIONERS HINSON, TAYLOR, HOLT OPPOSED

THE BOARD VOTED 2-3 BY ROLL CALL VOTE NOT TO APPROVE

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR MADE A MOTION FOR MANDATORY MASKS TO BE WORN IN GADSDEN COUNTY AND TO STAY AT 25% CAPACITY FOR ALL BUSINESSES THAT WERE OPEN, WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HOLT.

Commissioner Holt had no problem with a second to that motion. She thought it may be difficult to reinstate masks. She thought the police and the BOCC needed to sit down together and make a plan. She stated she was willing to back off for a week in order to meet with law enforcement for a plan.

Commissioner Taylor agreed about law enforcement sitting down with the BOCC but thought if the mandate was put back on, it gave the officers more creed to find a method. She wanted to get people in the mindset that the mask was coming back but did not want to wait seven days. She stated she wanted to get the three 3 votes she needed.

Commissioner Holt was willing to hear from the City Manager because the County needed a good plan in place.

Chairman Viegbesie said the Board always had law enforcement input with the Resolution to tell the BOCC how they would enforce changes.

Jack McLane was on the phone and spoke to the Board. He said the City's position was there should be masks. Masks had helped keep numbers down and other places were mandated as well. Less people wear a mask, and because of this, he was concerned the County was going to have more positive cases and possibly deaths. He said the City invested a lot of money in masks and he wanted to see results. He stated the mandate was being enforced and said people wanted to abide by the law. If the BOCC was going to wait, he wanted cities to be given the option to decide themselves. He urged a mask mandate with a unified voice for the whole county.

Commissioner Holt said the Chair and the Manager met with law enforcement but not the whole Board. She wanted to make sure all law enforcement was telling citizens the same thing and make sure everyone was safe. She was in favor of a mandatory mask and that was why she made a second to the motion. She asked what was the percentage of vacation rentals and was it all businesses across the board.

Mr. Knowles said it was currently 50% across the board and Commissioner Taylor's motion was 25%.

Commissioner Holt asked if there were any reports from the 25% of owners, negative or positive. Mr. Knowles said there were requests to allow a higher capacity, typically for vacation rentals.

Commissioner Holt said if people were willing to abide by the rules, regulations, distancing and mask wearing, she had no problem with 50%, but she was concerned with people being too close.

Chairman Viegbesie said he would always wear a mask whether it was mandated or not and hoped others did the same. He urged people to get tested.

Commissioner Taylor wanted data before opening any higher than 25%.

Chairman Viegbesie stated the motion was for 25% capacity opening and a mandatory mask.

COMMISSIONER HINSON- Y

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR- Y

COMMISSIONER HOLT- Y

COMMISSIONER MORGAN- N

CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE- N

**MOTION PASSED 3-2 COMMISSIONERS MORGAN AND CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE OPPOSED
THE BOARD VOTED 3-2 BY ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE**

Chairman Viegbesie asked Mr. Knowles to change Resolution 20-23 to institute mandatory face mask and change the percentage of businesses opening to 25% capacity.

Commissioner Holt said she may need to withdraw her vote. She stated she could not do the 50%. She asked if 50% was capacity or amount of business open.

Mr. Knowles said it was capacity but that was in the presented Resolution.

Commissioner Holt stated she was good when the explanation was given.

Chairman Viegbesie stated wearing of a mask was mandated and 25% capacity of opened businesses.

**2. Extension of Resolution 2020-22 Regarding an Emergency Burn Ban
(Henry G. Grant, PhD, Interim County Administrator)**

COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR.

COMMISSIONER HINSON- Y

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR -Y

COMMISSIONER HOLT- Y

COMMISSIONER MORGAN- Y

CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE- Y

MOTION PASSED 5-0

THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners
May 22, 2020 Emergency Meeting

Commissioner Taylor asked before the next meeting, to get data from Dr. Cooksey and to schedule a meeting with law enforcement officers (multiple municipalities) and the BOCC with a common message.

Commissioner Hinson said at the next budget meeting, he would like to have a discussion about internet access and digital infrastructure and how the citizens that live in unincorporated areas. He asked the Board consider a 4-week program for Summer Youth Employment. He stated Mr. Sapp had called him and wanted to help support the kids. Freddie Figgers had an opportunity at 15 years old and was now worth \$62 million. He wanted to inquire about the local banking systems response to the Rural Business Community for business loans. He asked if there was data that showed or reflected how local business benefited from guaranteed lending to sustain small business employment.

Chairman Viegbesie asked Commissioner Hinson to put those things in writing and send them to the County Administrator and he would explore the answer to give.

Motion to Adjourn

WITH NO FURTHER BUSINESS, CHAIRMAN VIEGBESIE CALLED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 2:19 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

ANTHONY O. VIEGBESIE, PH.D., Chairman

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk