

**AT A SECOND BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD
IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON
JULY 23, 2020 AT 4:00 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 – not present
Sherrie Taylor, District 5
Gene Morgan, District 3 – appeared remotely
Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk
Jeff Price, Sr. Management & Budget Analyst
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Beth Bruner, Deputy Clerk

THIS WORKSHOP WAS HAD DURING THE COVID-19 SHUTDOWN.

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 4:03 pm Chair Viegbesie called the Workshop to order and asked for Silent Prayer and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

Citizens Requesting to be Heard

Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (3-minute limit)

Public comment for Commission meetings can be submitted via email to CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until 10 a.m. on Thursday, July 23, 2020. This allows adequate time for comments to be made part of each meeting’s Official Record and considered carefully by Commissioners and staff. Comments submitted after the deadline, but prior to the meeting, will be added to the official record, but the County cannot guarantee that Commissioners and staff will have adequate time to review comments prior to the meeting.

None were had.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Overview and Summary Highlights (Henry G. Grant, Ph. D., Interim County Administrator/Jeff Price, Sr. Management & Budget Analyst)

Dr. Grant introduced the above item and asked Mr. Price to give the complete overview.

Mr. Price said the itinerary for this meeting would be:

- **Discussion and Direction on Revenues for both FY20 and FY 21 budget years.**
- **Discussion and Direction on the Constitutional Officers Budget Request.**
- **Discussion and Direction on other expenditures.**
-Will need to update Personnel numbers once Medical Insurance 2021 rates are provided.

- **Discussion and Direction on the Non-Profit requests.**
- **Announcement of Public Hearings.**
- **Goal= Balance Budget**

Mr. Price said the first thing he wanted to talk about was Revenue. He started taking the taxes and seeing what the COVID Virus had done to what would have been received this year and see how it would affect next year. State Revenue Sharing was cut in half. County Revenue Sharing prediction estimate from the State was 15% lower than last year based on what may happen with the virus. To get the numbers, he used April and May as the months that the County knew and had information for the virus and compared them to last year and get an idea of how much it had gone down. He stated there was a big unknown and the County was about \$800,000 short in the budget. The State should give all percentages and estimates by tomorrow.

Commissioner Holt asked if it would not be more prudent to do the estimate throughout the year instead of for 3 months. Once the budget was set, it would be for the year. She stated if it was a 15% downturn, where would it be this time next year. That was what estimates were needed. If programs were funded, the County needed to know what money was going to be coming in.

Chair Viegbesie asked Mr. Price if the Board should adjust to make it annually, not quarterly.

Mr. Price said yes, as the months came up with June and July (before the end of September), he would get the best numbers and work it out for the whole 2021 fiscal year.

Commissioner Holt asked Mr. Price, with that being the case, by September, money had already been put into categories for funding. The Board needed to know something before money was placed in those areas. She asked for just a projection based on what was known now, before the next meeting.

Commissioner Morgan stated it was hard to hear Mr. Price and he may have missed something. He asked if the 15% for the entire fiscal year or just a period of time.

Mr. Price said 15% was the estimate from the State of Florida and it represented taxes and their average. He said he would redo the numbers as more came in.

Commissioner Morgan said the County could not wait on numbers and they needed to look back and project numbers for this year. He further stated to go ahead and project the Budget and if an amendment had to be made, it could be.

Commissioner Holt asked Mr. Price if there was a trend in the State that the Board could look at that showed the way Revenues were going for gas tax or tourism or anywhere the County would get Revenue from and if he would provide charts or graphs for the next meeting. She asked him to do the 15% projection.

Mr. Price said yes.

Mr. Price said the next topic was Constitutional Officers.

Commissioner Morgan stated the Constitutional Officers' Budget was self-explanatory. He agreed with the recommendations.

Chair Viegbesie agreed and asked if there were any other questions.

Commissioner Holt asked what the increases were for.

Mr. Price said the Clerk had personnel increases and an upgrade of computer software. The Sheriff needed more deputy and vehicles. He further stated the Constitutionals themselves would have more detail.

Commissioner Holt asked if Information Systems was technology. Mr. Price said yes.

Commissioner Holt asked if any of those increases would be paid for with the Cares Act money. Mr. Price-said he would look at that.

Commissioner Holt asked if the line that read Detention was for the jail maintenance or Employees.

Mr. Price said it was for raises.

Commissioner Holt asked if anything was turned in for COVID from Corrections/Detention.

Mr. Price said not that was noted. He was not sure if it was asked for but he could go back and ask.

Commissioner Holt asked what the increase was for Court Services.

Mr. Price said it was for pay increases for bailiffs. He did not think they were asked about the CARES Act money either.

Commissioner Holt had a question for Clerk Thomas. She stated for the employees, she always tells the Board the Finance Department was funded under the BOCC budget, she asked if there was a State Statute saying Finance was under the Clerk.

Clerk Thomas said of course. He further stated sometimes, over the years, the Board made that argument but the answer is you are wrong on that.

Commissioner Holt asked if they were funded out of the BOCC or the Clerk budget.

Clerk Thomas said the BOCC was the Governing body and responsible to fund part of the Clerk's budget just like they fund the Sheriff or the Property Appraiser, but (the Board) does not say 'Sheriff those are my debt fees' or 'Property Appraiser, those are my appraisers'. The Clerk is the Comptroller and constitutionally have duties that the BOCC is required to fund. He further stated that she had made statements over the years that were wrong but he did not want to argue with her. There was a mistake about his request. He stated he was not asking for 2 positions. First, he wanted to say, as Clerk, he would accept the recommendation to hold all the Constitutionals flat. He further stated if the BOCC was doing that, he would not make an argument for additional money if they were holding everyone flat. He wanted to go on the record saying "yes, there was a \$40,000 request for upgrade of finance software and operating with out of date finance software was a potential audit comment and want to go on record and make sure I made that request to you." Clerk Thomas further stated the request was wrong and he was not asking for 2 people in IT, the Statute was being stated that required the BOCC to fund the Clerk's IT. In the original request they were, but has stated he would accept the recommendation to stay flat. The original request recommendation up in Finance dealt with Tax Deeds, this was something the BOCC had gotten a freebie from him over the years. His Assistant, whom the BOCC did not fund, had been doing the Tax Deeds for the County for years. He stated it was a full-time job in itself. It helped the entire County, the Board, School Board and other municipalities as the process to keep property taxes, in conjunction with the Tax Collector, to keep the County earning money off property taxes even when people did not pay them. He further stated, at a previous meeting there were inaccurate statements about his requests. The only part about his request that dealt with personnel was to help with the Tax Deed process which has become huge and was a job in itself and was so important to the County, School Board and other municipalities getting that revenue. Clerk Thomas wanted to go back to the point of he would accept the recommendation if all Constitutionals were being held flat. He stated that would a cut for him because it did not include money for health insurance that went up every year and did not include money for retirement. In the past they have held Constitutionals flat or at least the Clerk. That means the Clerk's office had to absorb the increase in costs and that was problematic because they usually do not hold their own County Departments, they cover their increases in insurance and retirement. Just a point for the record he wanted to make and stated again that if every Constitutional was held flat, he had no choice but to accept that.

Commissioner Holt stated the debatable point was whether Finance Department should come out of the County budget or the Clerk budget. She was saying the County Budget should be separate from Constitutionals. She was asking for clarity.

Clerk Thomas stated concerning the funding off of interest, the Legislature ended funding from interest years ago so that was a non-issue. The Clerk funded part of the Finance Department that deals with the Clerk. The Clerk had a budget, BOCC funded a part of that. Court was the biggest part; it was fee based and one and a half employees worked that. The Clerk did a lot for the Felony board. They do the Supervisor of Elections books and Property

Appraisers books. The BOCC was required to fund that. The request was about what the BOCC was required to fund.

Commissioner Holt stated she had no problem with that. If 15% was cut, she did not mind cutting everyone else 15% as well. She further stated she asked about Finance for a reason, and stated they could discuss it after the meeting.

Clerk Thomas stated the Clerks' Budget was very complicated and Finance was a big part of it and it did not even come before the Board, it went before the State.

Chair Viegbesie stated to Mr. Price, was there anyone who worked in the Clerk's office that would be in the Personnel budget for the County, like the Budget Director. He asked if she was an employee under the County or the Clerk's office. He heard in the conversation that the Budget Director was an employee under the County and not the Clerk. Commissioner Holt corrected him and said it was Finance not Budget.

Mr. Price said she was a Clerk employee.

Chair Viegbesie asked if that expenditure was part of the Clerks requested Budget, and it was.

Clerk Thomas stated the BOCC had Mr. Price and the clerk had their own. Part was funded by the County.

Chair Viegbesie stated he did not understand that, but he knew the conversation had come up at some point during discussions and that was why he was asking now. He further stated he was glad the clerk had entered into record a clarification of what the Office of budget and Management did and what the Finance Director did and what organizational structure the Finance Director was under.

Commissioner Holt stated if it was the Clerk's employee it should be funded out of that department.

Clerk Thomas said a small portion of the Clerks' Finance Department, 1.5 FTE's was funded out of the Clerks' State portion of the budget who deals with just clerk issues, the BOCC does not fund that 1.5 FTE's.

Mr. Price said next was the Other Expenditures page and was what was looked at each year. County Auditing and Attorney went up with the virus. Medical Examiner went up about 5% the others were standard and did not go up except Medicaid and Senior Citizens went up a little due to insurance on the building. Concerning Non- Profits, Mr. Price stated there were applications received after the deadline if the Board wished to include them.

Chair Viegbesie said he had a recommendation. He asked the amount North Florida Legal Services asked for because he did not see it on the handout.

Mr. Price stated they did not hand in an application asking for funding.

Chair Viegbesie stated with this year, the County needed to support NFLS but they did not turn in an application. He was also looking at GCDC/Economic Development. He suggested that GCDC get bumped up. He stated the GCDC building (County building now) used to have traffic and now that building was abandoned and the BOCC needed to figure out how to add a little to GCDC.

Commissioner Morgan said he had no problem with the first page of Non-Profits. He further stated it was inappropriate and unfair to the Non-Profits who submitted the application on-time to consider those past the deadline. When the Board was looking at a 15% reduction in revenue, he asked the Board to not consider increases to additional non-profits this year because it was going to be a rough revenue year.

Chair Viegbesie also supported not giving after the deadline has passed if the application was not in. He further stated he still thought NFLS should be funded some even though they did not submit an application.

Commissioner Morgan stated the CARES Act would have money for GCDC and the Chamber, and they would be okay.

Commissioner Holt said if Non- Profits were coming out of the CARES Act Money it should be no more than they would get otherwise. She was not in favor of Legal Services of North Florida getting funding for the deed situation for housing. The County did not need to be involved in that. With heir property, they were talking about going to court and the County could not afford to take cases to court for heir property. She further stated the citizens would need legal advice on things and would not be able to use the County Attorney for everything. She said sometimes you are not looking if they applied on time, but the need of the county. Legal Services may be a need instead of a want for the County. The County had \$2 million to move in housing, you have the people to move it, but when they stall, then it would have to be first come first serve on those programs, but not to take care of heir property situations.

Chair Viegbesie said since legal services did not turn in an application, but given the cause, they have families with heir property and other problems. He stated he would support giving to Legal Services. He questioned what that would do to the others who had not submitted applications and Mr. Price just said there was an organization that submitted but it was past the deadline.

Commissioner Holt stated Commissioners were for people, not to just look at programs. If there was a need for the people, the Board should step up. A Non-Profit just came and applied. If there was a need, then it should have support.

Chairman Viegbesie asked Mr. Price about Summer Youth Jobs. Chair Viegbesie said he understood \$50,000 for FY 2020 was there on reserve without any revocation and whatever was approved for FY 2021 would be added to the 2020 for the FY 2021.

Mr. Price answered, if that was what the Board wanted, yes.

Chair Viegbesie stated that was the understanding and that was what was agreed upon. If it was agreed upon at the end of the process and approved it would be \$100,000 plus the \$50,000 from 2020.

Commissioner Morgan asked if the total funding for FY 2021 would be \$100,000. That was what he understood and what he agreed to.

Chairman Viegbesie stated if that was what the Board wished, but no, he was saying \$150,000 total. He asked Mr. Price how he had it set up.

Mr. Price said it was handled that the unused \$50,000 would be added to the \$50,000 for FY 2021 for a total of \$100,000 unless the board wanted to do more or less.

Commissioner Morgan stated that was also his understanding.

Commissioner Taylor stated the projected revenue was asked about and she saw a revenue sheet with gas tax, tourism tax.

Mr. Price stated Commissioner Holt wanted detail.

Commissioner Taylor thanked the Clerk for his explanation. She stated the Constitutional Officers staying flat was the way to go. She further stated looking at other expenditures, the Attorneys increase could be absorbed by the CARES Act. She thought others could be as well. She asked if the Medicaid bill could be absorbed under the CARES Act. GCDC was asking for too much in the CARES Act. They were asking for \$100,000 each. They stopped the after-school program in January of 2020, so she did not know how B&G Club had pulled dollars down, if they just pulled the full amount down whether the services were rendered or not. There were only 4 months of B&G Club so she did not know how the money was spent but questioned if the County needed to fully fund that particular organization because they did not know when school would start back. She stated she agreed with looking at contractual services with North Florida Legal Services but also wanted to see something happen with housing because there were too many people that had issues with having a clear deed. She asked Dr. Grant to take a look at how to take the CARES Act money and look at some items, they may off set some items. The Sheriff needed a reason to use COVID dollars. She said the Attorney, for sure, could be paid with CARES Act dollars.

Dr. Grant stated all of the reimbursements had already been submitted for reimbursement through the CARES Act. Some things in the budget may be covered but would not know until the County had a plan to submit.

Chair Viegbesie stated EMS was in the Budget and the ambulances approved on Tuesday could fall under the CARES Act and come out of the budget.

Dr. Grant explained the County could not pull things out of the Budget until the County approved a plan to submit.

Commissioner Taylor stated Mr. Price said some things could come out of the budget and they were increased because of COVID and could be covered by the CARES Act.

Dr. Grant stated an acceptable plan was needed and submitted to be approved before things could be pulled out of the budget.

Commissioner Taylor stated the County already knew they could get reimbursed as long as it was billed between now and December, so to say there was no plan or nothing was in place was incorrect. The County knew what the CARES money could be spent on. She asked why the County could not say this was due to COVID and not be entertained in the budget. She said she did not support GCDC or the Chamber. She stated the amount of money going to different people was ridiculous. Use the money to offset the budget. The Clerk was asking for \$40,000 for IT (software), make sure he had what he needed, he would get a large sum of the CARES Act money.

Commissioner Morgan stated the Administrator and County Staff were in a tough spot. He had to plan a budget like there was no CARES Act. The Integrity Group would lead. After an initial plan was submitted, the BOCC could go back and make adjustments, but not until.

Commissioner Taylor stated there was \$8 million guaranteed money and an Interim that was aware what it could be spent for and a budget there was a shortfall in. She further stated it was a given to look to see where could be compensation made. The County just spent money on 2 ambulances with no plan, and it came from CARES Act money. This was a time sensitive issue and the BOCC would be spending the next month on the budget. The BOCC had to talk about both at the same time. The Integrity Group was waiting for the BOCC to tell them what was wanted. The Budget was a road map to know how the CARES Act money needed to be spent.

Chair Viegbesie asked the County Administrator and Budget Director to take a look at what Commissioner Taylor said and the BOCC could then do what they needed.

Commissioner Holt said The Integrity Group was supposed to sit down with the board first, then the board would know if CARES Act money could be used to balance the budget. If you could not, it was not worth talking about. The County was asked to hand in projects, that was

not what the BOCC was supposed to do, they were supposed to study the document first and then make a plan. She further stated she did not agree with paying some of the people in the document received the other night or with some of the amounts. She said she asked EMS about the need to disinfect their vehicles. She asked if the Sheriff needed that too and stated no one knew because the BOCC had not talked to the Sheriff's department, the Manager did, not the board. She further stated the BOCC needed to meet with Integrity again tomorrow and again next week to finish up.

Chair Viegbesie said the BOCC could not use CARES money to balance the budget.

Commissioner Morgan said the BOCC needed to approach this budget session like there was no CARES Act money available. It was two separate pots. He further stated the board could still approve a Budget, assuming there was zero dollars from CARES. Today's meeting would have zero to do with CARES Act money. The BOCC was wasting time talking about CARES Act dollars when an upcoming budget was trying to be put together.

Attorney Knowles stated as part of his contract, 10 hours per month were pro-bono, and the board could direct him to use that on citizens to help with probate. He would explore that and see if that would work while not costing the County any more money.

Commissioner Holt asked Mr. Knowles to check with North Florida Legal Services about intake. Mr. Knowles said he would.

Mr. Price said the next Budget workshop was Aug 20; Sept. 10 was a Public hearing and another September 21.

Chairman Viegbesie suggested the Aug 10 Budget Workshop should be to clean up the Budget, after that was a Public Hearing and he would not encourage the BOCC to use a Public hearing to add and subtract.

Commissioner Holt said this budget needed to look at holding everyone flat, and that would only work if the BOCC could stay flat. She stated more info was needed from the Budget Department before Aug 20 showing what the revenue looked like.

Mr. Price said he should have something by August 15th

Commissioner Holt did not see funding programs like last year. Quincy Shuttle needed a fogger to disinfect with.

Chair Viegbesie said he had discussed a fogger with the County Administrator this morning for disinfecting vehicles and buildings.

Commissioner Holt there was a liability if the county did not disinfect buildings and vehicles, and have sheets to sign off on that they were cleaned.

Dr. Grant asked if the shuttles were under the County Jurisdiction.

Commissioner Holt stated the county was funding them and should get with them and find out. This building needed it anyway and anything else the county had any say so over.

Dr. Grant said as far as the building, he was working on that. Librarians were brought back and trained by EMS to do temperature checks and other items as people come in the building. Also, a sheet to sign off on disinfecting rooms/buildings.

Commissioner Morgan stated everything discussed was CARES Act dollars and not to do with the budget.

Commissioner Holt said the county was responsible today whether there were CARES Act money or not. She was talking about not being prepared.

Commissioner Morgan stated the BOCC knew what was being received and everything being talked about was covered under CARES Act dollars.

Commissioner Taylor stated the Spreadsheet in front of her was documentation of expenditures and could be used for reimbursement. She stated the County was not responsible for the shuttle disinfection, but could it be off set and get it out of the budget.

Dr. Grant stated he would look at anything the board wanted.

Chair Viegbesie stated the County could provide citizens services they needed and still be able to afford other services.

Commissioner Holt said she was talking about the liability part. Where the money came from was different. If the County was funding a form of transportation and something happened to the people, the County would be on the hook. If transportation needed something, the board needed to know if the County was liable. She further stated what she did not see in the Budget was Temporary workers. People were calling in because they had to go to quarantine. The county may need to look at something in the Budget on how the County was going to handle that. If people were out for weeks, the jobs still needed to be done. If Road and Bridge had 10 people out, those roads did not get cut.

Chair Viegbesie asked Mr. Price if the book handed out was a workbook.

Mr. Price stated it was a workbook and the next one to come out would be more final and those could be handed in.

Commissioner Taylor asked the attorney if there was a Hold Harmless Clause in contracts that eliminated the County from being liable.

Mr. Knowles answered most of the time it was up to the individual contracting authorities and he would address that moving forward.

Commissioner Holt wanted the Attorney to also look at that for the Summer Youth and Non-profits.

ADJOURN

Chair Viegbesie adjourned the meeting at 5:31 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

ANTHONY O. VIEGBESIE PH.D., Chairman

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk