

AT A DISASTER RECOVERY WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON JULY 24, 2020 AT 3:00
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-appeared remotely
Gene Morgan, District 3-appeared remotely
Sherrie Taylor, District 5
Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m., asked everyone to bow their heads for a moment of silence and 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.

Chair Viegbesie read aloud the COVID-19 statement.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Dr. Grant said The Integrity Group would be presenting items 2, 3, 4, and 5 today.

2. Overview of Funding Programs

Gary Yates, The Integrity Group, appeared before the Board.

Olivia Schmidt appeared remotely and introduced herself.

Frederica Hamilton appeared before the Board and introduced herself.

3. Timeline of Project

4. BOCC Review Spreadsheet of Projects

Mr. Yates re-appeared before the Board and said he wanted to talk about the CARES Act. He said the County had received the first \$1.9 of the \$7.9 Million they are to receive. He stated the other allocation the County was set to receive was the State CARES Act for \$175,000 from the Florida Housing Finance Authority for people that were behind in rent and mortgages.

Eric Miller appeared before the Board and said the State of Florida was given over \$150 Million and they apportioned \$75 Million for component of local government and the County's allocation

was \$175,000 and was based on a population-based formula. He said they were provided the allocation spreadsheet a couple of days ago.

Mr. Yates said the second part was FEMA Public Assistance Program. He said the only FEMA piece that could be used for lost revenue was the Community Disaster Loan up to \$5 Million that they could assist in doing an application for and was specifically for lost revenue the County may have suffered related to COVID 19.

He then stated the last one was HUD CDBG piece and felt a realistic target for Gadsden County was between \$30-40 Million and broadband solution, which may be between \$8-10 Million, would be an excellent candidate for HUD funding as well as the hospital issues and some of the other infrastructures.

He said they wanted to focus on today was to go through a refined list of the projects that would be in the CARES Act category, get the plan approved and once approved, can focus on the protocols. He then showed the portal that was built for the grant process.

He explained the spreadsheet and the different grant programs that would be available.

He said last week several people talked about the interest of involving non-profit organizations and members of the community to help with outreach. He said they could help pass out masks, disinfectants, information on available grants, application forms and written material regarding COVID 19 and solutions. He discussed other ideas, plans and allocations for use of the funds for the County.

He said a couple of communities had provided a needs list for the Municipal Passthrough Funding and \$1,517,316.00 had been set aside for the municipalities.

He mentioned the FEMA Community Disaster loan and the maximum allowable is \$5 Million. He said they had not done the analysis yet but put for a working number \$2 Million for the County. He said the loan could be forgiven after three years.

He said they would like a response from the Board and hopefully could come up with items on the CARES list that needed to be removed, modified or any new items that needed to be listed.

5. Discussion of Recommended Improvements/Modifications

Chair Viegbesie said there were citizens that have requested to speak.

Antonio Jefferson appeared remotely. He said there were some needs that were greater than the per capita amount established but wanted to work with the County to establish whatever that may be. He said they felt it was critical that all resources that could be placed into the communities and be allowed to be placed there to give the cities the opportunity to provide the services.

Beth Cicchetti, GCDC, appeared remotely and said was speaking on behalf of GCDC, the Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce and the Big Bend Minority Chamber of Commerce. They had proposed three components to the grant program and the six municipal managers along with the County Manager had met and put a proposal together but it appeared a couple of the

recommendations had been cut. One was a grant to individuals for workforce training. She realized there was some concern about the small business program and did not think it received fair treatment in terms of impact. She said they would be working with a lender that would have a long-term relationship with the businesses and training them on how to use their credit and improve their credit score. She said the proposed lender was Northwest Florida Black Business Investment Corporation.

Chair Viegbesie stepped out at 3:48 p.m.

Jack McLean, City of Quincy Manager, appeared remotely before the Board. He discussed a letter that was forwarded to the Board. They have requested the calculation method be based on per capita basis for each city of the \$7.9 Million. The letter gave a listing of the City's reimbursable costs for a grand total of \$722,683.03.

Marva Davis, Esquire, appeared remotely before the Board. She asked they review her letter she submitted regarding County CARES Act Implementation Plan.

Brad Johnson, Havana Town Manager, appeared remotely. He said the Town of Havana provides utilities to 1700 people and utilities was one of the largest expenses that households face. He said he thought the municipalities would be a good partner for the County. (There was an issue with the connection and Chair Viegbesie asked Mr. Johnson to forward his comments to the County Administrator to incorporate his recommendations.)

Mr. Yates reappeared before the Board. He said regarding the Worker Training program, it was still on the list and was moved to a FEMA funded project.

Commissioner Holt said she was on a conference call yesterday with several people and suggested several people from each district be appointed to the committee. She said the Health Council was out in the community and could help. She added if they were talking about a first come, first serve grant process, only the ones that would get money would be ones that knew about the process. She hoped the majority of the money could go to those that needed it, were unable to get funding and did not know how to do it. She said they needed to look at how they were going to get people in.

She said to put in non-profits because some of them that do food banks would be the ones out there trying to give food away. She said the proof of qualifications would be hard for the "mom and pops" because if filed on the taxes but did not have an official business and lost income. She added that landlords have lost income because people were unable to pay rent. She added if they were not going to use the money in a loan program, to move it into a program where it could be used.

She asked if they had a contract with any other group and Dr. Grant said there was no other task order.

She then said the Chamber was not giving reports now. She added that Integrity must produce.

Chair Viegbesie said she alluded to and he was going to ask Integrity, was there any minimum qualifying eligibility requirements and qualifying determinants for CARES money and, since this

money was subject to Federal government auditing, could they please produce how to provide this body with the minimum eligibility requirements and determinants for qualifying.

Commissioner Hinson said there were five things he wanted to touch on: broadband services; telecommunications; small business grants; homelessness; youth employment and refurbishing the hospital and they needed hospital beds.

He added they needed to have another meeting without Integrity and talk about what the Board wanted and bring Integrity back at a later date. He felt they were a very smart group but the Board needed to jump in front of this.

Commissioner Taylor said she had questions first. As far as funding, she appreciated the new list that was presented, however, with regards to the hospital build-out, yes, do it today. She added that this was a workshop and things could not be voted on today. She said there was a need for the build-out and for equipment and felt there was a need to increase the amount for that area.

Legal Services

She said the Board worked on their budget yesterday and CARES Act has indicated it could go back as far as March 1st and look at expenditures the County has had and get reimbursed through CARES. She would like for legal services that has been paid out to be looked at; transportation; janitorial services; health department; just gave the Sheriff's Department up to \$20,000 for security when they were doing testing and was refundable as well as the cost for the people to come to the testing sites and do the vaccines.

She concurred with the Commissioners when it came to small businesses and Attorney Davis when it came to small businesses and the loans. That amount of money needed to be enhanced.

Hotspots for internet service, there was need for them and needed to look at a cost for that.

Chair Viegbesie stepped out at 4:34 p.m.

Residential Funding

She said what was talked about earlier was qualifications for business applicants and residential applicants. For businesses, they needed to be licensed, if not, if been in business for two years, get a license. When they give money to businesses, they then become liable, they should look at liability insurance to cover themselves and the County to cover themselves. She said she wanted the ones that have been genuinely affected by this to reap the benefits.

For rent and the residents, she wanted to see a letter from the landlord and/or mortgage holder.

On the list was the Sheriff's Dispatch Control Center and Communications. The County paid for that already and if they could recoup if they were purchased for after March.

IT

She said it was needed everywhere; in the law enforcement office, health department, with cities and with County Government and at the constitutional offices.

Supplies

She said they needed PPE's, cleaning equipment, and supplies.

Allocations for cities

She did not think the allocations was fair. She said she knew there was some forgiveness on utilities during this season and knew there were customers that could not pay their bills. Would the City of Quincy still hold them responsible for their bills in moving forward or were they forgiven completely and taken off the book?

Vice Chair Holt asked if Mr. McLean was still on and she asked if they had an electric arrears forgiveness program. He said they had 90 days service where they did not collect and they have some still in the same situation now.

Chair Viegbesie returned at 4:40 p.m.

Commissioner Taylor said there was still a bill but the City was giving them an opportunity to pay and everyone was not on a forgiveness program.

She said she would like to see with the City of Quincy, add an additional \$25,000 to Quincy, Midway, Havana, and Chattahoochee where they have water and electricity to help them with interest they may have had to pay (from buying the power and water) and \$12,500 to Gretna and \$25,000 to Greensboro.

With regards to TCC, they were re-tooling and knew they have gotten their dollars and did not think they needed money from the County. They needed to do it in consultations but not give them money where they have already been included in the CARES Act.

Integrity

\$800,000 was a lot of money to be given out for their services but they did have an agreement with them, but did not have a task order and no deliverables. Dr. Grant cleared it up and said there was no agreement with any other company. He was not saying there was no task order from Integrity.

Commissioner Taylor continued and said she wished the Commission would consider deliverables. She wanted a group that could produce deliverables and make sure things were being done.

Chair Viegbesie said there were things he thought they could be reimbursed from federally funded subaward and grant that they could receive and was other sources they would be able to get reimbursement for some expenses they have already incurred with regard to COVID 19 and not take from the CARES money.

Commissioner Taylor said they knew FEMA funding and HUD money was a shot in the dark and they did not know for sure they would get it. She said they needed to have that money in their coffers before September in order to balance their budget.

Chair Viegbesie said they were going to agenda the agreement for the August 4th meeting to be approved and this was a different source of money that was coming down the pipe they have just become aware of and was not FEMA.

Commissioner Taylor said the only concern was the money has to be spent by December. She asked how they were going to do this. Like the hospital build-out; do they have to wait for a regular meeting and was told yes.

Chair Viegbesie said he was leaning towards having a workshop next week and then a special meeting on Friday.

Commissioner Holt asked for Integrity, if they were requesting something they had already gotten federal funding for, how would they handle that?

Mr. Miller said they would work to ensure there was no double-dipping. He said the HUD grant application was an application and they would win lots of money because they were good at it but was an application. The FEMA money, the County was an eligible candidate and was nothing that had been mentioned or on the list that was not clearly reimbursable by FEMA. The idea on the utility losses was great but the one condition they could not do with CARES Act was use it for lost revenue but was a way around that where they could work with the right cities and officials where an individual could get a grant to spend on the utility bill.

Dr. Grant said in connection with what they said, the County would take care of the utility problems and rent. Money to the cities was for anything outside of what the County could provide.

Eric Miller reappeared before the Board and stated the perimeters of use for the CARES Act was for broader than FEMA and HUD CDBG. They were only putting three requirements with the exception of the Single Audit Act. The three perimeters were that it must be unbudgeted; related to COVID-19 or the effects of COVID-19 and the time perimeters between March 1st and December 30th. He said the local governments were to set the perimeters for use. There are some additional requirements that FDEM put in the funding agreement, the quarterly reports and a close-out that was due 60 days after that.

With the duplication of benefits, that was in their task order and always in their standard task order when they have a government client.

With citizens and businesses, they recommended an attestation that they have not, the loan programs were quite expensive.

Task Orders and Deliverables

Some of the major tasks were shown in the timeline but their task orders were pretty explicit and stated all the tasks they have been assigned and if they did not perform to satisfaction, did not deserve payment. The task order was their guiding light and can be amended as see fit.

Commissioner Holt said she did not mind staying here, if they did it now they did not have to worry about it later. With the hospital, she noticed it was under HUD and thought that was good. She said they could get 25% out of CARES and the other out of HUD if they could get a timeline and push it in that area. If it was set up as a hospital, it could be used as such later. She said they have to have a critical access destination and Capital Regional held the license on that. She added they could get funding if they had that critical access designation.

They have to have a marketing plan right away that said they have an evacuation plan because if they took families to the shelter and they had the virus, others could get infected there.

For the School Board, they need to find out if they could do a match for them.

6. Demonstration of Gadsden Grant Application Portal

Mr. Miller said they could now show the portal they have built, it was not finalized yet but wanted Jeremy Tidwell to show them. He said he had not heard anything they had not covered but just needed to embellish their description to everyone understood all the issues that were brought up were covered. He liked the idea of bumping up the hospital from \$275,000 to \$600,000 or \$700,000 but was their decision. He added the advantages of doing that and getting that designation helped greatly with they start trying to get \$10 or \$20 Million from HUD for a new hospital or a greatly expanded hospital.

Commissioner Taylor concurred that there was a need for another workshop. They need to be careful designating buildings around this county as shelters when it was not certified by Red Cross. She did not want to push back on the hospital build-out. Put some decent funding toward it and make sure whomever puts together specs for it considers the needed portals that will be needed.

She said they needed to find 15% to balance the budget and it was in there and could be taken out of the CARES Act. She said she could appreciate what Integrity can do, but wanted to see a timeline instead of the “bubbles” that was provided.

She said Commissioner Holt mentioned the “babysitter”, she wanted the babysitter to be qualified but earmark funding to get her established and get licensed to she could certify herself.

Mr. Miller said Calhoun County was fortunate enough to get into the State action plan for HUD and earmarked they would get \$10 Million for a new hospital in Blountstown.

At this time, they showed an overview of the portal to the Board.

Jeremy Tidwell appeared remotely and showed it to the Commissioners.

He added they could include links to include links to divisional corporations, DBRP, whatever the Commissioners felt they wanted to add to the portal and could use money for applicant assistance.

Dr. Grant asked if it would be helpful if the Commissioners took the list and check off and get back to him. They said they were ready.

Chair Viegbesie said to do that and get it back to the County Administrator as soon as possible and was looking at the next workshop on Wednesday at 1:00 and have the Ordinance Ratification meeting on Friday at 1:00.

7. Next Steps

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners
July 24, 2020-CARES Act Workshop

MOTION TO ADJOURN

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, THE WORKSHOP WAS
ADJOURNED AT 5:36 P.M.**

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**BRENDA A. HOLT, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk