

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR  
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON AUGUST 17,  
2020 AT 2:00 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-absent  
Sherrie Taylor, District 5  
Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator  
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney  
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

**INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

At 2:00 p.m., Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone and called the workshop to order. He asked everyone to bow their heads for a moment of silence, followed by asking everyone to stand as he led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

**CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD (3-Minute Limit)**

***Public comment for Commission meetings can be submitted via email to [CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov](mailto:CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov) until 9 a.m. on Monday, August 17, 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. The Board of County Commissioners would like to thank everyone for their patience and flexibility during this time.***

Chair Viegbesie stated all the comments he had were related to the agendaed item and read into record the Covid-19 statement.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**2. Motorola Communications Tower System**

Dr. Grant introduced the above item.

Chair Viegbesie began to read the Citizens emails.

Brandy Hunter, email read into record.

Shauna JoElle, email read into record.

Jim Roberts, email read into record.

Laura King, email read into record.

Commissioner Holt said he reason the Board decided to pay Motorola this much money was because they cared about the firefighters and people in the County and they now

needed to hammer out the problems that went along with that vote to appropriate this money. She stated this was a Workshop, not a Special Meeting, and therefore there would be no voting on items, the Commissioners were just going to hash this out, and move on.

Chair Viegbesie suggested for the Commissioners to hash this out in the Workshop, and asked the Administrator, between now and 6:00 p.m., to prepare an Agenda Item on this particular project for the Commission to consider and vote up or down. He hoped the Board would be able to iron out all of the differences and controversies they might have had. He said, as much as he hated to add items, he did not think there was anything in the item they had not talked and discussed to death already.

Commissioner Hinson said the Board needed to vote if they wanted to make an action item before Dr. Grant put it on the agenda. He stated the attorney had said an action item had to be advertised first so the community knew what was being voted on. He said he wanted to do what was right.

Chair Viegbesie asked the Attorney to look at the item and see if it could be at the next meeting.

Commissioner Taylor said this was an item that had a dollar figure attached to it and that meant it had to be properly advertised to the community and could not be placed on the next meeting per the Policy and Procedure in place. Commissioner Taylor said she agreed with Commissioner Hinson, it was an item that needed to be scheduled as soon as possible, but she thought when the workshop was over and the Commissioners had discussed how to get this done, there may need to be a special meeting called before the next meeting and hear it as it had been properly advertised. She said it was \$445,000 and that was a cost factor that called for it to be properly advertised.

Chair Viegbesie said this item could be heard at either the first meeting in September or there could be a Special Meeting called for this one item.

Commissioner Taylor said all of the Commissioners wanted to do what was right, but they had to be fiscally right as well. She stated the writing campaign was coming from a similar group of people and was not County wide. She said she had reached out to engineers to look at what needed to be done, versus what the County was being asked to pay for, and the way it was described to her, was like taking her car, getting it washed and paying \$80,000. She said the County had equipment that Motorola needed to let the County know where the equipment was with regards to being in operation. She was being told by high-ranking officers at the Sheriff's Department, the equipment was stock-piled. She further stated the radios were being stock-piled and not being utilized for some reason, and she asked why. She said Motorola was talking about putting a fence around a tower and asked why the tower did not put out the communication need because of a fence. She said she needed those questions answered and felt the public had been misinformed. She further stated the County had paid Motorola \$1,790,730. Commissioner Taylor said she had never asked anyone to use their personal cell phones and did not think they should. She wanted to know why the radios were in a closet and why the system was not up and being used since the County had paid in almost \$2 Million. She said she was willing to move forward, but felt they needed to have a bid since specs were already in place from an engineer and go with the lowest bidder.

Dr. Grant said Commissioner Taylor asked for figures from different vendors and they were in the attached documents.

Commissioner Holt said she would like to go through the packet. She said she also called Dr. Grant today to ask who the other vendors were that had been contacted.

Dr. Grant said it was New Tech out of Sarasota, and Mr. Meeks said the other was Inspired out of Tallahassee but they had not given the County a full quote at this time.

Commissioner Holt said her frustration with the project was not only with Motorola but with the County as well. She said there should have been three quotes brought to the Board, and they would decide which one they wanted. She stated a decision needed to be made quickly. She asked where the contact information was for Inspired. Mr. Meeks said it was not in the packet. He said they sent a quote in but they left the Scope of Work out.

Commissioner Holt said she would like to go through this with Motorola and Staff together.

Chair Viegbesie said what he was hearing was, the workshop was hastily put together and documents were not provided for everyone to read. He wanted to go on with the workshop. He said when it came back, all alternative service providers adhering to the Procurement Policy, should be put side by side to see what each had in their services so the Commission could look at why the Administrator and staff were recommending the particular option. He said it would give the Commissioners a more in-depth understanding of what was going on. He said he wanted the project yesterday, but the Commissioners had not been given the information that would allow them to make an intelligent discussion. He wanted to defend Commissioner Taylor and say, she was a very consistent Commissioner and was strongly in opposition of change orders. He said she would vote against a contract if it allowed a change order. He further stated this item needed information for the first meeting in September and if Commissioners wanted to read through this, fine, but he thought the reason there was staff, was to prepare for the Commissioners information they, as policy makers, could intelligently use to make their partisan decisions.

Commissioner Holt asked on page 29 of 122, if that was information from the company that put up a cost analysis of doing this job or was it what Motorola said was the cost analysis.

Mr. Meeks said Motorola provided that scope of work. He said everything in the Packet was Motorola.

Commissioner Taylor said she was looking through to make sure she knew, when going through the packet. She asked what was on page 69 of 122. She then said, Motorola was on the line and she wanted to ask them.

Debbie Giles, Motorola Representative, appeared remotely to address questions. She explained page 29 was from the original contract where the County was to be responsible for all civil work. She said, since the project began, things changed, the County asked Motorola to perform civil work, and that was where the Change Order 5 came from. Commissioner Holt asked if any work on page 29 had been done by Motorola and Ms. Giles stated no. She then said the new jail tower fell under that for the tower, and the

County asked them to do that. Commissioner Holt asked if the jail tower was out of the original amount of money the County agreed to pay at that time, and Ms. Giles said it was a change order. Commissioner Holt asked what the amount of the change order was. Ms. Giles said she thought it was a little over \$400,000 and was for the tower and dispatch furniture.

Commissioner Taylor said it was \$455,730.00.

Commissioner Holt said that was for the tower at the County Jail, but the original amount without the customer responsibilities was just under \$1.3 Million.

Ms. Giles said the initial proposal provided to staff in 2017 was closer to \$2.4 Million and that was when County asked Motorola to back out all the civil work because they thought that was a position they could handle, that was when \$1.295 Million became the amount. Commissioner Holt said, completed was dispatch furniture, jail tower for \$455,000, Ms. Giles said yes.

Commissioner Holt said page 69 of 142, when Motorola met with Clyde Collins, he said the County could do quite a bit of the work, Ms. Giles said yes, he and the County Manager said they would take on the responsibility of civil work and Motorola provided the facilities manager the 56 Book of Standards, so they knew what needed to be performed to bring it up to standards for the equipment.

Commissioner Holt asked Dr. Grant if he had been shown a book of standards and Mr. Meeks said he had it on a drive.

Commissioner Holt asked what was required at the site as of now. Ms. Giles said it was the statement of work and started on page 69 in the packet. Ms. Giles wanted to clarify, it was not just fencing, there was a lot of underground work, cabling and grounding to go in, and what the item did was brought everything from the towers to the shelter, where the radio equipment would be housed. She said all of that had to be done to meet the standards to protect from the elements.

Chair Viegbesie asked Ms. Giles if there was a concern that SBA and the American Tower Companies had about only allowing approved contractors on-site for construction work, a result of burying fibers and trenching that would be done by hand.

Ms. Giles said he would have to ask staff that question. She said they provided engineering drawings and they were the drawings before the Commissioners.

Chair Viegbesie asked if staff was then considered an approved contractor on-site for the construction by SBA and American Tower Companies, or are they allowed for staff to be classified as approved contractor on-site to do the construction work.

Ed Willoughby, Service Manager, Mobile Communications, interjected. He said towers had restrictions as to who they would allow on tower sites to do work. He said, normally, those chosen vendors were ones that were aware of and knew how to do site preparation work on tower sites because a lot of things besides burying fiber was involved in tower sites. He said there were extensive grounding networks, extensive pads, piping and other things underground. He further stated when the County agreed to do civil work, they could not have known yet what that would be, because there was no negotiation yet.

Commissioner Holt asked when they were negotiated, Mr. Willoughby said he did not know.

Commissioner Holt said this was a non-negotiable point right now and the County did not have people qualified to do the work. She asked Mr. Meeks when he knew about this and he said the people from the companies notified him the middle of last year.

Commissioner Holt said someone needed to tell the Board.

Debbie Giles said this had always been the responsibility of the County. When leases were assigned, one of the things that the owner of the tower always said was, if equipment would be going there, you had to provide your own shelter and generator, and it had to match what was currently on-site. She said the County took responsibility of this and Motorola was reached out to earlier this year and told the County did not have enough man-power to do it and would Motorola provide what was in the contract along with finance options to complete the work. She also wanted to address, when the initial system was purchased, it covered the equipment, each of shelters, brains of system, dispatch consoles, which were in operation, and hanging equipment on the towers. She said a lot of radios were being used on the current system. She said the brains of the system could not be put into operation until the civil work was complete; shelters in place, generators in place, grounding in place and Motorola being allowed access to the shelters to put the equipment in and hanging of equipment on the towers.

Commissioner Holt said Ms. Giles was not aware that the tower company needed to have people that were certified. Ms. Giles said leases were between the tower company and County. She said Motorola had done work between numerous tower companies and it was not an issue. She said she did not know that Motorola would have problem, because they had worked with the tower companies before and their people were certified. Commissioner Holt said that would narrow the blame to staff.

Commissioner Taylor said she was looking at bid from New Tech and they were about \$80,000 less than Motorola. She asked if Motorola was hell-bent on \$444,000 as their fee to complete work. Ms. Giles said she was not sure what the New-Tech fee entailed. She said the Motorola fee entailed, not only doing work, but having a Project Manager who would oversee the work so the County Staff was not taxed to having to do that day-to-day. She said Motorola was also financing it to allow to add to existing finance for the system.

Commissioner Taylor asked if Motorola was staying with the \$444,000 and Ms. Giles said yes. Commissioner Taylor said Motorola built the tower at the Sheriff's Office for \$455,730. Ms. Giles said part of that was furniture for the Dispatch Center. Commissioner Taylor asked why they still needed a foundation, fencing at that one, when Motorola built it from the ground-up, why was that not included as part of the build-out. Ms. Giles said when that quote was provided, they were instructed that all shelter, generator, civil work would be performed by the County. Commissioner Taylor said she did not think the Sheriff tower was involved in that agreement because it was erected from the ground up. She said at that time, the County did not know they had to erect until Motorola came back with a concern of not being able to complete the project because one needed to be erected there and the County had to come up with \$455,000 to erect the tower. She thought the Board needed to give staff an opportunity to get more bids because they may get lower bids. She said she was confused as to why, if just fencing was needed, why was the equipment not being used and what could be done, short of putting up fencing.

Ms. Giles said it was more than fencing. She said shelters and other things had to be put in place for the equipment to be installed. She stated since this has become such an issue, Ms. Giles thought it was best for Motorola to withdraw their proposal and if the County put out an RFP, they may consider responding at that time.

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Chair Viegbesie said there was enough blame to go around. He said staff should have reported to the Board the knowledge they had of the requirement from SBA and American Tower Companies. He thought Motorola could submit a proposal to reduce the \$455,000 or reduce the interest charge on Change Order 5. He did not want to procrastinate on the project.

Commissioner Holt said she was not pushing Motorola out. She said everyone wanted this to move forward. She closed saying she was ready to go to work and get this taken care of.

Commissioner Hinson said he appreciated what Motorola was saying, enlightening the Board on a lot of things.

Dennis Lawler, New-Tech Construction, appeared remotely, Chair Viegbesie asked if the Commissioners had questions for him and there were none.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**


Chair Viegbesie called the workshop adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**



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

**ATTEST:**

  
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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**