

AT AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD  
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND  
FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON  
OCTOBER 9, 2020 AT 10:00 A.M., THE  
FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: Dr. Anthony Viegbesie, Chair, District 2  
Brenda Holt, Vice-Chair, District 4  
Gene Morgan, District 3- absent  
Sherrie Taylor, District 5- called in  
Eric Hinson, District 1- appeared remotely

Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator  
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney  
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk  
Beth Bruner, Deputy Clerk

**Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance**

At 10:08 a.m. Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked for heads to be bowed in prayer, followed by leading in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

**Amendments and Approval of Agenda**

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY CHAIR VIEGBESIE.

THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

**Awards, Presentations and Appearances**

None were had

**Consent**

None

**Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (3-Minute Limit)**

Anyone wishing to speak on agenda items or non-agenda items should schedule or notify the County Administrator's Office before attending the meeting and will be asked to follow the Gadsden County Public Meetings Citizens Access Guidelines. Also, Public comment for Commission meetings can be submitted via email to [CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov](mailto:CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov) until 9:00 a.m. on Friday, October 9, 2020. 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.

Chair Viegbesie said he had one citizen requesting to be heard.

- A. Penny O'Connell, Quincy Main Street, Executive Director- Read into record.

**General Business**

**1. Approval of COVID-19 Resolution 2020-60 (Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator)**

Dr. Grant introduced the above item.

Chair Viegbesie asked the attorney to give an update of any revisions.

Mr. Knowles said the only changes were dates and the Resolution number. He asked the Commissioners to look at the curfew, mask requirement and requests for events.

Chair Viegbesie asked if they were part of the Resolution document.

Mr. Knowles said events were not in the Resolution but if approved, they could be or they could just be verbally approved. He suggested it be in writing.

Chair Viegbesie said to be fair to other who were asking for activities to go on, it should be on the agenda like the others were.

Commissioner Holt asked the attorney if there were any calls on changes.

Mr. Knowles said no, and he had not spoken to Col. Collins. He stated it seemed to be working.

Commissioner Holt said she would find out at the meeting later. She said she wanted a progress report and asked if there were school numbers.

Dr. Cooksey said the school report was posted on the Department of Health website weekly on Tuesdays. She said there were 12 cases in schools, 5 were virtual students, 7 were on-site students and 91 contacts were quarantined. She stated this impacted 6 schools. She said she would send the link to Dr. Grant. She stated it was updated once a week and would show the number of cases by school or students, teachers and staff.

Commissioner Holt asked if there was an uptick in the number

Dr. Cooksey said schools specifically saw a decrease in persons' quarantining. She said the County was up, at 8.2% and increased slightly. She further stated last week was a little lower and testing was stable. She said at an average, 200 people were tested per day.

Commissioner Holt asked for testing location spots.

Dr. Cooksey said CRMC on Tuesdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. or go to your personal provider. She said CVS in Quincy was a self-swab, she said you must be symptomatic. Home Depot off Capitol Circle in Tallahassee. All of the places she listed were working with school and Emergency Management for rapid testing for students, staff or symptomatic people 55 and over.

Commissioner Holt asked Dr. Grant to get the report from Law Enforcement and the Department of Health each week to have numbers to judge.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND FROM COMMISSIONER HINSON.**

Commissioner Taylor wanted to find out if essential workers for the County were being compensated. She said it needed to be talked about. She said the Board needed to meet with Integrity. She made sure the curfew was 10 p.m. and there was a mask mandate.

Mr. Knowles said yes, but the County was unable to issue citations or enforce penalties.

Commissioner Taylor asked when food truck requests would be entertained and said she was for it. She thought they wanted an answer today.

Chair Viegbesie said in the past, the Board asked for others to submit a plan. He suggested the plan be presented and then voted on to follow the same procedure for everyone.

**THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE.**

COMMISSIONER HINSON	Y
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	Y
COMMISSIONER MORGAN	ABSENT
COMMISSIONER HOLT	Y
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	Y

**2. Approval of the Agreement with Clemons, Rutherford and Associates, Inc. for Architectural Services (Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator)**

Dr. Grant introduced the above item. He said this item was asked to be brought back because there was concern if CARES would fund this project. He said The Integrity Group did a thorough investigation of the concern and they said CARES may be at risk of retention by FDEM if used for activities related to the permanent construction of the hospital facilities.

Commissioner Holt asked Integrity if they would recommend doing the hospital project under a different funding organization and not under CARES.

Eric Miller with Integrity appeared remotely and answered yes. He said the HUD CDBG program would be a good fit and they would be at the CDBG workshop.

Commissioner Holt asked if any preliminaries before reconstruction would qualify with CARES.

Mr. Miller said based on other Federal Grants, Architectural and Engineering costs were considered as part of permanent construction.

Commissioner Holt said that was good to know. She asked if Mr. Miller would find out if the Department Treasury had concerns about this area. She asked if HUD was competitive, and Mr. Miller said correct. Commissioner Holt said the County should look at as many pots as possible to get a hospital. She further stated the County still had funds in the Endowment Fund.

Clerk Thomas said there was about \$1.3M in dividends and interest earnings in the account.

Commissioner Holt asked what the total in the account was other than dividends and earnings.

Clerk Thomas said it was \$9 Million and he stressed it was for the hospital only, not for a shelter.

Commissioner Holt said it would be built for a hospital and would also use it as a shelter during hurricane season. She said the purpose was so the County could get funding from the State and Federal Government in order to build out on the hospital or until it was used as a hospital. She wanted Integrity to know there was some funding in the County. She asked Integrity to consider HUD and any other place the County could get funding.

Gary Yates with Integrity, said it was best to delay the application for HUD. He said that because there was another County that had an earmark for a State plan for a hospital. She said any RFP proposal for the hospital today should be tabled.

Commissioner Holt said that was a good idea for earmarks on the Legislative session and the County needed to go all out on lobbying during this session. She said she would not approve this item until there was a funding source. She wants a company that had worked on this project and knew about it.

Chair Viegbesie said since he had conversations with people and agencies that dealt with this. He said he was told the \$781,000 should be part of the \$10 Million, where the design, client, and the construction of the project should be part of those monies. He was told that a drawing plan was not providing of the service and should not be part of CARES Act. He said during that conversation, he thought of the Ambulances purchased and they would be delivered before the December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline and the hospital building would not be. He stated this did not fit under CARES. He further stated everyone wanted a hospital and the Board should suspend the conversation and push the project during CDBG HUD funding when that time came.

Commissioner Taylor said money was set aside to build a temporary shelter for those with COVID. She said the CARES Act said you could build a temporary shelter. She did not think the County would get funding for a hospital. She was afraid the County would not be able to self-support a hospital. She said this would keep citizens from getting services. She asked Dr. Grant to look at it again and try to build a place for people with COVID. She said not to wait for Integrity, citizens needed this now.

Chair Viegbesie said everyone wanted health care services to citizens. He said the Board needed to come back and do it piece by piece.

Commissioner Taylor was asking for a Workshop/Emergency Meeting ASAP. She said the Board needed it to be put on the agenda.

Chair Viegbesie said the item was on the agenda. He told her to make her suggestion a motion. He asked the Attorney if Commissioner Taylor could make a motion to use the money to retro-fit that building for a shelter for special needs.

Mr. Knowles said he did not think she could do that, it needed to be on the agenda.

Commissioner Taylor agreed and she requested a Workshop/Emergency Meeting.

Mr. Knowles said he thought Commissioner Taylor was asking for it to be added to the agenda. He said there was going to be a Workshop next week and he thought it could be added.

Commissioner Holt said it was not impossible. She said small hospitals were being built using State and Federal funds. She said the County was paying a half-cent sales tax right now and still had no hospital because people on the Board already voted to not build out the hospital. She stated people were already paying for a hospital. She said if it was built out as a shelter, the County still needed a hospital and would have to go back and rebuild. She said no false statements should be made and if the Board wanted to do a shelter quick, take \$1 Million, go to the Stevens School cafeteria and build out as a shelter and be done, that was the plan for Stevens School already and then the Board could still do what needed to be done at the hospital. She stated the people were paying for a hospital since 2009 and deserved to have a hospital.

Commissioner Hinson called the question.

Commissioner Taylor said the County was collecting less than \$1 million a year and that would not support a full-fledge a hospital. She said with the \$1 Million, the County had a full-fledged emergency facility that had saved lives and had done an excellent job.

Commissioner Holt told Commissioner Taylor she had also messed up \$10.3 Million dollars.

Chair Viegbesie called for respect among Commissioners and for order.

Commissioner Taylor said the County should not even think about putting a temporary shelter in Old Stevens School, in a bedrock community where 90% of the citizens were elderly. She said she wanted to move forward for the County not for a County Commissioner. She stated Integrity and the Attorney said do not use the money for an architect. She wanted this item to come back and the Commissioners to come up with a conclusion.

Chair Viegbesie said he wanted a motion

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO POSTPONE UNTIL THERE WAS HUD FUNDING WITH A SECOND FROM CHAIR VIEGBESIE.**

**THE BOARD VOTED 3-1 BY ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE POSTPONING THIS ITEM UNTIL HUD FUNDING WAS SECURED. COMMISSIONER HINSON OPPOSED.**

COMMISSIONER HINSON	N
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	Y
COMMISSIONER MORGAN	ABSENT
COMMISSIONER HOLT	Y
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	Y

Commissioner Holt said if the hospital was renovated for COVID patients, it had to be renovated at hospital standards. (need oxygen and other things) Having just an emergency shelter would be why she wanted Stevens School to be used as a general shelter not for COVID patients.

Chair Viegbesie said there were two items for soccer and food trucks He stated he wanted a plan from Quincy Main Street to make sure the activities were in accordance with the CDC guidelines as the Board had requested from others. He asked for a detailed plan and also asked when the workshop would be held.

Dr. Grant said the workshop was scheduled for October 22 and the next BOCC meeting was on October 20.

Chair Viegbesie asked Dr. Grant to put all plans together for one agenda item on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Holt said the City of Quincy had an activity planned near the Supervisor of Elections office and streets would be blocked off. She said it may cause problems with voting and she wanted a legal opinion. She further stated there should be no obstruction or distraction when it came to voting.

Mr. Knowles said he spoke with the Supervisor of Elections and she was concerned. He said she welcomed the event but it was on a Tuesday, on the street, and in front of the Supervisor of Elections office, the street would be blocked off on both ends. Mr. Knowles said the ballot box in front of her office was the only drop box in the County. He said the County could be sued along with the City of Quincy. He suggested getting up with the City of Quincy Manager and Attorney. He said the County may have to take legal action if the City would not move the event. He further stated there could be no instance where a person's ability to vote was hindered.

Commissioner Holt said she spoke with the Attorney and the young lady in the Supervisor's office and the Commissioners from Quincy. She said it was a touchy situation because only one person had to say they could not get to the Supervisors Office to turn in their ballot. She said she asked that emails be sent to the City because the County would need documentation if there was a lawsuit. She further stated, in 2000, Gadsden County was the only County that filed a complaint with the Supervisors of Elections Office during that election. She said she filed that complaint. She wanted to make sure there were no obstructions to the ballot box.

Chair Viegbesie made sure there was still a quorum to talk about a plan, and there was.

Commissioner Taylor said she did not know what Quincy was doing.

Mr. Knowles said the City was celebrating the Coke mural. He said he had a diagram on how it would be set up. He said Madison and Jefferson would have a stage and two food trucks on Clark, police officer at each end of Crawford Street, and Adam Street would be open. His and the Clerks concern was voter suppression/intimidation. He said there was no conflicting ordinance, although, the Board could pass an Emergency Ordinance. He said he would forward the diagram he received to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Holt said she spoke with two Commissioners of Quincy. She wanted the Chair, Attorney and Managers to meet. She said the County was not allowing anything, but it was good to talk and get everyone on the same page.

Commissioner Taylor said she did get the information on the mural. She said the celebration was two-hours long and she did not see what the problem was. She said the City could set up in a way that this could be done. She said it should not have an impact on voting. She asked for the City and Supervisor of Elections to work together.

Chair Viegbesie suggested Dr. Grant scheduled a meeting ASAP with the Mayor, City Manager, Chair and the Attorney for both the City and County and the Supervisor of Elections.

Mr. Knowles said he did not know the length and it may be two- hours as Commissioner Taylor stated. He said the concern was not that the County would get sued, but they could. He further stated the Supervisor was worried there could be voter suppression. He also said it was an outdoor event that may go above the 50-person restriction.

Chair Viegbesie said he thought the meeting between the County and City would iron it out peacefully and that was the direction the Board was giving to the staff.

Commissioner Taylor asked to meet with Integrity and to have the moratorium she spoke about and said she wanted these on the agenda. She asked the attorney to look up the definition for essential worker, she wanted to get them extra pay in Public Works because they were opening themselves up going out into the community every day.

Mr. Knowles said there was Workers Compensation Provisions for front-line workers, and they would not qualify for that. He said the Administrator could offer Administrative Leave for those who tested positive. He said he would look into it more.

Chair Viegbesie said direction was given to staff with regards to the activities.

Commissioner Taylor asked when the next meeting with Integrity was.

Chair Viegbesie said there would be a workshop on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and Commissioner Taylor said that was too late.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners  
October 9, 2020 Emergency Meeting

Chair Viegbesie said the Governor was not making any drastic changes to any of the Executive Orders or the State of Emergency. He said Friday meetings had been held to review those changes from the Governor's Office. He suggested to suspend Friday meetings until there were drastic changes from the Governor's Office that the Board would need to discuss the Counties Resolution and how it would go along with the Governor's Office.

Commissioner Holt said she had no problem with not meeting on Friday and asked about the emergency status.

Mr. Knowles said the State was still under an emergency status, He said the County needed to keep the State of Emergency going for HUD, FEMA, and others. He said the Chair could sign the Resolution.


Chair Viegbesie said he was not saying the County was not in a State of Emergency, he just wanted to curtail the Friday meetings. He said now that the State was in Phases 3, an Emergency meeting could be called if it was needed.

**Motion to Adjourn**

At 11:15 a.m., with no further business to come before the Board, Chair Viegbesie called the meeting adjourned.



GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

  
ANTHONY O. VIEGBESIE, PH.D., Chairman  
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

  
NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk