

AT A WORKSHOP/SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON
OCTOBER 22, 2020 AT 4:00 P.M., THE
FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD,
VIZ:

These meetings are being held virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order No. 20-69 as extended by Executive Order No. 20-179.

Present: Dr. Anthony O. Viegbesie, Chair, District 2
Brenda Holt, Vice Chair, District 4
Eric Hinson, District 1- appeared remotely
Sherrie Taylor, District 5
Dr. Henry G. Grant, Interim County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Beth Bruner, Deputy Clerk

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

At 4:04 Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone and called to order the Special Meeting/Workshop. He asked for heads to be bowed in silent prayer, followed by leading in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

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 meeting can be submitted via email to Citizenstobeheard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 22, 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.

None were had.

General Business

**1. Status of Gadsden County CARES Grants Program
(Frederika Hamilton, The Integrity Group)**

Frederika Hamilton, from The Integrity Group, appeared before the Board. She said as of 12:45 p.m., the Small Business Assistance Program had 197 applications received. Of those, 82 had been reviewed, 39 were under review, 13 needed additional documentation, 61 qualified or were paid, and 2 did not qualify. She said the total amount for the Small Business Grant Application to-date was \$439,500. She reported the Resident Assistance Program had 389 applications received. Of those, 116 were to be reviewed, 31 were under review, 195 need additional documentation, 32 were qualified or paid, and 11 did not qualify. She said the total for Resident Assistance was \$60,416, and the grand total was \$499,916.

Ms. Hamilton said she wanted to share some daily activity data with the Commissioners as to some of the things they provided on a daily basis with the Resident and Small Business Assistance Programs for CARES Act. She said a typical day consisted of

meeting with 8-12 applicants per day, providing technical assistance. There were 30-50 phone calls per day ranging from 2-3 minutes and some lasting 7-10 minutes. She said 15-25 applicants called for updates on their applications and those calls lasted 2-6 minutes and they also did follow up with applicants regarding missing documents from the application, and that consisted of 8-10 calls, lasting 2-4 minutes.

Commissioner Taylor asked, regarding the Business aspect, 61 applicants were approved and 197 submitted. She said there was still an on-going process to get to the other 197.

Ms. Hamilton said 82 were to be reviewed, 39 were under review and 39 had missing documentation.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the 39 with missing documents had been contacted and Ms. Hamilton answered yes.

Commissioner Taylor asked if they had a deadline as to when the information had to be in.

Ms. Hamilton said she just asked for the documentation and the applicant provided it. She stated it was usually only a day or two before the applicants brought in the documentation.

Commissioner Taylor said given this was a time sensitive element, when will the next round be ready to go out. She said there were still 130 applicants waiting to hear if they qualified. She asked if the deadline would be met.

Ms. Hamilton said the deadline would be met. She stated her team had added more reviewers to the process to facilitate reviewing the documentation and also to allow for the process to not be interrupted. She further stated as the reviewers went through the applications received, and found missing documentation, they made a note in the system and moved to the next application and the next reviewer was tasked with following up with the applicants.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the \$1.2 Million would be spent.

Ms. Hamilton said the Small Business would and she was not sure about the Residents Assistance. She said they would revisit that in two-weeks and if the money was not being exhausted, Integrity would present to the Board a recommendation. She stated she thought there would be an uptick in applications for Residence Assistance.

Commissioner Taylor asked for a current list that had Business and Resident Assistance checks administered.

Ms. Hamilton said it would be provided to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Holt asked if there was a reason, if a resident or business applied on-line, they could not check what they had done in case they made a mistake and wanted to change it.

Ms. Hamilton said she thought there was a step where applicants could type in their item ID number and they would get an email back. She said the system was always having changes based on feedback from the applicants.

Commissioner Holt asked if they could they go back in the system and check their application, and Ms. Hamilton said yes, they could.

Commissioner Holt asked if they applied at the end of September, should they know if they qualified by now.

Ms. Hamilton said the applicant would receive a notice the application was received and she said she tells them, unless called or emailed, there were no missing documents and to let the application go through the process. She said there was a recent request from the County for all applicants to submit a W9, even under Residents Assistance.

Commissioner Holt said people were waiting and said they were not hearing anything back.

Ms. Hamilton said unless they received a call saying something was wrong, it just needed to go through the process. She stated the applications were reviewed in the order they were received. She further stated checks went out October 16 and October 19, and next week more would go out.

Commissioner Holt said there were a lot of rural mailboxes, and people were not home all the time.

Ms. Hamilton said whatever address was given on the application was where the check would be mailed to.

Commissioner Holt asked what the return address was and Ms. Hamilton said it was the Clerks address. Ms. Hamilton also stated applicants could call and leave a message, and her team would get back to them in at least 24-hrs.

Commissioner Holt said Tallahassee redid their process to simplify it and she asked Ms. Hamilton if she knew anything about what they may have done or anything to make process go faster.

Ms. Hamilton said she was not aware of Tallahassee or any adjustments made.

Commissioner Holt asked when the deadline was.

Ms. Hamilton said they were taking applications through November 28, 2020 and the program went until December 30, 2020.

Commissioner Holt asked Dr. Grant what was the deadline for spending the money.

Dr. Grant said the date was November 16, 2020, for Phase 1 and 2.

Chair Viegbesie asked Ms. Hamilton if her office was handling the Small Business Assistance Program and if they had enough staff.

Ms. Hamilton answered yes, they had enough staff. Chair Viegbesie said he was going to offer help.

Commissioner Holt said Ms. Hamilton sent applications to the Clerk. She asked if there was anything the Clerk said he had to check and if some item were missing. She asked if there a problem between the two.

Ms. Hamilton said the most recent W-9 was required for businesses not residents and the request for W-9 for residents had come in the last week. She said Integrity would not send something over to the Clerk if it was not complete.

Commissioner Holt asked if that was required under CARES.

Ms. Hamilton said the Small Business required a W-9 but was a request per the Clerk's Office for Resident Assistance.

Commissioner Taylor asked what was in the coffers for the CARES Funding.

Ms. Hamilton said \$1.9 Million (the first 25%) She said the Spend Plan was approved, and are now waiting on the Governor's Office to approve the Attestation to FDEM from Dr. Grant.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there was anyone to contact to find out if it was still on the Governor's desk. She asked Dr. Grant if the County was set up to continue the funding through County sources until the dollars came in. She asked if the process would have to be stopped because there was no more money as far as CARES.

Dr. Grant said he had not been told to stop processing. He further stated FDEM assigned a Liaison the County worked with, and there was a conference call weekly for updates.

Chair Viegbesie said the Board was working on getting the next 20% released.

Ms. Hamilton said she had called the Gadsden County Liaison about the Spend Plan and the 20%, he was checking and would let her know.

**2. Revisit/Retarget CARES Act Funding Spending Plan
(Daryl Cox, The Integrity Group)**

Daryl Cox, from The Integrity Group, appeared remotely and said at previous meetings, the Board decided to forgo the pursuit of the Hospital engineering and wanted to look at reallocating the \$1 Million. He said the County did not need to submit the amended Spend Plan to the State yet. He said based on recent happenings, the \$1Million set aside for Broadband may need to be reallocated. He further stated there was good news received in updated guidance from the U.S. Treasury. He stated the U.S. Treasury now said the use of CARES and the eligibility of public safety payroll and related fringe benefits were an eligible expense to draw down funding. He further stated the \$209,000 the Board was leaving alone and the \$267,000 that was allocated to other COVID expenses, those two and the Hospital funds, and maybe others, were opened up for reallocating. He said by allocating it towards Public Safety, FDEM would allow the County to draw down the funds and put them in the County Bank Account and the

County could use as they saw fit. Mr. Cox said he got clarity from FDEM and they confirmed it was an eligible use. He stated he was pushing for a revised allocation for the \$1 Million. He further stated, based on some of the documentation received from the Sheriff's Office, more funds may be added towards the Public Safety Payroll and use it to draw down the 20% as well as the remaining 55%. He said he was open to questions.

Commissioner Holt asked how much the draw down was, what was available, where it was coming from, and how did it affect the items that were already voted for.

Mr. Cox said before any changes were made, \$267,000 from row 53, of the \$7.9 Million total allocation, there were two areas left unallocated, one was \$267,000, and \$209,000 was another. He stated there was no taking away from anything.

Chair Viegbesie asked Mr. Cox to slow down and Commissioner Holt asked for lines 124-128 to be explained again.

Mr. Cox said the document was approved in August, and 99% was still that, with no changes. He said out of the two Grant Programs, the County COVID expenses, and the passthrough, the total was line 124, \$7,757,000. He further stated the Board said leave the \$209,000 alone.

Commissioner Holt asked where the \$209,00 came from.

Mr. Cox said the Grand total was row 124, \$7,757,000 and \$209,000 was what was left from the total allocation of \$7,967,000.

Commissioner Taylor asked why take money from Hospital. She said it was put there to build out for a shelter for people with COVID. She asked why that money was being moved. She said getting \$10 Million in wishful money from HUD was not a given. She stated in regards to money going to the Sheriff, she did not want to see it happen that way. She further stated they had already had a check cut for \$800,000 and if there was excess money or the Sheriff needed more funding, she thought the Board should rename the line item for the County Administrator to have more control over it and help out in all different departments. (EMS, Public Works) She wanted to see the Administration control the money and be more diverse. She stated Public Works had to deal with essential workers too.

Mr. Cox said reallocating the hospital funds for a temporary buildout completion would be difficult to do before the December 30 deadline. He suggested reallocating the funding to Public Safety Payroll to draw down funds and they would then be in the County coffers. He said the goal was to use all funding.

Commissioner Taylor asked if Public Safety Payroll restricted the funds to be used for payroll only.

Mr. Cox said the U.S. Treasury said when you draw down funds for the Public Safety Payroll, you had a budget for that and it came to the County, you still have to use those funds for payroll but all that was budgeted for payroll was now open for use.

Chair Viegbesie said he understood the Public Safety Payroll was what the County would pay March 1 to Dec 30. He stated this let the County claim the money and it would come back to the County and go to the General Operating Fund.

Mr. Cox said that was also his understanding. He said the qualifications changed, and Public Safety was not budgeted to respond to a pandemic and that was a large portion of their job.

Chair Viegbesie asked if the drawdown came back to the County, did it mean there was no time limit to spending.

Mr. Cox said once allocated to the Public Safety Payroll and the funds were drawn down, it was gone and the reallocation of those funds become available for use after Dec 30, 2020.

Commissioner Taylor said she was confused because the Board would have no control once the Sheriff got his money. She did not understand how to take the \$1 Million and spend it before December 30, 2020. She said she was concerned putting the money there and Chair Viegbesie asked the Administrator to explain.

Dr Grant said this allowed the County to draw down money, put it in the County coffers, and eliminate the time limit of December 30, 2020. He further stated the County had to draw down by Dec 30, 2020, and the money was already obligated.

Commissioner Taylor said she understood.

Commissioner Holt asked how much the drawdown was and Dr. Grant said it was the remaining amount not spent.

Commissioner Holt asked where would the Sheriff money come from.

Dr. Grant said the programs could remain.

Commissioner Holt stated the Clerk said \$11,000 was to residents. She said she wanted the hospital done. She said to not cut programs. She wanted to get people who were hurting where they need to be. She asked if everything voted on was covered and would not be eaten up by Public Safety.

Chair Viegbesie said no, unless more people asked for more.

Commissioner Holt said she needed assurance the Board was going to do what they said they were going to do. She asked if it was requested, did the County have to give it.

Chair Viegbesie said he would request three more EMS Ambulances with the retargeting. He said the County had one on loan from Calhoun County. He stated the uncommitted amount would cover the Sheriff and everything else that came back on payroll would go into the coffers and could be distributed. He said the amount on the spreadsheet may not be the amount they would get. He said he did not want to give any back.

Dr. Grant said the process being discussed was not changing any requests. He stated the County was trying to draw money down and the County could use it with no time limit.

Commissioner Taylor said the \$500,000 the Sheriff needed should not come from CARES. She said it was for competitive salary. She said to find another way because when it was over, the County could not support his budget the next years.

Chair Viegbesie said there was a plan and it was thrown out. He said he told the Sheriff it was "one-time money". Chair Viegbesie said the Board needed a Workshop with the Sheriff. He thought the Sheriff Budget needed to be separate from other Constitutionals.

Commissioner Holt said Commissioner Taylor was correct, and the money would be needed next year too. She stated people voted and then changed their minds, and that was a problem because the Board had made promises.

**3. Discussion/Agreement on HUD CDBG-DR Projects
(Daryl Cox, The Integrity Group)**

Mr. Cox said he had a reminder for the Commissioners, and this was related to Hurricane Michael. He said it was CDBG-DR Funding where they separate Competitive Grants into three different sectors, Housing, Infrastructure and Economic Recovery. He said each sector would make available different Grant Programs within each sector. He stated there was 2 programs in the housing sector, the Housing Repair and Replace Program and it would be homeowners who had damaged or destroyed homes from Hurricane Michael, and had not received FEMA assistance or Insurance assistance could apply directly to the State for repair or replacement of their home. He said the second program was the Voluntary Home Buy-Out Program. This would be where the County would identify potential property around the County that were in flood zones or had experienced repetitive loss due to disasters. He said the County would be able to apply for this Grant based on identification of different properties and be able to purchase those properties at fair market value and buy the individual out on a voluntary basis. He stated there were a lot of requirements that had to be met with this program. He said if the Grant was approved, there was a separate application process where the homeowners would go through the application process to have the buy-out done through the County. He said if the County wanted to do that, Integrity would put together a Grant Package and Application and submit it to DEO. He stated it was due by November 30, 2020 and the criteria would have to be met before that date.

Mr. Cox stated the General Infrastructure Repair Program was the most utilized program. He said the County had potential projects already identified under this program and there was a \$250,000 minimum on each project. He stated the projects could include stormwater systems, sewer and waste water systems, damaged buildings, roads, bridges and different items related to infrastructure in the County. He stated the criteria was meeting certain LMI (Low to Moderate Income) requirements. He said the LMI had already been identified by HUD and they would use those to know what locations and projects would be most likely approved. He said all of the projects had to meet one of the three national objectives. LMI was one of the national objectives that was preferred to be meet first. He stated EMS Headquarters could be a good project for submission to the DEO for the Infrastructure Program. He said there was a limit of five projects the County could submit applications for. He said he wanted the Board to figure out what those five projects were that would fit into that criteria. He stated the Multi-Purpose Shelter on the NE side that had the \$5.7 Million estimate was a candidate. Mr.

Cox said there were roads and bridges that also needed repair. He said a key point was there had to be some sort of disaster tie-back to make each eligible by either having direct damage not previously covered by FEMA or another Federal source or at least some sort of indirect effects from Hurricane Michael. He further stated one not on the list was the Radio Towers, and he thought they should be submitted to DEO. He stated because of the limited ability to respond to Hurricane Michael may not have been what it should have been, but with the towers the response would be better next time. He stated there was also Facility Upgrades and Repairs, and more specifics needed to be collected as far as what the County was looking to do and what the tie-back to the disaster would be. He said lastly, there was a Technical Assistance Grant Program. He said it was the State Action Plan and DEO had set aside funding for helping the Integrity Team and County Staff in projected budgets and drafting a scope of work. He said if the County applied for the Technical Assistance Grant, someone at the State would be next door to the people who would be reviewing the applications a second set of eyes. He further stated it would be paid for by DEO, not the County. He said it was time to decide what the five priorities would be for infrastructure and the application deadline was November 30, 2020 and a lot of work needed to be done, including a couple of public meetings as well as developing a very detailed Project Budget, a Scope of Work, Staffing Plans and he said there was a lot that went into the applications.

Commissioner Taylor said that was a lot to digest as far as the different projects. She stated the Board had not had a chance to share their thoughts as far as the five projects. She said she thought Integrity needed to move forward with submitting the application but the language, she thought, the Board should have latitude. She wanted to move ahead but did not want it so the County had to be so specific in the language to the funding agency. She said infrastructure could be broad. She said there was a new Board coming together that should have some input in this.

Commissioner Hinson said he wanted to listen today. He said Midway was a disaster waiting to happen. He said there was a one-way in and one-way out. He stated there was also an emergency with the sewer system in Midway and they needed a sewer system and not a septic tank. He thought it was an environmental hazard as well. He said Midway was growing and was a disaster waiting to happen.

Chair Viegbesie asked Mr. Cox, given the limit, was there enough to put a Program Package together. He also asked if all five projects were separate applications and Mr. Cox said yes, there was a specific application for the Voluntary Home Buy-Out Program and five separate applications for the separate infrastructure projects as well as a separate application for Technical Assistance.

Chair Viegbesie asked where the hospital need fit.

Mr. Cox said the Hospital was the first priority for a HUD project and he thought that was a consensus among the Board. He wanted to address Commissioner Taylor and Commissioner Hinson's concerns. He said he understood Commissioner Taylor. He said usually, with CDBG projects, there was a little more latitude in what could be done with the funding, however, with the CDBG-DR Grants, they were very specific. He said the infrastructure projects specifically, there was a scoring system that would be used. He said one point was how shovel ready the project was. He said the Radio Towers were already put out to bid and a selection was made for Motorola, drawings were made, and would score better than a Community Center. In scoring he said out of 125 points, the

towers already had 10 points because it was already put out to bid. Project Specs already written were 5 points. He said to look for a good score. Mr. Cox said the sewer system for Midway was something where the City was eligible to apply outside of the County's five grants. He stated Evacuation Routes in Midway could be discussed. He stated the County could assist Midway and be a co-sponsor but it would take away from one of the County's five projects. He recommended the City of Midway do that on their own. He said there were 5-bonus points for projects related to Evacuation Routes and that project could be looked at for road widening, signage, drainage and said the County could get creative. He said cities could get together as co-applicants and put together evacuation routes leading to higher ground, and those were projects the County could sponsor and would score well.

Chair Viegbesie asked if the project had to have a design and engineering prepared to get high points.

Mr. Cox said it was not a specific requirement but would increase the score.

Commissioner Holt asked Mr. Cox about the Hospital.

Mr. Cox said he thought the hospital was one of the Infrastructure Projects and asked the Commissioners to decide today the five Infrastructure Projects as well as decide if they wanted to move forward on the Home Buyout Program and Technical Assistance.

Commissioner Holt said the County had previous plans done by Rutherford. She asked if the School Board could apply for training.

Mr. Cox said yes, on Infrastructure Projects, the eligible applicants were Counties, State Agencies and Municipalities. The School Board needed to be sponsored by the County and the County would still have its own five projects.

Chair Viegbesie asked if Commissioner Hinson was still on and he was. He said there were road projects, and this could be used on in Midway.

Commissioner Hinson said he thought Midway was one storm away from a major problem and the Commissioners needed to put it as a priority.

Commissioner Holt asked if property resale on Government property was possible. She did not want to own a lot of property because it came out of the tax roll.

Chair Viegbesie thought if property was in a flood area it was used as a holding pond.

Attorney Knowles said no, there was a prohibition against reselling it. He said there was a Deed Restriction to stop any development.

Dr. Grant said Mr. Cox needed direction on the five projects to move forward with the application.

Chair Viegbesie asked if the County could do road and sewer jointly with Midway.

Mr. Cox said he could not say there was something stopping the County, but it could be hard to get approved. He said the County could combine a road project with a storm water project. He said other options had a better chance of getting approved.

Commissioner Hinson he wanted somewhere the stormwater could run. He said now, it just sat in one spot. He liked the idea the sewer system would be at the top, then roads and stormwater. He wanted to figure out how to get all three of them in.

Commissioner Holt asked Mr. Cox if it was possible to give Midway support.

Mr. Cox said if the Board wanted to sponsor the project, they could.

Commissioner Holt said concerning the Towers, the County would not have to spend money on the towers.

Commissioner Hinson asked Chair Viegbesie what five projects he wanted.

Chair Viegbesie said the five items were listed and nothing was being replaced. He said they were the Hospital, Multi-Purpose Complex, Radio Tower, Roads, Bridges and Sewage and Facility's Upgrades and Repairs. He stated if there was a way, the County would work with Midway on sewer drainage and roads and bridges. He said put another road on the other side of the complex where there was a one-way in with a railroad crossing blocking the way. He said Commissioner Holt suggested Midway apply themselves and the County would send a letter of strong support to impact the points system.

Mr. Cox said any project outside of the city limit would be a County project but the County could have joint projects.

Chair Viegbesie suggested municipalities apply themselves. He said sewage and stormwater could be submitted by Midway, and roads and bridges were currently funded through SCOP and SCRAP.

Mr. Cox listed the five projects again. He said an upgrade to County facilities would fit better when the Economic Revitalization program opened. He listed the five projects; Hospital, EMS, Multipurpose Center, Radio Towers and Public Works Project.

Commissioner Holt asked where the Multipurpose Complex was and Chair Viegbesie said it was in Saint Hebron.

Commissioner Holt said the Board did not vote on that and she would not agree to it.

Dr. Grant said it was in the list of projects since the beginning.

Chair Viegbesie said it was on the HUD items.

Commissioner Holt said it should be more related to infrastructure not a park.

Commissioner Hinson said he did not want Midway left behind. He said it was a public health situation and should be in the top 2.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners
October 22, Special Meeting/Workshop

Motion to Adjourn


At 6:14 p.m., Chair Viegbesie called the Workshop adjourned.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA




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

ATTEST:


NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk