

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MARCH 16, 2021 AT 6:00 P.M.,
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING HAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: Brenda Holt, Chair, District 4
Dr. Anthony "Dr. V" Viegbesie, Vice Chair, District 2
Eric Hinson, District 1 – appeared remotely
Kimblin NeSmith, District 3
Ronterious "Ron" Green, District 5
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Holt welcomed everyone to the meeting, called it to Order at 6:01 p.m., asked for a moment of silence and led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Dixon stated there were no amendments.

UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER GREEN TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AND SECOND MADE BY CHAIR HOLT, THE BOARD VOTED 3-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS WRITTEN.

AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS AND APPEARANCES

There were no presentations or appearances.

Commissioner Viegbesie arrived at 6:02 p.m.

ITEMS PULLED FOR DISCUSSION

There were no items pulled.

CONSENT

UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER NESMITH, THE CONSENT AGENDA WAS APPROVED AS PRESENTED.

1. Ratification Memo
2. Approval of Minutes
 - January 5, 2021 Pre-BOCC Workshop
 - January 26, 2021 Workshop
3. Approval and Signature for Special Assessment Liens SHIP Program-Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program
4. Approval and Signature(s) for Satisfaction of Special Assessment Lien

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Due to COVID-19 and the efforts of 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.

Commissioner Green read aloud the statement for Chair Holt.

Karen Stansberry sent in three emails.

“Dear Governor DeSantis,

In your CPAC speech, you claimed Florida is an oasis because it is a state where people can live free and normal.

That is not the case in Leon or Gadsden County. We have petitioned, emailed, made phone calls and even held peaceful protests; all to no avail.

Look at the extremely low number of cases and hospitalizations in these counties. These mask mandates are obviously nothing more than a power and ego trip for these commissioners.

These mask mandates are holding people hostage in a delusional fear. Thus has gone on so long I doubt most people will be able to return to normal.

The commissioners will have to answer one day for their deliberate actions that are hurting people.

You are a compassionate and rational person. Please do what you can to bring these two counties back to the real world.

Thank you,

Karen Stansberry”

“On my way to Georgia to buy tires. Had dinner in Georgia last week. Leon and Gadsden County mask mandates in place = no revenue for you.”

“You may easily contact your representatives via this link. You may edit the message to express your concerns about forced human experimentation.

[https://www.votervoice.net/mobile/LifesiteNews/campaigns/81071/respond?ct=t\(VV-VBOR-2-22-21a\)](https://www.votervoice.net/mobile/LifesiteNews/campaigns/81071/respond?ct=t(VV-VBOR-2-22-21a))

PUBLIC HEARINGS

5. Public Hearing (Quasi-Judicial)-Oak Grove Substation Special Exemption (SE-2021-01)

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and stated it was a request for “Special Exception Use” to expand the existing Oak Grove electrical substation.

Leslie Steele, Public Informations Officer, interjected and stated there were some emails submitted from citizens. Chair Holt then read them aloud (please see above).

Jill Jeglie Reeves, AICP, Senior Planner, appeared before the Board, was sworn in by the Deputy Clerk and gave a brief description of this agenda item.

Chair Holt announced this was a public hearing and asked if there were any comments and there was none.

Taylor Woods Waddle, Jim Stidam and Associates, appeared before the Board. Chair Holt asked about solar panels and he stated solar activity not related to this project.

Commissioner Viegbesie said with regard to solar services, there was a company that was constructing and working on some solar provisions. Chair Holt said that was the power line. He asked if this would generate any relief for the current power grid that would reduce chances of power failure to recipients in the area? Mr. Waddle said he believed so, they were strengthening the grid and upgrading from the current power source to be able to handle large amounts of power and should help with outages.

Commissioner NeSmith asked his relationship and if he provided any electrical services to anyone in the area. Mr. Waddle explained they were the engineering firm and did the civil design for the expansion and Talquin Electric was their client.

COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

6. Public Hearing-(Quasi-Judicial) Oak Grove Substation Conceptual and Preliminary Site Plan (SP 2021-01)

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and said it was for approval of the Conceptual and Preliminary Site Plan to expand the existing Oak Grove Electrical substation.

Jill Jeglie Reeves reappeared before the Board (was reminded she was still under oath) and gave a brief description of this item. She said Talquin Electric was expanding the fenced area and it was located in an Agriculture 2 land use category. She said the Planning Commission recommended approval at their February 11th meeting unanimously and that was the recommendation.

Chair Holt asked the Commissioners if they had any questions.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if this was on the existing property and they were expanding. Ms. Jeglie said yes.

Chair Holt announced this was a public hearing and asked for comments and there were none.

COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION 1 AND COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

GENERAL BUSINESS

7. Approval for Adopt-A-Road Agreement with M.R. Moore Chapter #21 for Pt. Milligan Road

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and stated it was for approval of the Adopt-A-Road Agreement with M. R. Moore Chapter #21 for Pt. Milligan Road (CR 161) located in District 2.

COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

8. CR 65 (Attapulugus Hwy) SCOP Supplemental Agreement

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and said it was for Board approval of the FDOT SCOP Supplemental Agreement for the resurfacing of CR 65-Attapulugus Highway.

UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HINSON, THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE THIS ITEM.

9. Approval of the 5F Music Festival

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and said it was for Board approval of the 5F Farm Event Reggae Nights. The event has been scaled down greatly, they agreed to abide by all CDC regulations and was recommending Option 1.

COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE.

Commissioner Hinson said he was not sure he “wanted to go down this road right now”. He said they were talking about 5,000 people capacity.

Commissioner Green said he concurred with Commissioner Hinson on this item. He added that things were progressing but this set a fear in him of the County hosting an event of this magnitude even with precautions in place.

Commissioner Viegbesie said his motion died for lack of second and the conversation was not necessary.

Mr. Dixon said for clarification it was for 400 people, not 5,000. He added that he had great heartburn about this and felt they were getting to a fine line where they have an opportunity to do it right. He explained this was outside on hundreds of acres. Everyone was very concerned about COVID but they were getting to a point they needed to consider items and doing it right.

Chair Holt asked how to deal with the emergency Ordinance that was in place.

Mr. Knowles said the Governor issued an Executive Order and has remitted all fines that if any had been issued, they would not have been able to collect. He said they have been “hobbled and crippled” by State regulation, over-regulation on how to run the County and how they deal with public health within the County. Legally speaking, this was almost a formality. He did not know what enforcement powers they had to stop this from happening. There is a Resolution in place that technically allows them to issue fines but there is no enforcement mechanism in place.

Chair Holt said she was in favor of events but was concerned about the virus.

Ms. Quigley said they do not normally regulate one-time events, only if it was going to happen on a regular basis. Only for building permit purposes, if they were going to require electricity or such as that, the Building Inspector would regulate that.

Mr. Dixon said if the Board wanted to entertain, they could table this item and get more specifics.

COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE MADE A MOTION TO TABLE AND CHAIR HOLT MADE THE SECOND. COMMISSIONER HINSON HAD A QUESTION.

Commissioner Hinson said what gave him heartburn was they were discriminating among the Gadsden County residents. He stated the same folks that made the motion was the same one that clearly almost embarrassed an event in Havana at a car show event.

Commissioner Viegbesie interjected.

Chair Holt said to not attack a person, to attack the issue.

Commissioner Hinson stated he was not attacking anyone. His thing was they were stopping others from doing it and lot of funding was lost.

Chair Holt interjected and said the item was coming back.

Commissioner Hinson said for them the hear what he was saying, what was the rush? Why couldn't it come back.

Chair Holt said they were tabling the item and would have a chance to hash everything out. She asked they stick to the topic.

Commissioner Viegbesie said he was really disappointed; yes, he made the motion; he never opposed any car show in Havana. He said to say that he opposed a car show was a lie.

Chair Holt called for order; he told the Administrator in the future, she wanted a deputy at the meeting and then she called for the vote.

THE BOARD VOTED 4-1 BY VOICE VOTE TO TABLE THE ITEM. COMMISSIONER HINSON OPPOSED.

CLERK OF COURT

10. Updates

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

11. Updates

Mr. Dixon said he had no updates.

COUNTY ATTORNEY

12. Updates

Mr. Knowles said he had no updates.

DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS

13. Report and Discussion of Public Issues

Commissioner Eric Hinson, District 1

Commissioner Hinson asked when they were starting the budget process.

Georgette Daniels, Asst. County Administrator, appeared and said they have not set a date yet. They have a tentative calendar. Mr. Dixon said they had issues with the current budget and was trying to work things out and will be getting a calendar out.

He asked about the Senior Citizens Center and the funding source. He talked with the Administrator and also talked with him regarding the bidding process.

He said he wanted to talk about broadband and the status. Mr. Dixon said there was a meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning. Commissioner Hinson asked if they could, as a Board, find a way to meet with FCI and resolve the issue so they could move forward. He added a lot of citizens were asking questions. He knew it was approved on a 4-1 vote and knew the Administrator was doing his part to make sure they were in line with what they were to do. He felt they needed to bring FCI and the Board together. He said he was told by some citizens they still have service.

Chair Holt asked if the Administrator would check with FCI and let them know what they wanted to do.

Commissioner Hinson said he has not talked with the Administrator about the Sheriff's budget. He thought they had addressed that a few months ago and was why he wanted to look at the budget to see what was going on. They needed to make sure officers were comparable with salaries in Leon County.

Commissioner Kimblin NeSmith, District 3

Commissioner Nesmith said first, he wanted to thank the Administrator and staff for implementing the **GADSDEN LEADS** motto.

Second, he thanked the Board and said every time they have a meeting or workshop, he learned something new.

He said he wanted to start talk about a new Commission Building. The one they were in was not a techno-friendly building with cords going everywhere. He added the space did not represent their motto and the current facility was antiquated.

Third, why did they not have personal aides. Chair Holt said they did not have the money. He said he would like for them to find the money so they could have personal aides. He said he attended three funerals the past Saturday; while attending them, he was invited to two church services for Sunday. Because of those events, he was doing yardwork yesterday and was stopped by someone to ask if they could have community meetings so they could discuss issues in the neighborhood.

He then talked about the debris around the County. He said they always talk about water, sewer and electric but thought they needed to discuss the debris around the County.

Chair Holt said they needed to be creative with money, look at funding sources, and do research and budget in how they were going to fund. She said they were short in Building, Planning and Zoning, Housing, etc.

Commissioner Ronterious Green, District 5

Commissioner Green said Commissioner NeSmith had some valid ideas and agreed with his comments. He said they may could consider working something out with the local universities to give a jump-start for assistants.

He said he had the opportunity, while riding his bike around the County, noticed all the trash in the community. He said they had to take pride in where they lived and stress to others the importance of taking pride also and keeping the County clean.

He also encouraged those that had not yet been vaccinated to do so.

Commissioner Anthony "Dr. V" Viegbesie, District 2

Commissioner Viegbesie said he was "intoxicated with the level of enthusiasm and energy" he was hearing.

He asked the Administrator where they were with the campaign "Love where you Live". Also, there was grants available on the State and Federal level to help run the campaign.

Mental Health

He said he was currently in the NACO leadership academy and a member shared they have instituted a wellness program and was a mental health first aid training program where staff as well as those in leadership in the County government were trained in understanding how to handle mental health issues and family issues that come within the subordinates in how to deal with them, how to recognize and how to mitigate and reduce the severity rather than not understanding what was going on with them.

Commissioner Brenda Holt, District 4

Chair Holt complimented the Men of Gadsden County for adopting MLK and Barack Obama Blvd and there will be a trash pick-up.

She asked the Administrator and Attorney to please review some of the items that were mentioned before they come back to the Board to check on the legal side of them, such as aides for commissioners for one. On the Planning and Zoning part, they were looking at variances and processes and need something they could tell citizens they would have to do on the process. On the trash issue, they had bins at one time in different areas of the County and the issue was people stopped putting trash in the bin and was putting it around the bin.

Commissioner Viegbesie said he wanted to mention that a lot of trash he was seeing was trash being thrown from vehicles.

Chair Holt asked them to review the packet on economic development.

Commissioner Nesmith echoed what Commissioner Viegbesie said earlier about the types of trash on the side of the roads. He said however often they needed to meet in order to resolve this issue, they needed to meet. They needed to come up with a solution for trash around the County. He said they could not resolve anything without implementing something.

Mr. Dixon said these things do not happen overnight and would not be resolved overnight. He added they were moving fast to rectify the problem across the County.

Chair Holt added they did not have lot of manpower. This might be the year to give up some pet projects and go after staff. She said they needed a grant writer and coordinator. They need people that know what to do.

Commissioner Hinson said to piggyback on Commissioner NeSmith's position, a lot of employees from Public Works, some had died from the Coronavirus and if they could hire a certain number of employees temporarily. He said the Sheriff used to have staff pick up trash (prisoners) and thought they stopped that because of COVID. He said he also forgot to ask about the Residential Assistance Program. They have the money and need to find a date they could talk about it and how to move forward. There was \$1.3 Million in Gadsden County now for the programs. Chair Holt said for him to contact the Administrator.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked the Administrator if he could work with HR on putting together their HR needs because they must have the manpower in place before they could start all the grandiose programs.

Receipt and File

UPCOMING MEETINGS

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:31 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

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

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk