

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON OCTOBER 19, 2021 AT 5:00
P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

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

Chair Holt welcomed everyone and called the workshop to order at 5:03 p.m.

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 until 11:00 a.m. August 17, 2021. 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.
Commissioner Green read aloud the above statement.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Mr. Dixon said they had before them the Havana Community Development Corporation, Inc. (HCDC) seeking matching funds from the county to facilitate repairs, renovations and repurposing of the old Northside High School buildings and facilities. He said the total needed to fund this proposal in its entirety was \$916,213, of which the HCDC will provide approximately \$300,000 from its own resources. The HCDC is requesting the Gadsden County commission to provide a 2/3 match up \$600,000, payable in one installment for the funds required to complete this project.

Commissioner Hinson arrived at 5:05 p.m.

Mr. Dixon said the issue was being brought by Commissioner Hinson and HCDC.

Wilbert Butler, Jr., HCDC Board Chair, appeared before the Board and passed out information to the Commissioners, Administrator and Attorney (the Deputy Clerk was not provided a copy).

Commissioner NeSmith stepped out at 5:07 p.m.

He said this started with a dream that started with Bill McGill and when he died, it passed on to Harold Henderson.

Commissioner NeSmith returned at 5:08 p.m.

Mr. Butler listed the names of the members and said they were all graduates of Northside High School with the exception of Mr. Harold Knowles. Also, one of the individuals that was on the Board was Phyllis Moore, who was now deceased.

He listed some of the things the center would be able to do:

- 1) Address an emergency rural Health Care emergency center.
- 2) Funding for community Health Centers and community care;
- 3) Community behavioral and mental Health Services;
- 4) COVID-19 emergency medical supplies enhancement;
- 5) Construction;
- 6) Cultural education and enrichment;
- 7) Food Supply chain and agriculture pandemic response;
- 8) Meals and food supplements for individuals who have not attained the age of 25;
- 9) Funding for COVID – 19 testing, contact tracing and mitigation activities;
- 10) Emergency management performance funding;
- 11) Funding for public health workforce; and
- 12) Transportation.

He explained some of the things they were able to provide to the community.

He said they were asking for \$200,000 under the CARES Act and under the Churches Assistance Program of the American Rescue Program, they were asking \$250,000; under the non-profit organization assistance program, they were asking for \$90,000; under the Non-profit Healthcare Assistance plan, they were asking for \$60,000 for a total of \$600,000.

Commissioner NeSmith thanked him for the presentation. He asked about the funding and that he explain that again.

Commissioner Green asked for more clarity, their Board has contributed \$200,000 and they were asking for the County's support of \$600,000. Commissioner Green said his understanding of the CARES Act was to help with loss and asked what his loss was.

Mr. Butler said there was several things going on with the County in terms of COVID. He said they asked for \$50,000 but could show they lost more money than that.

Commissioner Green said his question was not answered. He asked if there was a fee for utilizing the Facility.

Commissioner Hinson asked if the Health Department also used the facility to give vaccinations and Mr. Butler said yes. He asked how many years the Boys and Girls Club utilized the facility and Mr. Butler said this was their third year. Commissioner Hinson said for them to also think, at the old Stevens High School, when this happened, his goal was to refurbish it. He said they had \$600,000 from insurance but because of the State, they got \$4.5 Million. He said they may could use that money that was going to use for Stevens High School for this funding.

Chair Holt asked the Administrator if that money has been used and Mr. Dixon said he did not know and would check.

Chair Holt said she knew from what was done so far was not complete and did know \$4.8 Million had not been received yet and was in Congress, and that information was on hold. The information that was brought by the young lady that writes grants for the County, the information that was brought by here was for a CDBG-CV grant and was not from the County. That could be applied for by the County.

Commissioner Green said he wanted to be clear on the \$600,000, was that money allocated from insurance what was set aside for that building because of the loss and was that money that could be used for other things and to ask if they have applied for any other funding resources to help use for what he was asking for. Mr. Butler said they apply for grants on a regular basis; have applied for money through the State and was rejected for their last one; have applied for half a Million that was in review currently.

Commissioner Green asked for someone to answer the question about the \$600,000 grant. Chair Holt said they have been spending that all along because there was a problem with the plumbing, they re-did the lighting, there were several things going on and quite a bit of that money has been spent.

Commissioner Green said his question was could that money be used for another project being it was insurance money.

Chair Holt said they would have to look at that and look at what was left. She also said they would have to know what they would be getting in funding in order to finish it.

Commissioner Hinson thanked Mr. Butler for coming and at the time, the attorney said the funding was for Gadsden County, not necessarily for Stevens School. He said he wanted to add another \$400,000-\$500,000 to funding. But at the time, the attorney said it was the County's funding and it could be used in Havana, in Chattahoochee, Midway, etc.

Mr. Dixon said Commissioner Hinson was correct, once that money comes here, unless they are going to rebuild Stevens, that money could be re-allocated. He thought there was a bigger issue here than what the Board was looking at, so many projects come out of Gadsden County that no project may be funded. He said they do need something in the north-end of the County but has to be part of the bigger plan. He said whatever the Board decides to do with Havana CDC, it needed and to be planned.

Mr. Butler said he agreed with Mr. Dixon and has tried to pull people together. He said he was not trying to recreate the well, was trying to pull all businesses together for one accord.

Chair Holt said they have to look at people that have not been funded, there are non-profits, etc. She said there were several people that did not get funded and people still need help. She said Gretna Elementary School was requesting money along with others. This would need to be considered.

Commissioner Viegbesie said there was no doubt this project was needed in the community. He said he would limit his comment to the funding sources that have (inaudible). His concern is what Commissioner Green referred to. All the money in the CARES Act should be related to COVID. In the Workshop they had recently, some small businesses had not been funded. He said he

understood there was approximately \$700,000 left. Mr. Dixon said the amount was \$771,000. Commissioner Viegbesie said they were looking at giving some of that to small businesses that had not received anything and getting at least one ambulance because at times they have had to borrow one from Calhoun County or Liberty. He said they did not know what they could do right now. Access to health care was a prominent need in the County.

Commissioner Hinson said one reason, he was a School Board member when Mr. Dixon and Chair Holt came to the School Board and they denied when he asked. He made sure the organization got the school.

Commissioner Hinson said \$1.3 Million was left from COVID and could be spent for anything now, it did not have to be spent for COVID and there were no longer restrictions. He said he saw what they were doing during COVID.

Commissioner Green wanted to be clear this was an excellent idea but was concerned about the affordability of what they have allocated already. He said it did not matter where this was.

Commissioner Viegbesie said for clarification, \$1.3 Million that was left, Mr. Dixon said they had used every dime. Mr. Dixon said he thought they make mistakes when they reduce the conversation down to certain funding line items. There were opportunities they ought to embrace. If they could sit, plan and talk, he said to imagine getting the County to sign off and the City to sign on.

Chair Holt said this was not a definite no, the County had to get things in order. She said she was happy with what Commissioner Hinson brought to the School Board. She said the school should not have been sold, it should have been in partnership with the County.

Mr. Dixon said they should be asking for a legal partnership with the County.

Chair Holt said she did not think there was anyone that did not agree with this.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 5:57 P.M.

Gadsden County, FLORIDA

**ANTHONY VIEGBESIE, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk