

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FL ON June 12, 2024 AT 5:30 P.M., THE
FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: Ronterious Green, Chair, District 5
Alonzetta Simpkins, Vice-Chair, District 2
Eric Hinson, District 1 – arrived late
Kimblin NeSmith, District 3
Brenda Holt, District 4 -arrived late
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk
Angela Grant Sapp, City of Quincy Mayor, District 2
Ronte Harris, City of Quincy Mayor Pro Tem, District 3
Dr. Robin Wood, City of Quincy Commissioner, District 1
Freida Bass-Prieto, City of Quincy Commissioner, District 4
Dr. Beverly Nash, City of Quincy Commissioner, District 5

Call to Order, Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Green welcomed everyone to the joint meeting of the City of Quincy and the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners to discuss the new Community Center that would house the Boys and Girls Club.

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD (3-Minute Limit)

The Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners welcomes and encourages public participation at all meetings of the Board. Citizens are free to speak for up to three (3) minutes on non-agenda items. Public comments and participation are also encouraged for items on the agenda. Additionally, if you are unable to attend a meeting in person, comments from the Public can also be submitted via email to CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until noon on the date of the meeting. 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. Citizens are further encouraged to participate via Zoom using the credentials on the County's website. The Board's meetings are also broadcast live on the Board's Facebook page.

Chair Green read the above statement aloud.

General Business

1. Introduction

- Commissioner Angela Sapp, Mayor

Mayor Sapp gave a brief synopsis of the new center that would house the Boys and Girls Club and stated it would be located on MLK Blvd. where the track field is currently. She mentioned the Jackson Heights playground and pool that was in the area and when kids attended Carter-Parramore High School, they were able to go to the pool, take swimming lessons and return to school to finish out their day. The pool closed approximately 15 years ago and the children then had to venture across Highway 90 to the other pool located on King Street. She stated all their

questions had not been answered, which was why they were here today. The two communities that face the proposed site are an aging community and some do not want to give up their comfort zone they have now. She was looking forward to the conversations to discuss the future of the center. She introduced everyone with City and announced City Manager Robert Nixon was not present due to a death in the family.

- Commissioner Ronterious Green, Chairman, introduced County Commissioners Chair Green introduced the County Commissioners present along with County Administrator Ed Dixon.

- Cari Thro, Board Chair of Boys and Girls Club
Ms. Thro said they were excited to be here and have been serving Gadsden County a long time and was looking forward to expanding.

- Edward Dixon, County Administrator
Mr. Dixon introduced County staff and County Attorney that was present, along with other staff members.

- Robert Nixon, City Manager

- Kacy Dennis, DEO/President of Boys and Girls Club of the Big Bend

Mr. Dennis said he was super excited for them to be here and had some board members with him also and introduced Denise Fletcher, Antonio Jefferson, Vice-Chair, and Daniel Lewis.

2. **Presentations**

- Gadsden County

Mr. Dixon thanked everyone he has had the opportunity to work with.

Chair Green stepped out at 5:45 pm.

He said they had to hurdles to overcome with the community center and there are hurdles they will need to be aware of. One is the orientation of the building, how it relates to the neighborhood and traffic safety. He said they were able to discuss the potential integration of Jackson Heights into the situation and a bridge across MLK. He said with the presentation, this was just some of the things they had discussed. He added they knew there were situations they were aware of.

Chair Green returned at 5:49 pm.

Commissioner Holt arrived at 5:50 pm.

Mr. Dixon continued with the presentation and stated the award date of the grant was July 1, 2023 with receiving \$3.6 Million. He stated the Board has made it their position that they will be looking for additional centers throughout the County. He said the location is MLK Blvd. and as Mayor Grant stated, was the best place for this, being a historical place, provides much needed space in right place in terms of 10 acres and the County's ability to lease the property from the City for 30 years. It shows the level of partnership that the County plans to be here for the next

30 years and plan to make an investment in this spot for the next 30 years. He also added they were aware Boys and Girls Club have requirements and they want to meet those requirements. The County is prepared to provide certain services in this situation, cleaning, etc. that will not take away from the program. In his mind, Jackson Heights remains an opportunity to enhance whatever they do at MLK. He showed renderings that were presented by Boys and Girls Club on how some buildings could look.

Mayor Sapp asked about the lease, if it had been seen yet. Mr. Dixon said it was on the County's agenda for the next meeting. Mayor Sapp said it will be for \$1 a year and the County maintains the facility and the road. Mr. Dixon stated yes.

Commissioner Simpkins asked if there were any additional expectations other than upkeep of the property. Mayor Sapp said she had not seen the lease yet. Mr. Dixon said they had not talked about anything else other than the lease. He said the City Council made it clear they would like to see the walking track go back in in some way, form or fashion, the addition of a pool and a buffer between the neighborhoods.

Commissioner Simpkins said being awarded \$3.6 Million and being realistic as to what they would be able to do, will they be able to fulfil a pool from the start? Mr. Dixon said the city said this was things they would like to see. Mr. Dixon said everything was still in the design phase.

Daniel Lewis from Boys and Girls Club asked from a liability standpoint for the Club, would they be covering the track and pool in addition to, what was their money going to?

Chair Green said everything not going to happen in the first phase. They also knew they would have to find other sources in revenue or grant funding to phase out other pieces.

Commissioner Simpkins said she wanted to make sure the County was not over-committing. Mr. Dixon said from his conversations, it was their agreement they would jointly go forward.

Commissioner Holt said her questions were pretty much answered. They need to jointly go to the Legislature with palm cards in hand stating things needed from the legislature when approaching them and asking for more money for the Center.

Mr. Dixon said in building the Emergency Operations Center and Sheriff's Office, they have gotten multiple years financing receiving \$10 Million, \$5 Million and \$3 Million in the course of two – three years. He said multiple year funding was something they were learning how to do. They were approaching this like they were going to get the money.

Dr. Woods said at first, they talked about the lease; they have a lease but do not know what was in the lease? (Inaudible) She asked if there where phases set up at the beginning or were they just now discussing phases? She said when he came to the City and the City Commissioners wanted to request they keep the track and to add the pool, she did not remember them talking about the phases and may be phased in somewhere else; that there were expectations from the City as far as funding, etc. She asked what that was decided, was it just right now or was there discussion somewhere else and she missed the meeting?

Chair Green said when they are talking about funding and working together, that is the legislative act of funding, not that they would be responsible for paying monthly bills, etc. It was more of a collaborative effort to go out to ask for the money together.

Dr. Wood understood the difference in the funding but did not want there to be an illusion when they made the agreement about the pool, now they have a lot of questions coming up about the pool, but when they were trying to get the land, these conversations were not had. She wanted to be very transparent with the constituents in what was asked and it seemed people were surprised with talking about liability with the pool.

Mayor Grant said there have been conversations not had, they had not been privileged to regarding the pool, etc. She wanted everyone to know the city commissioners have not been privy to a lease but they want to work together.

Mr. Dixon asked to step back; when they went after this money, they went after it for a community center. The city said exactly what he said, they want to see a track field and a pool. In terms of the lease agreement, the County was waiting for the City to provide the County with the lease agreement and the only terms thus far agreed on was 30 years at a \$1 per year. He said they will get money based on what the design is. If there is not enough money, they will go after more.

Commissioner Holt said she was under the impression that was why they were gathered today, to discuss what want they wanted in and not in to get everything ready.

Mayor Sapp said she felt they were at disadvantage because that was not the instructions they were not given for today's meeting, in fact, they were not given any instructions.

Commissioner Holt said now was the time to go to work and go after this.

Mayor Sapp said they were at a disadvantage coming here with nothing before them.

Commissioner Holt said this was the first step in getting anything done.

Mayor Sapp stated they did have to have a pool; they sold the pool they had so a new school could be built.

Mr. Dixon said he believed it was on the next meeting to hire the design and give them instructions that they were to design for them. At that point, he could let them know that had been done and dates could be set up for them to meet and have architects to bring renderings.

Mayor Sapp said she did not want them to drag their feet on this project, she wanted to see it happen.

Denise Fletcher with the Boys and Girls Club, said they were active in the communities, even though there was no building, they were very active in the schools and it was a much-needed thing. She asked if the \$3.6 Million was awarded specifically to Boys and Girls Club or the Gadsden County Community Center? Mr. Dixon said it was awarded to Gadsden County.

Commissioner Simpkins said her concern was people in the unincorporated areas should have some say as well and will there be meetings to get their input? She said they should have a voice and would there be transportation to the meetings?

Mr. Dixon said he expected, even with the Boys and Girls Club, when they are meeting with kids, to have their own input as to what they want in the club.

Mr. Dixon said this meeting was a start to conversations, not that anyone had agreed on anything, just to make sure they were all inclusive.

Dr. Wood said the reason the question came up about the lease, it was stated that it would be ready by Friday so in her mind it was already being prepared.

Mr. Dennis had a quick video of what the Boys and Girls Club was offering that was shown.

Commissioner NeSmith stepped out at 6:40 pm. and returned at 6:42 pm.

Chair Green asked the Administrator what the next step was.

Commissioner Simpkins asked Mr. Dennis, they have been in extensive conversation and will continue to be so, until she saw what she wanted to see come to fruition.

Commissioner Hinson arrived at 6:47 pm.

She continued and asked in Havana, those numbers were not very high, and felt those numbers would not increase until they provide after-school programs. The target population was not within walking distance. What could be put into place when the program was over, they were able to safely walk home and service more of the children that needed to be serviced?

Mr. Dennis said they needed to find a way to fill the transportation gap; either through fundraising, etc. It was an issue they were working hard to try to combat.

Commissioner Holt said when it came up about transportation, they may could talk with the school board as they have the largest transportation system in the County. They could look for infrastructure funds as transportation was infrastructure. She also mentioned the “Golden Triangle” in Mississippi. She said poor people have a hard time paying attention or doing anything, playing or concentrating, when poor.

Mayor Sapp said this had been a very good, productive meeting and she looked forward to moving forward.

Mr. Dixon said the next step would be a conversation about the lease agreement, the task order to come before Board and community meetings once they architect is chosen. Then they could begin a layout.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, MAYOR SAPP MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 6:58 PM.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

RONTERIOUS GREEN, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk