

**AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON NOVEMBER 1, 2011 AT 6:00P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS WAS HAD, VIZ.**

**PRESENT:**

Sherrie Taylor, Chair, District 5  
Gene Morgan, Vice-Chair, District 3  
Eugene Lamb, District 1  
Doug Croley, District 2  
Brenda Holt, District 4  
Deborah Minnis, County Attorney  
Arthur Lawson, Interim County Administrator  
Beryl Wood, Deputy Clerk  
Muriel Straughn, Deputy Clerk

**INVOCATION , PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Taylor called the meeting to order then opened with a prayer and the pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag.

Chair Taylor called for all cell phones to be silenced and requested all speakers to file a "Speakers Request Form" with the clerk. She thanked the number of visitors for their attendance and taking apart in County Government. "It takes people to move a government."

The roll was called by the deputy clerk and recorded with the attendance as noted above.

**AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Lawson said he would like to add Mrs. Emily Rowan concerning long time library patron who passed.

**Addition:**

Emily Rowan was added to the agenda concerning Emily Hart, library member that was deceased.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HOLT AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER LAMB, THE BOARD VOTED, 5 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED ABOVE.**

## **AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS AND APPEARANCES**

### **Emily Hart Resolution( Addition to Agenda)**

Emily Rowan addressed the Board thanking the Board, and especially Commissioner Morgan, District 3 for the resolution in honor of Emily Hart a vibrant member of Chattahoochee Community who recently passed away. She was an active member of many organizations, but her main focus was children, reading and the Library in Chattahoochee. Mrs. Hart was instrumental in organizing the Gadsden County Friends of the Library and continually served as a Friend of the Library for twenty years as a constant driving force in support of County Libraries. She then read the Resolution into record and asked that a copy of the Resolution be given to her family. She once again, thanked the Board for honoring her.

Chair Taylor asked the Board and Audience to stand and applaud in honor of the belated Mrs. Emily Hart for all her contributions to the County.

Commissioner Morgan thanked Mrs. Rowan for her efforts in honoring Mrs. Hart. He stated all of her children would receive a copy of the Resolution along with a copy to be placed in the Chattahoochee Library. He also commented there is a large chair in the kid's corner of the Library that Mrs. Hart would frequent. He encouraged all to visit the Chattahoochee Library.

### **1. Gadsden County Health Department - Closing the Gap Grant Project (Mother Care Network, Inc.)** (Maximo Martinez, Gadsden Community Health Council, Inc. Executive Director)

Mr. Martinez along with Cynthia Coxen both at 2616 N. Adams St. addressed the Board regarding the Closing the Gap Grant Project. He expressed gratitude to the Administrator and Board members for giving them a letter of support to write the Closing the Gap Grant. He also acknowledged Dr. Brown, Professor of Psychology at FAMU who was essential in putting the grant together. He also acknowledged Howard McKinnon of the Health Council and Paul Meyers. He expounded on the exciting news of the grant that was presented by the Office of Minority Health, a ½ million dollars to Gadsden County. He said they were the highest awarded of any County in the State. He expressed his excitement about the grant and what it brings to Gadsden County.

Ms. Coxen spoke at length on the description of the project and its benefits. She said the purpose of the Closing the GAP project is to improve healthcare access to the minority residents of Gadsden County by creating an atmosphere in which such access is more culturally-sensitive, compassionate and affordable. This purpose will be achieved through implementation of a program employing a community of residents trained in the basic knowledge of how to access the healthcare in Gadsden County. These community-based healthcare advisors are called "Gadsden Community Health Ambassadors" (GCHA). She said the project would break out in 4 phases: the 1<sup>st</sup> phase would be the Community Health Ambassadors, 2<sup>nd</sup> phase 3 forum meetings held around Gadsden County, 3<sup>rd</sup> phase is specialized training.

The strength of this program is predicated on the intimate knowledge that a Gadsden Community Health Ambassador would have knowledge to pre-existing areas of need in their respective communities. In small rural communities like Gadsden County, physicians and healthcare workers

are typically seen as “outsiders”. A traditional professional healthcare worker may never be made aware of the informal social networks, as a consequence of their historical social ties to their community. She went on to identify the process of hiring Gadsden Community Health Ambassadors (GCHA). She said that there would be forums to inform the community of the need to identify Gadsden residents who could be trained to become Gadsden Community Health Ambassadors and a total of 72 advisors would be selected. She also discussed the Orientation Process and Assessment Plan. The Ambassadors Compensation would be a rate of \$10 per hour for 40 weeks; \$100.00 per week X 40 = \$4,000.00 per ambassador, based on a 10 hour work week. She ended by thanking the Board and stated that the project dates are from October 1 – June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Background History:**

The Reducing Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities "Closing the Gap" grant program, section [381.7351, Florida Statutes](#), was signed into law on June 8, 2000. These grants are utilized to stimulate the development of community and neighborhood-based organizations to improve health outcomes of racial and ethnic populations and promote disease prevention activities.

Projects funded through the Closing the Gap grant program help **stimulate broad-based participation** and the support of both public and private entities by:

- Fostering partnerships between local governments, community groups and private sector health care organizations;
- Helping communities address their most pressing health needs through targeted health screenings, education and awareness programs;
- Helping communities better understand the nature of health disparities among ethnic and racial groups; and
- Allowing state epidemiologists to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions so that identified "best practices" can be shared with other high-risk Florida communities.

Primary **benefits** to the state from the Closing the Gap Act include:

- Meaningful improvements in the lives of Floridians who now suffer disproportionately from disease and disability; and
- Development of tools and strategies that will enable Florida to eliminate these disparities.

The "Closing the Gap" grant program targets seven priority health areas but Gadsden grant would focus on (3): Cardiovascular disease, Diabetes and Maternal and infant mortality.

- [Cancer](#),
- [Cardiovascular disease](#),
- [Diabetes](#),
- [Adult and Child immunizations](#),
- [HIV/AIDS](#),
- [Maternal and infant mortality](#) and
- Oral health care.

Chair Taylor along with the Board commended Mrs. Coxen and Mr. Martinez for their efforts and offered their wholehearted support for them bringing over a half a million dollars to Gadsden County.

2. **Eugene Lamb, Jr. Park at Richbay Presentation of Funds**  
(Elizabeth Jenkins and Dale Riggins, Eugene Lamb, Jr. Park Fundraisers)

Elizabeth Jenkins, Chair of Community Project and Dale Riggins, Fundraising Chair appeared before the Board to give an update on Lamb Park. She pledged they had committed to helping with the financial contributions to the park and total raised to date is \$14,200. They asked Mr. Charles Chapman to come forward to give an update on progress of the park.

Mr. Chapman commented the playground equipment should be delivered in the upcoming days. He said they are in the final stages and looking forward to ribbon cutting very soon.

The Board applauded their fundraising efforts and commitment to the Lamb Park.

There was no comment by Commissioner Lamb, who the park is in honor of.

**CLERK OF COURTS**

3. Presentation of County Finance and County Clerk Issues  
(Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Courts)

Mr. Thomas had no report.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HOLT AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER LAMB, THE BOARD VOTED 5 -0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE ITEMS 4, 5 AND 7 OF THE CONSENT AGENDA.**

4. Approval of Minutes –September 6, 2011 – Regular Meeting  
August 16, 2011 – Regular Meeting  
July 19, 2011 – Regular Meeting

5. Ratification of Approval to Pay County Bills

6. **Approval of Budget Amendment Numbers 120002 and 120003 Moving \$9,249 and \$25,000 from Reserve for Contingency Account to the Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Account. (*Pulled at request of Chair Taylor*)**

Chair Taylor pulled item 6 for a question. She commented the only question she had was, could a budget amendment appear on the consent agenda?

Attorney Minnis replied it was her understanding from talking to Mr. Lawson is this had already been approved and they are simply bringing it back. It was approved in a general business discussion.

Chair Taylor stated that was the only question she had and asked for approval from the Board.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER LAMB AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HOLT, THE BOARD VOTED 5 -0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE ITEM 6 OF THE CONSENT AGENDA.**

7. Approval of Commissioner Lamb's and Commissioner Holt's Travel to the Florida Association of Counties' (2011-12) Legislative Conference  
(Commissioner Eugene Lamb and Commissioner Brenda Holt)

**CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS (3 MINUTE LIMIT)**

**Lamar Rudd** of Ashton Court, between Quincy and Havana addressed the Board with his concerns. He said was appearing due to heavy traffic and people gathering in an area close to him on a private soccer field. He said they are making the living situation unbearable due to the traffic, trash, drinking and loud noises. He asked the Board for direction to control the situation.

Chair Taylor directed Mr. Rudd to get with Mr. Lawson, County Manager with his concerns due to this item not being on the agenda. She commented she hoped some type of resolution could be agreed upon.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

8. **Public Hearing – Approval of Close –out Budget Amendment for FY 2011**  
(Connie McLendon, Finance Director)

Mr. Lawson announced the public hearing. He addressed the Board in regards to Resolution No. 2011-040 amending the budget as reflected on Amendment# 110127 through 110139. This is the annual close-out entries as permitted by Florida Statutes to close out Fiscal Year 2011. He said that Mrs. McLendon, Finance Director was present if there were questions.

**Public Comment**

Chair Taylor reiterated the public hearing and she invited the public to come forward and there were no speakers on this issue.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HOLT AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER LAMB, THE BOARD VOTED 5 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 11-040 WITH AMENDMENTS 110127 THROUGH 110139 FY 2011.**

9. **Public Hearing – Amendment of Section 74-1 of the Gadsden County Code of Ordinances**  
(Deborah Minnis, County Attorney)

Mrs. Minnis, County Attorney stated Amendment of section 74-1 of the Gadsden county Code of Ordinances to allow Discretionary Sales Surtax funds enacted pursuant to F.S. section 212.055(3) be used to pay for maintenance of the existing jail facility, the construction and maintenance of bridges in addition to the other uses already identified in the ordinance.

She gave a brief narrative that at the July 19, 2011 meeting, the Commission, at the request of the City of Gretna, with the support of the Sheriff, authorized the transfers of \$205,000.00 from fund 301(a line item to be used for improvements and repairs to the jail) to a line item for the benefit of the city of Gretna. Pursuant to the vote of the Commission, the \$205,000.00 would be made available to the city of Gretna to assist in the cost of installing a wastewater line along State Road

12. To replace the revenue in fund 301, the Commission voted to consider amending Section 74-1 of the Gadsden County Code of Ordinances to allow for the use of Discretionary Sales Surtax money to allow it to be used for the maintenance of the jail facility.

She noted a draft amendment was proposed to allow the sales tax fund to be used generally for the maintenance of infrastructure with infrastructure being defined as any fixed capital expenditure or fixed capital outlay associated with construction, reconstruction, or improvement of public facilities that have a life expectancy of 5 or more years and any related land acquisition, land improvement, design and engineering costs. The proposed amendment was duly noticed and advertised and considered by the Commission at its September 19, 2011 meeting.

She added in addition, the proposed amendment will allow the funds to be used for the construction of a pod or pods at the existing jail facility and for maintenance of bridges in addition to the uses already identified in the ordinance. Amendment of the ordinance will require an **extraordinary vote** of the Commission. The language in this ordinance has been guided by the Board of County Commissioners and prior Public Hearings.

#### **Public Comment**

Chair Taylor reiterated the public hearing and she invited the public to come forward and there were no speakers on this issue.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CROLEY AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HOLT, THE BOARD VOTED 5 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE THE AMENDMENT OF SECTION 74-1 OF THE GADSDEN COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES.**

#### **10. Public Hearing – Second Hearing for Gadsden County to apply for Florida Department of Community Affairs 2011 CDBG Economic Development Grant**

(Anthony Matheny, Planning And Community Development Director)

Mr. Lawson and Mr. Ford addressed the Board regarding the second of two Public Hearings Required for Gadsden County to apply for Florida Department of Community Affairs 2011 CDBG Economic Development Grant. He said that Mr. Auburn Ford, on behalf of Mr. Charlie Harris, will conduct the second of two Public Hearings required for Gadsden County to submit a grant application to the Florida Department of Community Affairs (FDCA), under the CDBG Program to fund infrastructure improvements for Gussie's Garden Inn Assisted Living Care Facility. This is Gadsden County's second application for these grant funds. The County's 2010 application was denied due to the submittal of an incomplete application. The first Public Hearing was held on October 04, 2011. The conceptual plan for Gussie's Garden Inn ACLF was approved by the Gadsden County BOCC on March 1, 2005. Mr. Harris owner of Sirrah Mini Storage allocated about a quarter of a mile west of the City of Quincy, city limits on U.S 90. He is converting the building into an Assisted Living Facility which will house forty-eight (48) clients and create eleven (11) low-moderate income jobs. The site is now serviced by septic. The facility will be required to hook to City of Quincy sewage. The connection requirement will cause an undue financial hardship o Mr. Harris and therefore he is requesting County staff to pursue a CBDG Economic Development Grant to provide the infrastructure to his business. The infrastructure improvement may also benefit future development in the area.

Chair Taylor explained the county is applying for a Grant, so that they can build infrastructure a sewer line on Highway 90, west, Blue Star Highway. She explained when you build infrastructure it pays the way for more growth and development.

Mr. Ford stated if funded, the infrastructure improvement will be paid 100% from grant funds. There will be staff time devoted to the grant application process, which may involve the County securing a consultant to apply for the grant.

**Public Comment:**

Chair Taylor reiterated the public hearing and she invited the public to come forward and there were no speakers on this issue.

Commissioner Holt clarified that we are approving the grant only to do infrastructure and asked the statement be taken out concerning the Assisted Living Facility until they reach the plan.

Commissioner Morgan made known this project was federally funded and it has no fiscal impact to the County.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER LAMB AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER CROLEY, THE BOARD VOTED, 5 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE GADSDEN COUNTY FOR THE SECOND HEARING TO APPLY FOR FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS 2011 CDBG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT, FOR INFRASTRUCTURE ONLY.**

Mr. Ford asked for permission for Chair Taylor to sign off on signature letter of items.

Chair Taylor asked Atty. Minnis if they were in order, to sign off on necessary documentation for this particular item.

Atty. Minnis replied it is not an agenda item for that particular issue and the documentation is not before you so, it's normally not your practice.

Chair Taylor commented she understood, but they are within a timeline and reiterated it doesn't have any fiscal impact.

Commissioner Holt moved for approval and the Board entertained questions.

Commissioner Morgan inquired of the Board what was involved in the signing of the documents. He asked for a copy of the document for review by the Board and County Attorney.

Chair Taylor stated it was a signature page needed to move this on to the next level.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HOLT AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER LAMB, THE BOARD VOTED 5- 0, BY VOICE VOTE, FOR APPROVAL OF CHAIR TAYLOR SIGNATURE ON THE LETTER OF INTENT.**

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**11. Request to Authorize a Countywide Referendum on Allowing Slot Machines at the Creek Entertainment Gretna Horse Track Facility**

(James Dorris, Chief Executive Officer, PCI Gaming Authority)

Mr. Lawson came before the Board with a request to authorize a Countywide Referendum on allowing Slot Machines at the Creek Entertainment Gretna Horse Track Facility. He said this item seeks Board approval of a county-wide voter ballot referendum to authorize the use of slot machines at Creek Entertainment Gretna's pari-mutuel horse track.

**Chair Taylor:**

What we are going to ask is as you come, forward please introduce yourself and the position that you hold in this particular firm that would suffice for us. Thank you.

**Keith Martin:**

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of County Commission of Gadsden County. My name is Keith Martin for the record. I am a Council Member of Poarch Band Creek Indians. I am designated by the tribal council to serve on the PCI Board of Directors. I have the honor of serving as their Chairman. I come before the County Commission today to ask them to allow the people of Gadsden County to vote on a referendum that would allow slot machines within the county. We are excited about this opportunity to come before you today. I would like to introduce Mr. Mark Dunbar who is 10% partner. GCI Gaming owns 70% of Creek Entertainment, Gretna. Mr. Mark Dunbar owns 10%, Mr. Gene McGee owns 10% and Mr. David Romant who is not here today owns 10% also. I have with me Mr. James Dorris who is the President, CEO of GCI Gaming, Vice-President of Marketing, Mr. Brent Faison, Mr. Matthew Martin who is a Board Member of GCI Gaming Board of Directors, Ryan Eluder who is the treasure of GCI Gaming, Mr. Wesley Cox who is lifetime resident of Gadsden County. Currently in my tribe we have 3 game facilities within the state of Alabama. We own 70% of the Pensacola Dog Track and we own 70% of the Mobile County Dog Track. We appreciate you hearing us out and let us come before you today. It does mean a lot to us and the project. This is the first project that we have taken on that is this far out of our reservation. We are excited about the opportunity with the potential of this project. I'll turn it over to Mr. James Dorris, my CEO.

**James Dorris:**

Thank you Keith and Madam Chairman thank you and the Board for letting us be here tonight. As Keith pointed out this is first venture or the furthest that the tribe has considered with Commercial Operations. I want to make clear this is not a tribal land issue. We will be paying full taxes to the County, City and to the State. Most everyone knows about Creek Entertainment Gretna. We are very excited about it; we will be operational as of December 1. We are located going toward Greensboro; County Road 12 near Interstate 10. One of the things that attracted us to this opportunity is the location and being on the Interstate. Our Wind Creek Facility in Atmore, Alabama is on Interstate 65 and they have some many cars that go out to that facility a year. There is 15 million that go by this location here in Gadsden County. We know that a great many of those people are driving by here and going to Biloxi. You can look at the Mississippi Gaming Website and they actual breakout where they are getting patrons in Biloxi. We know a lot of them are coming from Florida. We think there is a tremendous opportunity if the Commission approves the Referendum and the voters agree to let us put slot machines in and it would be a Wind Creek type facility here. This is a 20 million dollar investment and if you go out there you can see what that 20 million will get you. We have 62-63 people in training, those folks will tell you, there are



about 41 of them or 2/3 of them are residents from Gadsden County. Those jobs are going to pay up to \$50,000 a year. In fact we are about to start our massive hiring. I say massive because it will be very busy for us. On December 17 we intend to open the Poker Room. December 1, we are going to start racing. We are expecting right out the gate 158 employees. We will give you an idea what each job will pay. There will be 15 jobs that pay \$120,000 a year. There will be 67 jobs that pay between \$20,000 and 30,000 a year. We have 22 positions scheduled for \$30- 40,000 a year. We have 17 jobs scheduled for \$40-50,000 a year. We have 47 jobs we think are going to pay \$50,000 a year or more. They will be very good jobs and they are going to give people in Gadsden County, Gretna the chance to stay home and earn a very good living for themselves and their families and we pleased to be able to take part in that. Again, you ask the question what types of qualifications they have to have. For us the answer is; you got to be able to take care of our customers. If you have a great personality we can work with you because, you are going to be able to relate to our customers and if they have a good time they will come back. For folks that don't have a great personality, we need accountants (laughter). We are very excited with what we have going. On December 1, we are going to start are racing. We are excited about what's going on with that. We have Charmayne James, long time world champion barrel racer. She will be here on the 17<sup>th</sup>. That will be our marquee performance between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup>, we will do 20 performances. On November 16 we are actually going to dress rehearsal. I've been inviting people to come check us out. We are going to screw up but it's ok, it's a dress rehearsal, but we are going to work out are problems and we are going to be good to go when we open up on the 1<sup>st</sup>. We are looking forward to opening our card room on the 17<sup>th</sup>. We are pleased to bring these 168 jobs. If you all see fit and the residents of Gadsden County to let us, we think with 2,000 slot machines we can put in a Wind Creek Class Facility. At Wind Creek there are 1,600 games these will be 2,000. So it's actually larger than what we have in Atmore. If you haven't been to Wind Creek, Atmore, we would love to have you come and see it. If not I would ask that you look on the web and Google. You will see a quality facility that we try and build. I hate to toot our own horn, but I will put it up against any property anywhere in the Country and will be something that you all can be proud of. We want to stay overnight.

We know that it takes that level of investment and quality to bring people and ask them to stop. We want to be able to stay and visit Gretna, Gadsden County and then go about and move on. They will tell everyone they had a great time and say you got to go check this place out. It's a place you can come and have a good time and come back often. Ad Valorem Taxes, we think it's going to take about 5 years to build this out. Should the referendum pass this would be the casino complex, it would be bigger than the one we have in Atmore (layout viewing). We think this plan will take about a 5 year build out. The entire sight right now, Creek Entertainment, Gretna is what we opening up come December, should the referendum pass. We want to start immediately building Resort Destination Casino and Hotels. As that get's built, we think it's great opportunity to also have other development on the site. He said we will have our Arena where we will do our barrel racing. We finally got our permit in for the race track. We want to be able to offer a full spectrum of sports activities. There is barrel racing, racing around the race track, there is rodeo. We want to be able to bring all the different horse activities to have an event. Anytime we can have an event at our facility and especially if people could spend the night, the better off it is for us. They will have more time in the community and eventually spend their dollars here. With hotels, the plan has 1, 2, 3, 4 hotels, amphitheater, retail, restaurants other parcels. Also part of this plan is an indoor Equestrian, Gretna Civic Center and Agricultural Arena. The City of Gretna is working to build that facility, which would be near the Casino Resort. We would use that to host concerts and activities. We also have a parcel that would be used to provide fire and public safety.

The City of Gretna has been a great partner. They are excited, we are excited and we are hopeful that you all will let folks vote on this. I want to turn this back over to Keith and he will have a few more comments that he wants to share.

**Martin:**

Thank you, James. I don't know protocol here madam Chair, but I thought it would be helpful if ya'll hear from some of your peers. I asked and they graciously came. The Sheriff of Escambia County, Alabama is in attendance here, City Councilmen, Jim Staff who happens to be the Police Commission of the City of Atmore which is where we preside in Twin Creek. If ya'll have any questions of those. If any of the fellow Commissioners what to ask any questions. I always hear crime is coming; well I kind a thought that, when I first started, it's not Las Vegas. The rural south, clubs and things like that just don't pop up overnight. When you build a casino. I can't speak of any crime waves that came and they are here to address any question if ya'll, may have any.

**Chair Taylor:**

At this time if you want them to do a presentation during your part, it is certainly up to you. If that's what you want to do during your time

**Speakers**

- **Jim Richard Staff, City of Atmore, Mayor Pro-Tem, 110 McKenzie Dr. Atmore, AL 36502**, he commended the Poarch Creek Indians were viable in their County. He noted with the addition of the Casino the positive impact it has had and it has provided 1,000 jobs and the economy is doing well.
- **Grover Smith, Escambia County, AL Sheriff, P O Box 772 Brewton, AL**, addressed the Board on behalf of the Poarch Band Creek Indians. He said they have contributed to the County School System 1.6 million. He mentioned he has gone to the Poarch Creek Indians many times and they have always helped whether it is financial or taking an active role in the community. He said there was no addition in crime by the Casino coming to their area. He added the business is run very professionally.

**Martin:**

Everybody says Indians don't pay taxes, but on behalf of my tribe and to the great State of Florida and we will pay every tax that the law puts on us gladly. At this time I will let Jay close, Thank ya'll.

**Dorris:**

Speaking of taxes, Ad Valorem if we are able to put the Casino in we think it would be a 5 year build out. We think within the 1<sup>st</sup> year we are looking to pay the County about 1.8 million in Ad Valorem taxes. The entire master plan that's up on the screen, it is our estimate that it will generate about 5.8 in Ad Valorem taxes to the County. As Keith said, this is a commercial endeavor and we just did an estimate of what we think the taxes would be and those are our estimates of what we would be paying to the County. With that Madam Chairman, I'm done.

**Chair Taylor:**

I certainly appreciate your presentation and know there are some people that have asked to speak on this particular item. I will call you up and this is where your 3 minutes come into play. After which, then we will hear from the Board.

**Public Speakers:**

- **Sam Palmer, 1225 Berry Lane Quincy, FL 32351**, stated he was undecided, but after hearing them speak and receiving a better understanding he is now in favor of Referendum.
- **Mayor Clarence Jackson, City of Gretna, 150 First Street Gretna, FL**, spoke in favor of the project with his Commission by his side. He said they welcome them to their great city and are 100% behind this project. He commented they had visited the 1<sup>st</sup> class facility in Atmore and were thoroughly pleased. He also spoke of the added economic impact the project would provide.
- **Wesley Cox, 637 Cox Lane Quincy, FL 32351**, greeted Commissioners and stated he was a lifelong resident of Gadsden County. He shared the Creek Entertainment Gretna Facility revision of a Horsemen Destination, in addition to the pari-mutuel events. They want to be open year round for all type of horse shows. He said he was working with Creek Entertainment Gretna to host events as far as bringing in the horses and riders. He said the facility will be used all year long. He discussed the economic growth that could result in jobs. He supported the Referendum be placed on ballot.
- **Dr. Anthony Viegbese, 989 Ames Barineau Rd, Havana, Fl 32333**, conveyed the need for economic development speaking from the professional point of view as an Economist. In addition he spoke in support of the Referendum.

**Chair Taylor:**

I think that was the last speaker to speak on this particular item, but before I bring this before the Board, please let me apologize and recognize a couple of political members who are in the audience. I will do that at this time, I should have done it earlier. I do want to recognize **former Senator Al Lawson** and would you please stand sir. Please give him a round of applause. We **have School Board Member, Eric Hinson** and would you please stand sir (applause).

**Additional Public Speakers:**

- **Bobby Milton, Greensboro, FL**, provided he is in favor of the project. He spoke on the changes from Quarter to Barrel Racing and commented it was the greatest thing to come to Gadsden County.
- **Henry Corry, Havana, FL, Corry Cabinets in Havana**, shared he was in support of the Referendum and the economic boost to the County.
- **Randolph Thomas, Jr. 437 S Cleveland Street, All out Masonry** – conveyed the need for jobs in the area. He urged the Board to consider the Referendum.

**Chair Taylor:**

Alright Commissioner's. Now I will put this into the hands of this Board and we will have discussions from each of you on this particular item. We will go around and have words for each of the Commissioner's. I will start to my left with Commissioner Croley.

**Croley:**

I'm going to pass and yield to Commissioner Holt she had her hand up first.

**Taylor:**

She is the owner of the property. I was going to save her for last, so she could wrap it up and bring

it to a close. That was my intent.

**Croley:**

Well, first I want to thank you Mr. Martin and the Poarch Creek Band Indians for this investment and your commercial interest in Gadsden County and I mean that sincerely. I want to recognize Mayor Clarence Jackson my friend, the entire City Council and the staff who have worked hard on their economic development. Let's face it ya'll have really gotten out in front of these things. Now as part of this process and for the record. I want because of the personal interest of certain parties involved in the issue now under consideration for public record. I would like to disclose that I have been in discussion on this ballot with Mr. Gene McGhee in Gretna, Dr. Steve Fish, president of Florida Quarter Horse Racing Association, Mr. Herb Sheheane, lobbyist for the Florida Quarter Horse Racing Association and of course Mr. Antonio Jefferson, Gretna City Manager. Now obviously there is some difference in opinion what constitutes Quarter Horse Racing and that's unfortunate, but that's not my business. That has been decided when you obtained a license through the state of Florida. As far as I'm concerned that is of no interest to me. If there are any issues that will have to be worked out in other forums. I want to bring something to everyone's attention this business of the referendum on the ballot, I don't have any problem with submitting the issue to the citizen's of the County in terms of the State Statues, before I go any further I want to thank the Councilman of Atmore and the Sheriff of Escambia County for taking the long drive down here to give your input in this process. I think it's a great value to the citizens to hear about the law enforcement element and the contribution of the Poarch Band Creek Indians to their communities. I personally thank you for that, I think it's very valuable.

Let me go back to the question of the referendum, I spoke today to Gadsden County Supervisor of Elections, Shirley Green- Knight, I want to give you some figures and then let you know where I'm coming from. Think about this from how I'm viewing this and maybe you can help me resolve this question I have. Out of approximately 28,521 voters in Gadsden County 22,591 are Democrats and 3,801 are Republicans and 2,129 are other parties or Independents. Mrs. Knight shared with me the voter turnout in Presidential preference Primary typically run at about 25-30%. This past election when you had both of them a Democrat and a Republican preferential primary it was a little bit higher, but even then it was only 45%. Now you compare that with the General Election when there is 75 – 80% of the voters in this county are turning out to vote. The cost to include the ballot initiative in January and I know you have agreed willingly to pay this is approximately \$60,000, not counting what it would cost for you to do your promotion. Mr. Ghee you advised me if this passed and you could put slot machines in, you would be looking at \$100 million dollar a year in possible revenue somewhere in that neighborhood. I understand and if the Attorney would clarify this for me, the argument from the Florida Legislature may amend or repeal gaming laws that presently allow these slot machines for the referendum on the County levels. You got to weigh that against greater voter participation and the referendum process. My concern is how I am going to sit here and say I want to put this on a ballot initiative, that historically only 25% of voter's turnout. Sure it might go up with promotion against 75-80% of the voters are going to vote in the General Election in August of the same year. I'm also concerned; I can't second guess Legislatures on what they are going to do. I am hoping Madam Chair; this is a key issue for us. If there is anybody that can speak about the issue, how to weigh out. That seems to be the intent of the law, please engage the public mindset, because I have to disclose to everyone. I have had a lot of people some for, some against and probably out on the streets some of the circles I run in are little bit more apprehensive about the slot machines. They all seem adamant that they want to have it when the majority of the voter's are going to vote. With your

permission I think that's a key issue for the citizens of this county to hear about. If anybody can respond to that, I would appreciate it, if that's ok with you Madam Chair.

**Taylor:**

I certainly don't have any problems with that. The question is whether or not you want to place an item on the agenda when obviously the turnout wouldn't be as great as if you would wait until full agenda.

**Croley:**

That's my primary concern.

**Dorris:**

Commissioner, I understand what you are saying, but with respect. Historically it's a better turnout in November, however the right of the people to vote only counts if it is still there and I experience it the Legislature can close the door and they have on prior projects our partners have been involved in. I want the votes in Gadsden County to actually count and the only way legally that can happen is if we can get in January, before Legislature has a chance to veto. It is our opinion the Legislature is under a lot of pressure from these big 2 billion dollar proposals from Leg Vegas and Malaysian Companies. They don't necessarily want to see us in Gadsden County competing with that. Legislature is under pressure to shut the door. Our desire is to show them that people actually count. If we wait for November it's a very good chance it won't count. So that would be our plea to you. Let the folks have that opportunity while it would count.

**Taylor:**

Thank you

**Croley:**

One more question, while you are up. I don't have a problem putting the referendum on the ballot. I want to make that clear, my problem is when. If it is put on the ballot and if it passes you would see a significant increase in traffic. I understand you have a good record of supporting your community. I don't have any doubt about that from what I have heard. What arrangements are you willing to enter into with the other affected governments? The improvements that may be needed at this interchange, maybe additional safety improvements. Who's going to pay for roads and infrastructure improvement at a time when the State and Federal tell us they don't have the monies to do this. How do you propose to handle that and what commitments are you willing to make.

**Dorris:**

When we actually plan the resort the whole concept is to take to systematic design. I have some familiarity with St. Joe Company down in Panama City beach and they do a lot of development. I know we are going to spend a lot of time with the Department of Transportation and other affected Governments to make sure their concerns are addressed. That process will be very refined and reformed. We will work with each of those entities and we will make sure those kind of concerns are addressed.

**Croley:**

I think I'm finished right now, Madam Chair. I may want to come back after I hear other conversation, but I'm ok for right now.

**Morgan:**

Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all I want to disclose as Commissioner Croley did that I have had several conversations with the folks he has mentioned and I appreciate the opportunity to do that. I also want to disclose all of us here on this Council each threw in \$100 bucks to bet on how these votes would turn out. I'm kidding. I hope ya'll take my sense of humor with a grain of salt. This is a very serious issue and it's a great thing that we are having discussions about economic growth here in Gadsden County. Most everyone in this room knows that I have supported economic development in our community every since I have been up here. I want to commend the City of Gretna for wanting to better their community. Our County is not going to look the same whether it is this issue or any issue that we will be discussing. We will look different in years ahead. It can be for the better or not for the better. It can be from some issues that we are talking about. This is a good day when we are having these serious types of discussions. It doesn't matter on which side of the fence you may be. We have economic development at the forefront here. We are going to swing and miss some projects and we are going to get some grand slam homeruns. I truly believe when the right project comes along and this might be it. I think it will have a domino effect in our County. Some of the concerns that I have quite honestly, from what I've heard from talking to different people in the community, many who are for and many who are against the slot machines in our County. One of the primary concerns I have is how we are going to maintain the rural character of our County and the things, the lifestyle we enjoy in Gadsden County. I heard, I'm also on the Board of the Chamber of Commerce. I was in a meeting with the Casino folks, City of Gretna Officials where there and the Chamber Board and I was very pleased with some of the things I heard. These gentlemen are very professional at what they do. They have been successful in other places where they have done this. I was hoping to have an opportunity to go to Atmore, Alabama to see their facility. I tried to get there within the last 2 days and it just hasn't worked out in my schedule, but I look forward to going there and seeing that facility. It means a lot to me to here from local officials, like the Sheriff of Escambia County, Alabama, the City Council person and so many others I have talked too. I want to continue to hear discussion and I have honestly tried to listen with an open mind. There is never a time in my opinion where you should not put decisions like this before the public. I know if I wasn't on the Board of Gadsden County Commissioners I would not want 5 people deciding on something of this magnitude that may have a profound effect on our County, no matter how I felt on the issue.

I want to have the opportunity to get involved and share my opinion. Have input with the benefit as a citizen of being able to make that decision, it comes with responsibility, not blame. You can decide to blame other people for how something turns out or you can get involved and become responsible enough to be informed about certain things that we are talking about. It doesn't mean you have someone else take responsibility for you as far as becoming informed about an issue. It means you making and me making our own decisions based on what we believe as individuals in the County. I will tell you that I support us putting this before the people in January. I think for all the reasons I just stated that is the right thing to do. I also talked to the Supervisor of Elections and have reviewed the previous elections when they were held in January. Whether it is a Presidential Primary or other election even though voter turnout has been low, we want to have the majority of the citizens in our community make this decision. It doesn't matter when that vote is; you are not going to legislate somebody's responsibility on whether or not they go to the polls and vote. We can't legislate people becoming informed and making intelligent decisions that are morally right. What we are voting on tonight is to put it before the people; it's not whether we think it's right or wrong. It's whether or not we are willing to put it before you. I am going to go

out on a limb and tell you right now, I am not in favor of slot machines coming to Gadsden County, that's a personal opinion of my own. I am in favor of quality economic development projects and I believe this has the potential to be a very good one. That doesn't mean someone jump on my head and make me go pull a slot machine or play a game of poker or go bet on a horse race. I can if I want. If I want to go eat a prime rib with my family at nice buffet, I have the opportunity to do that if I want. I think those are some of the things we need to keep in mind. OI think we have citizens in our County that there are some potential for them to be up there placing bets, playing poker spending money in ways they have no business doing that. That's just my personal opinion. I feel uncomfortable about that, that's why I don't want to support slots there. Understand by listening to everything I said and what I told you tonight I think this has the opportunity to be a great thing for Gadsden County. I want some assurances that we have a good responsible corporate partner here, one that has been successful before in a community who is happy in them being there. One that will be there to support not only our public schools but our quality private schools, the local 4-H clubs and other organizations that they could become involved with. I want this to be an above board operation. One that is a quality project in Gadsden County that we can be proud of. I share with you my personal opinion; something that is important to me is how they will ensure us, to help maintain are rural character here. What we know about living in Gadsden County.

**Antonio Jefferson:**

Commissioner's I thank you, for having the City of Gretna here tonight. Commissioner Morgan you and I have had numerous conversations. I have talked with each of you and heard your concerns about making sure what we see here in the project is something we all, whether elected are appointed, we can be proud of. I want to ensure you Commissioner Morgan and the rest of the Commission we have done our due diligence; we know what type of partner this is. We know they are going to be a good corporate citizen because we have talked to the people in Atmore, the average everyday guy. We have talked to government officials, we have talked to the Sheriff and everything that we have heard and this is a great company that believes in the community. They have a very strong religious foundation on their reservation. I believe these folks represent a good close religious based community. I believe that and I stand here representing the greatest City in Gadsden County, that's what you will see out there on the ground and in 20 years from now when my son or your children are looking at that facility and keeping them here in Gadsden County.

**Morgan:**

Antonio I appreciate those comments. I just want to say again for the public this decision that if it goes before you, requires again not blame but responsibility and I close with that.

**Taylor:**

Commissioner Lamb

**Lamb:**

Thank you, Madam Chairman thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to express my opinion concerning this project. I met with the Investor and told him where I stand when it comes to gambling. I heard from both sides concerning this project. I've been sitting behind here come 7 years and most of the time I was the swing vote, one or the other for the last 3 years. That's not a good feeling some time being here, that's a lot of pressure placed on you some time. Guess what, I have an opportunity to put it right back on the citizens and it's giving me great pleasure to say

yes, to this vote tonight. I can't wait to say yes, thank you, Madam Chairman.

**Taylor:**

Commissioner Holt

**Holt:**

Thank you, Madam Chairman. Gretna is in my district, we are aggressive and hardworking and they are economically sound and involved. There are several people involved in this project and I must say this, there is no greater right that Americans have, than the right to vote. This is not about gambling this is about the Citizen's in Gadsden County finally having the opportunity to vote on their own outcome. That's what we need. We should always give them the opportunity to vote no matter what. That's something you never take away from the citizens. We lost jobs in Chattahoochee; in the State of Florida we have people that need jobs. There are people standing in the back room back there and they can tell you they need jobs. I told a young lady this, if you are working and your neighbor is not working and they are good people are you willing to share your supper with them. Think about they have to eat too, they have to live too. This should be put on the ballot and let the people vote. That gives those folks an opportunity to sell their product that is what you want. Give them an opportunity to go visit. I took someone out there the other day and the project manager was getting in his truck, but this man really wanted to know what was out there, so I told him to get in my truck and let's go. I want people to go and see and talk, don't let something come to your community that you don't know anything about. Get with the Commissioners, City Manager and go out and look at the project. Someone please tell me how to play Texas Hold-em (laughter). We really need to place this before the citizens and let them vote and then we turn around and can have these discussions. Put it out there and give them the opportunity to vote. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**Taylor:**

Thank you. We are going to bring this to a close and have a vote. I have just a couple of comments. One thing that we can appreciate and I to have met with the Keith Martin and his team, as well as the City Attorney & City Manager for Gretna. I need to disclose that. We have had emails and we have had conversation with people as my colleagues have mentioned about pros and cons. As Commissioner Lamb so eloquently said we now put it in the hands of the voters. I also met with the Supervisor of Elections. One thing she has done on every election is to educate the public before you go in and pull those levers. She put information in the newspaper. She even mailed out ballots to the homes, so that folks can have a chance to look and talk about it, discuss and have a clear understanding as to what they are voting on. My opinion what's good about January, you do not have a crowded ballot. It gives the voters a chance to make an intelligent decision and that's important. I too would like to put this referendum in the hands of the citizens in January, so they can make a decision about where they stand in regards to the Casino and Slots. Now, we have heard about horses, quarter horses, barrel racing I haven't the slightest, but I know that Florida is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in Horse Culture. We have the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest number of horses in the 50 states. We have to get in the game and let this move forward. Commissioner Morgan said something that I thought was so appreciated. We don't know if it's a good investment, we don't know if it's bad, but we have to put skin in the game. This County is not growing just because; it's growing because we are investing our time and energy in it. We have to stay focused. Again good Stewards, good Citizens, good corporate citizens is actually what we need. Gambling Anonymous need to be posted, so that folks can be made aware that no madam no sir, do not take your light bill money out there. You need to make aware the casino is set up, so it does not lose. You need to make



people aware, that's my major concern. The people of this County, that they are protected that they are not being taking advantage of and that you pay your fair share of the dollars needed to everyone, Private Schools, Public Schools, County Government and the City whomever, just pay your fair share and take care of this county. That's my only request.

What we need to do now Commissioners. Commissioner Holt I want you to do something that you have never done before. Just for tonight for 20 minutes to 8pm for a motion for approval.

**Holt:**

I motion for approval.

**Lamb:**

Second

**Taylor:**

There is a motion and a second. I will recognize Commissioner Croley, you have a question.

**Croley:**

Again, the issue is not whether there is consensus to put the matter on the ballot. The issue is when. I have heard the concern about the possible change in the Legislature, but I do note one of the gaming attorneys is sitting over there on the front row. My question though if this is put on in January, what benefit does that really give Gadsden in the event of an action by the Legislature. Is there something we need to do Mr. Dunbar, could you answer that?

**Mark Dunbar:**

Madam Chair, My name is Mark Dunbar, 35 Oxford Court, Tallahassee, FL. Commissioner Croley the questions you presented is if the County acts and puts this on the January ballot and the citizens approve it. I believe it is the attentions of my partners, to immediate move forward and apply for a license. Once the license has been issued essentially the property right is invested, not just to them but to the County. So in the Legislature, if it chooses to act, essentially is taking the property right from them and from the County and from the City all who would benefit from the revenue generated by the project. At that point the Legislature would sort of be on notice and as staff works legislation up, there are constitutional flaws with taking people's property rights. The whole idea here is to make sure that the Citizens of Gadsden County have their rights protected and invested. I was involved in a project in a very similar community to Gretna down in South Florida, Florida City. That project which was very similar to this one, had their slot machine license taken from them by the Legislature on July 1, 2010. That project is still be litigated, we lost in the first round in court and that Community lost its rights to that license because the legislature took it from them. I mentioned when I talked to Commissioner Morgan earlier today, that is the concern I have, I lived it. I was in a small community that was really invested in this type of project for economical development and the Legislature took it from them. What I would propose to you is not let the Legislature do it. I've seen gaming bills move very quickly. I had a conversation with the former Speaker of the House, James Harold Thompson last week about this very issue and I said Speaker you know better than anybody when the Speaker of the House or the Senate or President decide they want to pass a piece of legislation, particularly on gaming, it happens (snap of finger) just like that and the community's that are affected they lose. That's actually what happened last year? That's the reason why we are urging you to consider January vote, so your citizen's won't have that happen to them.

**Croley:**

I appreciate that response. I have pledge to all the parties. I wasn't going to make up my mind until I got here and heard all the facts. I appreciate you stating that publically. I've had no private conversation at all with you about this. On that basis, I appreciate it and thank you Madam Chairman for allowing him to clarify that.

**Morgan:**

Very quickly, Mr. Dunbar I know there has been talk whether are not there will be track racing or just barrel racing. I know that you guys originally proposed this as mixed use equestrian center. Just for the public record, you all will be opening track racing there as well.

**Dorris:**

Within the plan that we put forth with the City, we have a mixed use horse facility. We have a track and we have an arena. Our desire is to put all that in our facility. Our intent is to do all that. When we can come to terms with one particular discipline, then we want to move forward.

**Morgan:**

Your intent is to have all of the disciplines. Just for the public Madam Chair, you may want to consider reading the wording of that tax referendum, so that they will know what will be coming on the ballot in January, if that is approved by this Board.

**Taylor:**

No I do not mind and you can read it.

**Lawson:**

The referendum, if approved, will ask the voters of Gadsden County the following ballot question:  
***"Shall slot machines be approved for use at the pari-mutuel horse track in Gretna?"***  
It should be noted that the voter will be asked to approve the use of slot machines at only the Creek Entertainment's pari-mutuel facility in Gretna, no other location.

**Taylor:**

There's a motion and a second.

**Lamb:**

It has been said that there is over 20,000 voters and only 25% show up. I just want to say to the citizens of Gadsden County if you stay home, you just might get something you don't want. You need to come out and vote.

**Holt:**

Come out and vote and get something you want.

**Taylor:**

There is a motion and a second. All in favor of putting this item on the referendum in January please let it be known by saying Aye.

**Taylor, Lamb, Holt, Morgan, Croley:**

Aye

**Taylor:**

All oppose same sign. Make that 5 – 0 to put this item on the ballot. Ladies and gentlemen thank you very much.

**Martin:**

Would like to say thank you to Gadsden County Commission and the Chair and the City of Gretna.

**Taylor:**

Thank you very much.

**12. Discussion and Action on Authorization to Place a Referendum on the January Ballot to Authorize the Board of County Commissioners to Grant Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions** (Material to be Provided)  
(Deborah Minnis, County Attorney)

**Mr. Lawson:**

Madam Chair, item 12 under General Business, discussion and action on authorization to Place a Referendum on the January Ballot to authorize the Board of County Commissioners to grant economic development ad valorem tax exemption. This item is going to be discussed and presented by our County Attorney, Mrs. Minnis.

**Attorney Minnis:**

Madam Chair, Board Members just too briefly summarize this item and to clarify what I hope has not been confusing, it's that while it may be true, the National Solar issue is what triggered this discussion with tax abatements. The referendum that would be presented to the citizens would be broader than that. It would basically be a referendum for a 10 year period. To allow the County to use tax abatement as a form of economic development incentives and it would apply to any business who applied and whose application was approved and met the qualifications under the ordinance that could be later implemented. I just wanted to make sure that it was understood that this is not a referendum just for National Solar. This would be a referendum for the County Commission. Now that being said, there are other methods of giving economic development incentives under the statues. I provided supplemental information to the Board Members and hopefully you got those emails, telling you what those additional types are. The referendum language was added because I was asked how you would do a tax abatement referendum. So that's why the initial memo was sent to you. There are ways that you can do grants, you can do loans and there are a variety of other methods that you can use. That doesn't mean that the Board has to decide not to do the referendum, because like I said it's not just for National Solar. It's for the Board as a whole, for a 10 year period. If National Solar is not interested in tax abatements at this point or other businesses that come forth don't want tax abatements there are other mechanisms that can be used. In fact it was brought to my attention that Marion County has used a grant program. That they have set for their economic development incentives. I did get an opportunity to talk with the Attorney for Marion County, that haven't had the cause to use their ordinances at this point and time, but they were able to develop an ordinance that gave businesses certain grant money or loan money or help with loan insurance and those kind of things. There are other options available to the Commission for those kinds of projects.

**Taylor:**

Well put, Commissioners what has just been said and I know you understand, but I just like to regurgitate words to make sure I understood what she just said. Tonight we will still look at this referendum as an opportunity to going forward, not necessarily the company that's before us because there are other measures that we can look at to get them this percentage that they are looking at. We can go through a grant, am I correct, for a loan or something of that nature. However, we probably still need to look at this referendum. One point and time it was there.

**Minnis:**

That is correct, there was a referendum of this sort passed by Gadsden County in 1981 and it expired in 1991 and not renewed, so this is a referendum that the County has had in the past.

**Taylor:**

With that being said, Commissioner Lamb won't you address your mic, so that you can make sure they can hear you.

I will start at my far right this time with Commissioner Holt and see what kind of opinion do you have or do we go on and move this item for approval.

**Holt:**

Madam Chairman, I don't have any problems with approving a referendum for incentives and don't know if this can be done, but I would like for there to be some kind of preference for Gadsden County Jobs. I don't know if it could be done.

**Minnis:**

What happens is once the referendum is approved, then the business who wants the abatement would have to submit an application and part of that application is to the job creation and the ordinance that you would pass for that particular business could have the job creation piece in it.

**Holt:**

No problem, I just wanted to make sure that local preference.

**Minnis:**

Oh ok, I see what you are saying.

**Holt;**

I didn't say preference for Gadsden County, since whatever you entice someone to come here. Whatever that money that you are getting a lot of local taxes are going into that the abatement. I think they should have first preference at the jobs. I love the people from Bainbridge and Jackson and Leon and Liberty and all those counties, but in the application put the preference for local. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**Taylor:**

Thank you. Commissioner Lamb.

**Lamb:**

Thank you, Madam Chairman; I think it would be a good idea to put this on the book. It needs to be on there, it was on there once and then it expired now it's time to consider placing it back on

and I agree to place it back on.

**Commissioner Morgan:**

Thank you, Madam Chair I am glad we are having this discussion because we certainly need to consider the right time to pass this out to the public to decide, which is the referendum I tried to read a while ago. I do think since we are not under a specific timeline on this particular issue. I'm not sure something of this nature should go before the public, when we know the majority of our citizens will not be voting at this time. I think maybe we could have some other discussions maybe on what Commissioner Holt was saying. I just don't know if we ought to as much as I would be in favor of the citizens voting on this. I think the General Election would be the proper time to do it, because you aren't under a timeline. I know that our Executive Director of Economic Development for the Chamber, David Gardner had been in conversation with National Solar and I know we are having these discussions because of the possibility of them locating to Gadsden County. I think that it would be wise to see if we could have other options, I know what the Attorney mentioned.

**Gardner:**

Good Evening, Madam Chair and Commissioners. I put a letter that was emailed to me in everybody's pile tonight. I hope you saw the letter from National Solar requesting that because of the time issues involved that we look at the ordinance language the County Attorney has prepared. I'm very concerned about another 3 months on to this project and then the language after that.

**Morgan:**

David, do you think that it would be better served, with the conversations that you have had around this issue not just with National Solar but with other industry coming to Gadsden County. Would it serve us better to do this General Election proceeding or do you think that is something that we should go with now, with public in January when that doesn't tend to be when the majority of our citizens vote.

**Gardner:**

My gut feeling is to say, probably November. It's not as simplistic as what we talked about earlier. It is going to require some education.

**Morgan:**

That's all I have thank you.

**Taylor:**

Thank you, Commissioner Croley

**Croley:**

Well, I don't like abatements. I don't think they are right, except in the most extraordinary case. I think they are discriminatory against small business and unless you got a General Motors plant that's going to locate her or something with 1,000 of jobs, I'm just not really for them. As far as allowing the public to vote, that's something I do support and I do think it needs to be dealt with at a later date, because the proposed agreement the alternative that is being presented here needs more time to be talked about in a workshop anyway. It's a very completed agreement and this is my position right now.

**Taylor:**

Alright, I think everyone has spoken on this particular item. Here is what I think as the attorney has stated. If we move this referendum forward in January it doesn't necessary apply to National Solar, but it's a safe mode that's in place. To do it in January, it gets us started early in the year. Economic Growth and Development comes but ever so often and it is best that we are prepared, to be able to handle this and not lose our way and the opportunity. I said that at the referendum for the Poarch Creek that when you have a ballot that is not crowded, people are little bit more intelligent about what's on that ballot and not able to discern. The Attorney has stated that there are some other opportunities that we could look at for this particular project with National Solar. There are some other opportunities, some opportunities may be legal and some of them may not be, but at least you will have another option out there. I do not want to lose out on this particular opportunity, so I would like to move forward with it being placed on this ballot and that we go ahead and get this underway, not necessarily saying it is for National Solar. Just saying that we would be prepared in the event that someone comes to us, say in January or February and we will be able to say we are prepared for this addition.

**Taylor:**

Yes, you may speak your current address as well as phone number.

**Public Comment:**

**Marion Lasley**, 5 Deonte Court, Quincy, FL, I feel there is a lot of education material that needs to be presented before the people can vote on this. This is so very different from the 1 time location criteria for the referendum that was discussed previously. I think November is best. I want to know if you can read the referendum how it's being proposed. The tax abatements, it seems to be general and I want to understand what the criteria is for determining who gets the tax abatements and for how long. It was my impression that previously the abatements where for 5 years of use. Those are my concerns, there needs to be a success record to these abatement jobs provided. My other question is if it's on the January ballot and 20% of the voters vote, how would it be approved, is it 51% of the number who voted.

**Taylor:**

Those are valid questions and I will lean to the Attorney to get the questions answered.

**Minnis:**

Very quickly, I can read what the ballot language would be: shall the Board of County Commissioners of this County be authorized to grant, pursuant to s.3, Art.VII of the State Constitution , property tax exemptions to new business and expansion of existing business that are expected to create new, full-time jobs in the county. Then it would be: Yes-For authority to grant exemptions; No- Against authority to grant exemptions. For your information there is a statute that specifically sets out how this all has to happen. What the criteria is for the businesses that can apply. What their application has to say and it does tie it to the creation of jobs and that particular statue is 196.1995 and it has a very detailed process referendums normally last for 10 years. After 10 years they have to be renewed by referendum, so they don't automatically renew it would have to come back to the citizens. At the end of that 10 year period to determine if it would be renewed. There is a very detailed application process including presenting the application to the property appraiser to make report on what income may or may not be lost to the citizens and the county, if the tax abatement is approved. There is also a job creation piece to

it. If the application is approved then the County would then have to actually do an ordinance in the normal process that it does ordinances. So there would be a Public Hearing on any Ordinance approving the Tax Abatement for a particular industry. It's a pretty regulated area.

**Lasley:**

Does it save more jobs versus

**Minnis:**

Well I think they have to indicate how many jobs have to be created. The total number of new jobs to be created by the applicant, the average wage of the new jobs, the capital investment to be made by the applicant. Those are some of the things they have to explain in their application. The application does have to be approved by the Board and an ordinance has to be passed before the abatement would go into effect. Those are some of the criteria after the ordinance is passed. There would be an agreement that the Commission would enter into with the entity, where they could flush out the details of what their expectations are as far as new job creations. There is a performance criterion that is also set out in the statute. The applicant would have to report the specific times before the expiration of the agreement of the actual number of full/part-time jobs created what the average wage is. It's pretty detailed requirements in the statute for businesses who want to get the abatements.

**Lasley:**

Right, but the criterion is up to the Board. If the Board wants to give abatements. As long as the paperwork is filled out and the numbers are presented, if the Board decides that any business that can produce the paperwork can have abatement.

**Minnis:**

I don't know that it would be any business that could pull the paperwork. There is an application process; there is an ordinance process within that process, definitely within the process. Of course the public does have the opportunity for input because that will be done at a public hearing. At that point the citizens could certainly voice their opinions with regard to whatever the criteria is that the Board of County Commissioners is considering with regard to job salaries and those kinds of things.

**Taylor:**

Let me ask this question of the Attorney, and then we will move this question on. I'm concerned because what is our legal standing. Whether or not we can use that to kind of similar to abatement or a refund. What is your opinion? If we push this down to a later date then that wouldn't give companies the opportunity for abatement, in particular National Solar. I want to make sure we are in safe mode; if we push this down we are still able to go through some points of the components of this agreement that concerns me. That is one of the reasons why I was trying to push to get it on the ballot, so that we would be able to save this company. Have it meet some of its requirements that are outlined in the agreement.

**Minnis:**

A particular agreement was presented and it did talk in terms of ad valorem, economic development incentives that would be a concern with tying a grant to the ad valorem tax base. There are other ways to offer grants without tying it back to that, so we would have to talk to National Solar about what their desires are at this point. If they choose to continue to pursue ad

valorem type economic development incentives, my concern would be that we do that as an abatement and not as a grant. I know in Marion County a part of theirs there are some areas that they tie back to Ad Valorem taxes. My understanding is they really haven't had to use this ordinance yet, so that particular piece hasn't been tested yet. There is an Attorney General opinion in a similar kind of thing where the Santa Rosa Island Authority was giving lease reimbursements and they had tied the amount of lease reimbursement to the ad valorem taxes paid. The Attorney General applied that would not be appropriate. We would have to look at the agreement and get back with National Solar on actually what other avenues they would like to look at and pursue for this project.

**Holt:**

Madam Chairman if I may.

**Taylor:**

Yes

**Holt:**

What I would like to say is this. You are right. Definitely look carefully and make sure the process is in place. What I would like to say is this; the agreement is not an agreement with the County. It's a proposed agreement by National Solar to the County. I didn't want someone out there thinking we already have an agreement, because I see a couple of heads looking kind of puzzled. The other is that particular agreement proposal was for a 20 year abatement and it continuous after the 20 years. Also, there was a percentage that I was not in favor of. I just wanted to let the public know that's not an agreement.

**Taylor:**

Yes, we will get into the body of it. I will make sure that we don't close ourselves of any options to make sure this company comes here. If abatement is needed and required then we have that, if we proceed in January. Again, the attorney has mentioned her position in regards to grants and loans. I just don't want to go into this agreement, proposal with just those two options and we are not able to offer them per the statute.

**Morgan:**

Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the reasons we need to pay close attention to two things. One Commissioner Croley mentioned is something that we ought to consider the General Election because of what we have talked about and how it could potentially have such an impact on our county for a long period of time. In addition to that, the letter we see before us from National Solar request that we create a separate ordinance without the need for a referendum. That is us being in full support of them and wanting them to come to Gadsden County and that would provide an agreement that is favorable to us. That would be something I would take in mind as we proceed with this.

**Taylor:**

Again, Commissioner we may be able to do the loan, we may be able to do the grant. Again, as the Attorney said, first this referendum does not tie down or stop the progression of National Solar. It doesn't stop them it just puts us in safe mode in the event that this Board could not come together for the loan or the grant per our statute. It just puts something in place and that's all I'm trying to do. Like I said at our last meeting, I am competent of this. We definitely need this; this is



good growth and economic development. I just wanted to make sure we had something in place. In the event we aren't able to move through the other two that's out there. That's it, we might be able to do the grant. We might be able to find statute that we can do the grant, that we can do the loan. I want to make sure that thing is on that ballot. In the event the Attorney comes back and as you said there are some pending cases out there already? You have some judges that aren't in support of loans and grant. We have to be careful that we don't let anything get away from us that we capitalize on every opportunity. Let's move this. There is a motion to approve this particular item. We need a motion.

**Lamb:**

So moved

**Taylor:**

There's a motion. Is there a second. I'll second the motion. There is a motion and a second to have this item agenda so we can have something in place for January. All in favor respond.

**Holt:**

Question, why does National Solar not want it on the ballot in January, because there is nothing to say that we are going to approve the Ordinance anyway. So it seems like National Solar would be in favor of it.

**Minnis:**

They are trying to get it a little quicker with the loan or the grant.

**Taylor:**

We are just putting this in place just in case our statute doesn't allow the loan. It's just language right now. We are just trying to get through the process.

**Morgan:**

We are voting to place this on the referendum.

**Croley:**

Madam Chair, you do appreciate the fact that the Attorney had said that if you do put it on the ballot in January it may or may not pass by the citizens. If it does pass you still have to adopt the ordinance, so that's going to require at least a draft of the ordinance and 2 public hearings to be held before that could even come about. I believe that the Chamber's position has been to try to look at the alternatives that Marion County has presented as a way of doing what Commissioner Holt has just mentioned about National Solar. It still is a very complicated matter that needs to have a workshop because we haven't had time to look that over. She just emailed it to us, yesterday. The problem with what you are trying to do is you may even create a problem for the item you just approved because you may find out they all get rejected. I would not think it would be a good idea to put this item on the ballot in January.

**Taylor:**

The only problem with that is that we have to have this information approved before November 12 and that's per the Supervisor of Elections Office. It has to be approved so we can get the language over and we put these things on there. This is a democracy, we vote things up and we vote things down. I won't get heartburn one way or another. Only thing I'm trying to do is just

make sure we have as many opportunities to take care of this company in the event we aren't able to do the other too. That's the only thing I'm trying to do is to make sure there is something in place. There are some other things that might need to take place after the vote. They did say they would be turning dirt the first quarter of 2012. That will give us 4 months if we just follow this process, just in the event. That's the only thing I'm trying to do. There's a motion and a second. All in favor to put this item on the ballot in January please let it be known by saying aye.

**Taylor, Holt, Lamb:**

Aye

**Taylor:**

All opposed

**Croley, Morgan:**

No

**Taylor:**

Make that 3 – 2 to place on ballot. Thank you very much.

#### **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

13. Update on Board Requests  
(Arthur Lawson, Interim County Administrator)

There were no items or issues brought to the Board's attention by Mr. Lawson.

#### **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

14. Update on Various Legal Issues  
(Deborah Minnis, County Attorney)

There were no items or issues brought to the Board's attention by Mrs. Minnis.

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS**

15. **Commissioner Lamb, District 1**

- There were no items of concern for Commissioner Lamb.

#### **Commissioner Croley, District 2**

- Disclosed publicly, a letter from former County Manager, Johnnie Williams that was prepared while he was still employed by the County and mailed after his termination. He noted that it was a County Document that came to him at his personal resident. He stated he has met with the County Attorney and former Attorney General, Richard Durham. He handed the letter to the deputy clerk to be placed in the public record.

**Commissioner Holt, District 4**

- Replied to comments from Commissioner Croley concerning the letter from, former County Administrator, Johnnie Williams. She asked that she be included in copies of the letter and wished Mr. Williams great success in future employments.

**Commissioner Morgan, Vice Chairman, District 3**

- Embarked on financial commitment for defending Florida State Hospital – Increase financial (support) for Florida State Hospital. He asked for a motion to have it placed on the agenda for discussion at a later date.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MORGAN AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER CROLEY, THE BOARD VOTED 2 - 2, BY VOICE VOTE, TO HAVE THE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FOR DEFENDING FLORIDA STATE HOSPITAL TO BE PLACED ON THE AGENDA FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AT A LATER DATE.**

*Motion failed (Commissioner's Lamb and Taylor opposed) Commissioner Holt had departed at this juncture of the meeting.*

**Commissioner Taylor, Chairperson, District 5**

- Expressed congratulations to the City of Quincy for their opening of the Tanyard Creek. She commented on the event and the professionalism. "I take my hat off literally to them". She said the County is moving forward with positive things she noted the ½ million dollar Closing the Gap Grant, final touches to Lamb Park and two items that have been approved to go on ballot in January for the citizens to consider.
- Veteran Day Celebration – details would be forth coming
- Set date for National Solar Workshop/Special Meeting Date – It was the consensus of the Board to wait until next meeting and bring back in draft form.

**RECEIPT AND FILE:** NONE

**NOVEMBER MEETING (S)**

- November 15, 2011, Regular Meeting, 9:00 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the Chair declared the meeting was adjourned at 8:30p.m.

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**ATTEST:**

**BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sherrie Taylor, Chair**  
**Board of County Commissioners**

**BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court**  
**Gadsden County, Florida**