

**AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS ON AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY,  
FLORIDA HELD ON FEBRUARY 26, 2019 AT 5:00 P.M.,  
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:**       **Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2**  
                  **Sherrie Taylor, Vice Chair, District 5**  
                  **Eric Hinson, District 2**  
                  **Gene Morgan, District 3-absent**  
                  **Brenda Holt, District 5**  
                  **Dee Jackson, County Administrator**  
                  **David Weiss, County Attorney**  
                  **Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk**

**WELCOME**

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone to the Private Road Workshop. He asked Mr. Arthur Bodison to step forward and give the Invocation.

**Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items**

**Linda Barkley, 530 Dusty House Road, Quincy, FL** appeared before the Board. She stated she was in the process of petitioning for the road she lives on to see if it would qualify for the County to adopt and maintain it. She suggested that prior to citizens spending the money for surveys, etc., the County review the roads beforehand to see if it were one they would consider taking over.

**Michael Dorian, 145 Alligator Run, Quincy, FL** appeared before the Board. He stated he was on Bill McGill’s Better Roads Committee in the 1980’s. As Federal and State money became available, a County Road Paving list was established and roads were paved. He said the money has run out and Gadsden County is on its own. He felt homeowner associations should be banned. He said currently homeowners were responsible for maintaining roads in small neighborhoods. He added that most homeowner associations failed so the roads failed. He further stated that currently a contractor could make a small development out of 5 – 7 homes on any paved county road and it could be done without any notification of neighbors and without any County meetings. He said he understood it could be done over and over again, one next to another.

He said the Board needed to take responsibility of past mistakes and take care of their citizens. He added they also needed to close the door on Homeowners Associations and made developers pay for their own roads.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**2. Discussion of the Private Road Ordinance**

Chair Viegbesie asked if any Commissioners had anything to say.

Commissioner Holt said at one time they went through the process to tell homeowners that part of the Development Order was they had to take care of the roads. She also said there had not been anyone to apply to develop large or small subdivisions. She added that the State warned them before taking on private roads, make sure they could maintain the roads they have.

She said at one time they bonded (borrowed) the money and started paving the ones they had. She said to this day they had not been able to do an upward scale of the roads. She added if they borrow money, they have to have a way to pay it back.

She further stated they try to base the acceptance of private property along with what the State says they will accept.

She told Mr. Dorian he was correct in that they tried to get the developer to accept those roads.

Commissioner Hinson said this was something he heavily supported. He said in Section 2 (a) (2) it stated "Pay any and all costs associated with the voluntary conveyance..." He said he did not think people would have a problem with that, but a lot of senior citizens live on fixed incomes.

Chair Viegbesie said the point he was about to make has been made by the other commissioners; acquiring private roads is not something they could flip a switch and do. People that own property along the private road have to sign off on it; the property has to meet specific criteria and that is developed by the State of Florida. If the road does not meet FDOT standards, the County cannot adopt the road. If people want things done, they should be willing to pay taxes. He said his personal opinion was if the road was brought up to that standard, he does not understand why they would not adopt it.

Commissioner Taylor said what has been said to this point is true, but she was a firm believer where there is a will, there is a way. She said there were benefits the County would get in paving the roads that they need to consider as well. One being, when the roads are paved, there would be more homeowners wanting to build on the paved roads. There are ways to get this done and they must be smart about it. There are two things that must happen: Public Works must be able to maintain the additional roads; and make sure no public dollars are spent on the roads to develop them. She added if they bring in more roads, it would bring in more revenue and that would mean hiring more people to maintain. She said there was somewhere between 300-500 private, unpaved roads in the County and she would like to see the roads adopted.

She said they could open a sales tax and there would be a designated source to pay for the roads to be paved. She said there were avenues to get this done. She said there was a ½ cent sales tax that generates almost \$30 Million a year and they could do another ½ cent sales tax that could help with roads, that was currently being used for the hospital and EMS.

Mr. Dorian re-appeared before the Board. He said the Commissioners had an entire conversation and nothing was said about homeowners associations and they need to have developers do their job.

Chair Viegbesie said for them to not forget the impact of homestead exemption on the revenue generating aspect of property taxes. He said if someone owns a home that was worth less than \$50,000, they do not pay property taxes. He added a number of homes in the County are modular homes and a number of them are not worth more than the exemption.

Commissioner Hinson said he didn't think they needed to talk about money right now, people wanted to make sure the County adopted the roads.

He said they didn't want to talk about paving roads, the people wanted them to take over the roads so they could be able to travel up and down them.

Commissioner Holt said the numbers have to make sense. She said she had never thought about not helping people. She said the citizens voted in 2008 and 2010 for Amendments 1 and 3 and they were going to be able to get property taxes reduced. The taxes were reduced but it took money from the projects they were trying to get done. She said when the property taxes reduced; they were unable to go after the other roads. She reiterated they had to look at the numbers and be able to pay to take the roads. She added the roads had to be built up, the bed done, dirt brought in, ditches have to be pulled and if you had a road without ditches, the water would settle back in the road. She said the County was about to work on the budget and they could increase the millage rate if they wanted to. She said the County accepted two roads, Quail Ridge and Ames Barineau, and when the County accepted those roads, those people agreed to be taxed on those roads. To maintain road, she said the costs were approximately \$90-\$95/hour. She further stated if they borrow the money, they have to have the means to pay it back. She said until she saw the numbers, she could not support it or vote for it.

Chair Viegbesie said when the County waived permits, it was to the developer who was building the property and it should have been waived to the homeowner that the developer was building the home for. Unfortunately some citizens were not aware of this and the developer was ripping off some of the citizens.

Ms. Barkley reappeared before Board. She wanted to point out the fourth "Whereas" clause, it did point out it was not for paving, just asking for the road to be maintained. She said she needed to know if she invested in having an easement done and partition off the property, that the County would adopt the road and maintain it. She said they had the County pull the road, they had lime rock put on it and when the storm came through, the road washed away. She said she needed to know if they were going to invest their money; the County could take the road.

Commissioner Holt said that was something they could do now, when the process was put in place was people would call Road and Bridge and they would come out and look.

Commissioner Taylor said she has listened carefully to the other commissioners and agreed with them. A process is what they need to develop. Citizens need to make a request; then the citizen needs to make sure there is 100% participation on that road; develop a template, without that, they would not be able to go any further; Step three would be where the citizen could identify their own engineer and then said they have an engineer on staff that might could look at the road and charge a basic rate of what the costs would be to bring it up to standard; complete the application with an Easement to the County. She said once the application was completed, it would go through the regular process of adopting the road. She said she did see in the Ordinance where it stated not paving, but the problem they would have in not paving the road would be every time it rained, the road would be washed away. She said they needed to see if they could come together and get this on the Agenda. She said if she was to do this with the ½ cent sales tax, she would get the schools involved and would make more people want to vote for it.

Justin Ford appeared before the Board. He said if the citizens have the petitions and get to the point to know the costs, he would be glad to do that, but he did not want to do all 600. He did say as the petitions come in, he would be glad to meet and give an estimate of the costs to bring the

road up to standard.

Commissioner Taylor asked for direction to formulate a process. She said the Chair made a comment about homestead and homes valued at \$50,000 or less did not pay property taxes. She asked how many of those homes are sitting on public roads because when you look at the unincorporated areas where the dirt roads are, you do not see houses under that value. But people that live in these houses would still pay gas taxes and sales taxes as opposed to property taxes. She did say at the end of the day they have to have a funding source. She then asked the Attorney with regards to the possible ½ cent sales tax, was there a limitation on how many could be opened at one given time. He said the short answer was it depends, there are a lot of different potential taxes including fuel taxes, there were sales taxes, four different types and the uses are restricted in certain cases and sometimes it takes a Referendum, other times it takes a vote of the Commission. He said he would need to look into the specific type of funding source. He added that generally they were not limited to having multiple types of sales taxes and fuel taxes. Commissioner Taylor said the Sheriff may be another entity that would be interested in a tax, he always needed additional funding for protection, equipment, or manpower and the protection would take care of all 49,000 citizens.

Commissioner Holt said she was in favor of a sound process, if there is a way to pay for it and they are able to do it. She said they needed a couple of more workshops to make sure this will work. She said she was not willing to put this on the Agenda because if it was voted in incorrectly and they get a sales tax, they will be stuck with it no matter how they do it for 30 years or however the length of time is. She added it did not cost anything to do workshops. She told Mrs. Barkley when they do this, make sure they look at a special tax for just their road because they could get together for their road, whether it was County-wide or not and they have another option. She said for them to look at the special taxing district to see what the costs would be. She said these were things they needed to look at before it goes on the Agenda because when they vote for it and start doing it, if it does not work, people will not believe if they have to come back. She said she was fine as long as they look at the Millage Rate, can look at County-Wide and they need to make sure it is worked out before it gets to that point. She said she was not interested in this until they have all the public roads paved and those people have been waiting for a lot longer.

Chair Viegbesie said all have agreed there is need to develop a plan of action to maintain the dirt roads, but did not think it was something that could be rushed into. He said haste makes waste and they will need to work on this as to how to work the plan to accommodate the dirt roads. He said if they were look at imposing a special option tax, it could only be used on what it was collected for.

Commissioner Hinson said that was the reason he said to stick with the plan they had, a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush.

*Chair Viegbesie stepped out at 6:58 p.m.*

Commissioner Hinson said they were about to start Brickyard Road and High Bridge Road and they will have milling from that project. If they adopt a road, they might be able to use that milling on the dirt roads.

*Chair Viegbesie returned at 7:01 p.m.*

Commissioner Taylor concurred with the Commissioners the need for another workshop but did not want to workshop this to death. She asked the Attorney if the three entities mentioned joined together, the School Board, Sheriff, and the County, for this possible tax, in the referendum that goes on the ballot does have language that defines what it is for and what the money would go toward. In the language when they are looking at 100% of the funding and may want to go 1/3 each, could it be done and with those three on it, it would give them the greater chance of getting voter approval and was why she was looking at multiple entities on this Referendum. Mr. Weiss said he would look into whether or not there was a certain tax they could spread and was uncertain how that would work. She said for example, the schools could only use the dollars for technology, physical fitness activity and facility for build-outs. She said her concern was whatever the guidelines were could do with the dollars, could it go on one Referendum. She asked that he look into it. She said they did need another workshop to make sure moving forward they have all the kinks worked out. She said she knew how to win elections but more than anything, this Board needed to be on one chord and stop the divide they had. She said the comment was made there were still public roads waiting to be paved and that was true. She said the Commissioners needed to talk this in a positive manner and join together.

Chair Viegbesie said they were talking about a plan of action and they will workshop this until they get the kinks worked out. This was not something that they can rush into. This workshop is the beginning of something that will be implemented to change the bad roads.

Commissioner Holt said their options in looking at the templates were: County-Wide sales tax; special taxing districts; ad valorem taxes (millage rate) and needed to make sure they equal one mile. She said the Engineer and Road and Bridge director needed to give them data on the costs for a mile of road of what it would take to bring it up to standard.

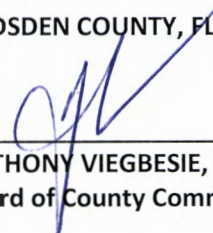
Mr. Ford reappeared and said each road would be different.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, THE CHAIR DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 7:13 P.M.**



GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

  
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ANTHONY VIEGBESIE, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:



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NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk