

AT A CARES WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON FEBRUARY 11, 2021 AT 4:30 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

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

**WELCOME**

Chair Holt welcomed everyone to the workshop at 4:33 p.m.

**INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Holt asked for a moment of silence then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

**CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD (3-Minute Limit)**

*Due to COVID-19 and the efforts of the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners to continue the practice of social distancing, Commissioners want to continue to hear from citizens under the Citizens Requesting to be Heard section of the agenda.*

*If citizens have any questions, comments, or concerns, please email*

*[CitizensToBeHeard@gadscdencountyfl.gov](mailto:CitizensToBeHeard@gadscdencountyfl.gov) and anticipate receiving a response within 48 hours.*

*The Board of County Commissioners would like to thank everyone for their patience and flexibility during this time.*

Chair Holt started reading the above statement when IT trouble occurred and there was an echo in the room. Once it was corrected, she then read the statement in full.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**2. Gadsden County CARES Program Spend Plan Line Item**

Mr. Dixon introduced the item and Fredericka Hamilton with Integrity appeared before the Board to speak on the issue.

Ms. Hamilton stated that all of the information was current as of February 9, 2021. Item 2 was an overview of all programs that County Commissioners CARES Assistance program developed and the dollar amount associated with each program.

Commissioner Green asked about the balances. Ms. Hamilton said it would be a balance left over in that line item available to these or other programs once all the funds have been drawn down to the County. She said the \$7.9 Million that was awarded to the County has been processed and the only amount that was in process currently was \$131,530.15. Chair Holt asked that the categories be broken down by amounts.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners  
February 11, 2021 – CARES II Workshop

- Broadband program totaled \$1,765,000.00
- Gadsden County Sheriff's Office 803,000.00
- Municipalities Pass-through Program 400,000.00
- Planning, Administration, Technology,  
Fraud Prevention, Compliance Monitoring  
and Outreach 795,000.00 received and \$779,600.00 paid

Commissioner Nesmith asked about the Municipalities Pass-through, the money had been received, had it been disbursed and she said yes. He asked about the \$803,000 to the Sheriff's money if it had been received and disbursed as well and she said yes.

She continued reading the programs and the money associated with each one.

- County Public Health Expenses Program \$1,604,316.00 received and \$926,055.12 paid

*Commissioner Viegbesie arrived at 4:43 p.m.*

Commissioner NeSmith asked out of the \$1,604,316.00 received, had the balance already been encumbered and Ms. Hamilton said yes.

She continued to read.

- Small Business Assistance Program 1,520,000.00 received and \$1,371,500.00 paid
- Resident Assistance Program 1,080,000.00 provided \$562,789.95 to 270 residents

She then explained the chart that showed the status of the Spend Plan.

Commissioner NeSmith asked about the balance and asked if that money had been encumbered and she stated yes.

Commissioner Green asked with the money available for the Resident Assistance programs, could that money still be utilized for residents or did they have to create another program for those funds. She said there will be more discussion about that item further in the presentation. She then explained the breakdown of the line items. She also stated that included was an actual breakdown provided by the Clerk's Office that showed the breakdown.

Chair Holt said when they were discussing before about the drawdown, on the Federal level when they start the second CARES Act money, the cities and towns did not get money. The reason behind that was it went to residents and they put a hold on evictions and those people had to get paid.

Commissioner Hinson asked for clarification, the total was \$6,623,345.07 and he saw another total for the Gadsden County CARES Allocation was \$7,967,316.00. He asked what the true total was. Ms. Hamilton said \$7,967,316.00 was the funding award the County was provided from the State for the CARES Program.

Commissioner Green asked if that was what was available and she said yes.

Chair Holt stated of the money received, the Clerk stated that money needed to be put back in the General Fund. Mr. Dixon said that was included and according to what he understood they loaned the account money and paid it back and it was a wash.

Mr. Dixon said they searched around and this was a new concept. A lot of the people around were tied to the same programs they were. He said they tried to cherry-pick based on the Commissioners comments and their needs. He reached out to Ms. Tuggerson from Tallahassee and she submitted a proposal. He said they would not start the program until they were assured what that number was. He then talked about the Roll out program and said they would create a savings account and that would be approximately half of the \$1.3 Million. He added they knew CARES II money was coming but did not know the details of it. He then explained the “roll-out” program.

He said the first thing was to conduct a survey, how did the first program work, why didn't it work. He said they had a lot of people in the residential program and did not receive funding. He said there was a lot of money left over. He said they needed to determine if people did not apply, was afraid to apply, could not apply, couldn't get technology, etc. because that would determine how they do future programs. He stated they were going to “front-load” this and made sure it was spread out across the County in multiple jurisdictions happening at the same time. He said they needed to make sure people had the resources to get into the program. If their job was to make sure they give away money to people that needed it, make sure they do that. Their job was to not keep people out of the program; it was to get people into the program until the money ran out. He discussed how to make sure they were available to give the money out and special emphasis would be placed on notifying the individuals that did not have access to social media; they heard that over and over again. Get the information out to people that did not get the information the first time. The first thing was utilities, instead of asking the County for a utility grant, why not place it with the cities and let them send to the County anyone that qualified for it. Food Assistance, they know who was insecure so why not put some with the food banks and maybe create a voucher per household, first come, first serve.

Commissioner Green said nonprofits was a concern to him. They could utilize some of their programs.

Mr. Dixon said most all the groups were members of the Health Council; they have used them before to stand up testing facilities and sites. He said while the Health Department might could do the shots, along with EMS, the other logistics have to be done. He said they needed to make them as professional as possible. Advertising was something that has to happen. They need to stand those groups up now and may have to county-wide.

Chair Holt said she was looking at generalized documents they could have for the public.

Mr. Dixon said a lot of it was about support systems to help get things done.

Commissioner Green stated that was where most of the commotion came from with the complaints because of a lack of understanding. He said there had to be a process and every county had its own process.

Mr. Dixon said next was the Landlord Program and that should be Landlord/Residents. He said they saw in the last phase landlords who were reluctant to help tenants with their rent, to sign documents for the tenant. They knew they had a lot of renters and needed to put special emphasis on whatever program they had.

Commissioner Hinson wanted to make sure that they were not double dipping. They needed to make sure that the landlord did not receive money and then also receive money from the tenant.

Commissioner Green understood what Commissioner Hinson was saying. He said multiple landlords would be paid because you had individual citizens who live in individual properties. He used apartments as an example, landlords will be paid for the renters.

Commissioner Hinson read off the amounts that the different cities received and they needed to look out for the citizens.

Commissioner Green stated that it was the same thing. It was possible because 1 person may have properties in different cities and each resident should be granted that opportunity if they qualified, regardless of who their landlord was. He could see where the frustration would come if just one person was benefiting and the citizen was not getting anything out of the deal. Chair Holt stated that the two programs, the one for housing and one for the CARES Act and money for HUD was coming from the CARES Act also. Ms. Hamilton's group and Ms. Burns group will compare notes to make sure they were not double dipping.

Mr. Dixon stated the goal was not to give to those people that were funded through the initial CARES program. They understood there was a second CARES program coming and they want them to find the first group initially funded and give to them because they were still in peril. The pandemic has lasted longer than they anticipated.

Commissioner Green asked for the sake of clarity, who has kept the records of ones that have applied in the past. He wanted to make sure they were being proactive by way of communicating with everyone that applied. Chair Holt stated that was a lot of the complaints but if they worked it out better this time, there will be more people on the ground and more that will know where people live.

Commissioner Viegbesie there was a concern expressed about guiding against double-dipping, which was the concern that Commissioner Hinson had. The question to Integrity was will there be any question in the questionnaire that will guide against the landlord taking from State, then the County, and then from the city. The suggestion was to include such question and if they said no and was found out different, then so be it.

Commissioner Hinson said a lot of residents were intimidated by the process. They need to get the process fixed first or they will be in the same situation. He asked who would be rating the people and determining who would qualify.

Chair Holt stated they need to work out some of these issues before the money came down and may need more workshops so they will be ready.

Mr. Dixon stated that some of the issues were hard to get at. There are “backyard” barbers in business that do not have records. So, if they give food vouchers, how do they do it? They need to make sure they honor the County’s businesses.

Commissioner Hinson if they need to put the people first, people have been put out of business for months. They should weaken the restrictions on small businesses, the car washers, etc. He said the Board and Administrator was putting restrictions on the citizens.

Chair Holt stated that standardized documents could help them get qualified. They need more workshops and maybe could get a checkpoint to see what needs to be put in place.

Commissioner Green asked in the regular meetings could there be regular updates on things that were being implemented so the citizens know that they were the top priority.

Mr. Dixon stated that the large businesses with employees of 25 or more were not part of the first grant. They need to decide if they want to include them in this opportunity. They understand they will have to do their own broadband at some point and that point was now for the future. They need to be moving toward that issue. He said non-profit relief grants, the non-profits that have been working during COVID-19 were excluded in the previous funding cycle and asked if they wanted to consider them and to what extent. Youth leadership, they knew kids were stuck in the house, know they were remote learning, and also knew that was not great for their mental health or their parents. In being creative, could they look at how to help them through this. He asked that they please submit any additional ideas.

Chair Holt said utility providers were able to get funding through CARES, such as Talquin. Mr. Dixon asked for that information. She said there will be a Zoom meeting on Monday for rural counties and minority communities.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if there was a physical copy of the small business application and the residential application and asked for a copy of both. He also asked if there was a general date for the money. Mr. Dixon stated they had no control over that. Commissioner NeSmith said even if they came up with perimeters in the next month for distribution did not necessarily mean they could have the funds to distribute. Mr. Dixon stated they would be ready to go.

Mr. Stanley Sims, 1320 Avondale Way, Tallahassee, FL addressed the Board. He stated that the same concerns that they and the constituents have, they had in Leon County. He said they needed to have a strategic plan in place and the Administrator has had the foresight to get individuals who have experience in this. It is important for the Board set policies. CARES money was not like money from heaven and was limited. Not only are we clean but Gadsden can go green.

Commissioner Green stated that this was true.

Commissioner Hinson stated that he was not unapologetic for helping the people. He asked who set the rules for the amount of money the citizens received?

**3. Gadsden County CARES Program Project Items Submitted to FL DEM/FL CARES by the County Clerk’s/Finance Office**

**4. Gadsden County CARES Program Spend Plan Line-Item Balances**

**5. Status of Non-CARES Projects:**

- a. First phase of HUD CBDG Grants
- b. Upcoming Economic Resiliency and Infrastructure Grants

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 5:56 P.M.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**