

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON FEBRUARY 16, 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 Dixon, County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk
Hannah Pope, Clerks Office

1. Welcome

Chair Holt welcomed everyone to the Florida Department of Transportation Grants workshop at 4:30 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@gadsdencountyfl.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.

Mr. Dixon read the COVID-19 statement aloud.

GENERAL BUSINESS

2. SCRAP / SCOP / CIGP Presentation (Justin Ford, P.E., Dewberry)

Mr. Dixon stated for general housekeeping, they had to cancel the regular 6:00 p.m. Board meeting due to an advertisement issue. He added that adequate measures have been put in place to make sure it does not happen again. The items are being added to the next regular meeting agenda.

Commissioner Green stated that he would like to see a Proclamation to Ms. Dee Jackson and others for Black History Month.

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and said Justin Ford with Dewberry Engineering was present. He explained Dewberry was the County's engineer of record and they were given the contract beginning October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2020 with an automatic extension. In September the Board re-upped the contract. He said the services they provide are roadway and

bridge design, stormwater and flood plain management, project planning and management, survey services, environmental services, site planning and design, traffic planning, permitting local, State and Federal, architectural services and general engineering services. He said the contract maybe canceled on a 30-day notice. He said they will be giving the Commissioners a list of contracts in the next couple of weeks with due dates and times.

Commissioner Viegbesie entered at 4:41 pm

Justin Ford, Dewberry Engineering, appeared before the Board and stated that every year they turn in applications to FDOT for various programs to get grant funding for paving, widening and resurfacing, safety projects and various things for the County. He listed the acronyms that the State likes to use and explained B-SCOP (Small County Outreach Program-Bridges) is a sub-program for bridges. The SCOP program (Small County Outreach Program) is the largest and main one that is used. The grant can be used for most road ways because it is used for all types of projects. Under normal circumstances it is a 75% grant with a 25% match but because we are a rural area of opportunity, the County gets 25% waived and it becomes a 100% grant program. He recommended breaking it into phases.

SCRAP program (Small County Road Assistance Program) is a resurfacing only so it was not for dirt roads. Smaller projects are funded through this.

CIGP (County Incentive Grant Program) has to be justified to the State that it will alleviate traffic off the State highway system and has to be connected to a state or federal highway within the County. He added it was very hard to get this for the County.

LAP (Local Agency Program) was more of an umbrella. Any grant received through LAP is going to have federal funds associated with that grant and most are related to safety improvements. He added it could be used for safe routes for schools. There is a Community traffic safety team that meets to talk about traffic safety on the roads. He said there were a lot of restrictions and the County has to be Lap certified, which they are, in order to manage and pursue these funds.

County paving history for the last five years has been 103 roads, 79.42 miles, and \$13 Million dollars spent. Ongoing projects are 5 roads, 30.37 miles, and \$10 Million. There is an attached list of the roads that have been done. Since 2010, the County has done \$31 Million of paving worth of road improvement. He showed a map that had the breakdown of where the work has been and has not been done in the County. There are not many records of pre-2000 work. The blue lines on the map was currently in progress.

Each year they apply for grants through the various programs and with each year, the number of applications they can turn in changes a little, depending on the expected budget. They apply for grants based off of the state budgets. In 2019 there were 5 roads that had been applied for and 3 have been funded. In 2020, they turned in two SCRAP, three SCOP, one CIGP, and four B-SCOP applications. Three of those have been funded. This is not bridge replacement, that is another program. This is to hold over and for repairs to be done to the bridge.

Spooner Road is in District 5, Cochran Road runs across Districts 3 and 4, Fairbanks Ferry Road is in District 1, Ben Bostick Road is in District 4, Hardaway Highway runs in Districts 3 and 4, and Withlacoochee Bridge is in District 2. In 2020, they applied for them in April, found out in January (2021) what was awarded. Funds can have a five-year window. They do not have any that are

funded 5 years out. Ben Bostick is funded under 2024 for construction and \$1.755 Million was allocated for the road. DOT sends a JPA (Joint Participation Agreement) to allow them to move forward with the work. They get that out pretty quickly.

The submission. Each commissioner gives 2-3 roads from each district to Dewberry and Staff. They look at different factors to submit for funding. The commission last year elected to roll the same list forward. He said they have ranked the roads for funding.

The applications are due March 12, 2021. At the first March meeting, they have to have a signed Resolution for the commissioners to vote on. There is a total of six applications for the county: five roads and one bridge. The selection is up to the commissioners. DOT rides the roads to see if the Board selected roads that meet the criteria for grants.

3. SCRAP / SCOP / CIGP Criteria (Justin Ford, P.E., Dewberry)

4. Questions/Comments (ALL)

Commissioner Viegbesie asked about the roads that have already been approved. Mr. Ford said the ones in blue have been funded. Mr. Ford stated the ones in blue and tan have been funded. The evaluations have already been. Commissioner Viegbesie asked he furnish the Commissioners with the actual starting date for the roads so the Commissioners could inform the constituents in the district.

Commissioner Green asked what year the matrix was done. Mr. Ford stated 2019 was the last time they did the evaluation. Commissioner Green stated it could make sense if they could follow through with the list, but there may be roads that have had more damage or been driven more than normal that may need to be evaluated. Mr. Ford stated even if they rolled this forward, there are some that he would expect to be on the new list.

Commissioner NeSmith said going back to the evaluation matrix, were they submitted by commissioners and Mr. Ford stated yes. Commissioner Nesmith stated to the Chair they may need to look at other resources to get the roads paved because he knew in his district, there were a significant number of roads that needed attention.

Chair Holt explained the history to answer this question. Since the County is so small, it does not have the tax base to fund their roads. These programs were set aside for the Counties. She was not sure there was a way to get any more money from the State. She was hoping to get federal funding for infrastructure funding. Hurricane Michael added more problems to the roads. She said re-evaluation was up to the Board.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that going on the history that Chair Holt just spoke of, in order to get local roads paved the Board decided to float a bond. They gave priority to some districts. Some districts were overlooked because of those findings. In the second phase, they decided it should be distributed equally. Those did not have roads have not been prioritized. All the districts did not get the money starting at the same level. All the revenue from tax may go down tremendously because of cars changing. He said the economy was changing and they needed to take that into consideration. He said other counties transportation mode was going to renewable energy and Gadsden County needed to seriously consider how they could begin to gradually move into renewable energy.

Chair Holt stated they were able to get \$10 Million but the understanding was Districts 1, 2, and 5 had more people on the east side of the County. They agreed to do that. The next bond was going to pave districts 3 and 4. When that bond came in, it was a new Board and they decided to split it equally.

Mr. Dixon stated that prior to floating the bond, there was no funding mechanism to pave roads. The County was paying \$500,000 a year only paving 1 mile in each District every year. He said they were moving faster than a lot of other counties. He said they had 600 miles of dirt road and now they have less than 50 miles of dirt road. The matrix makes it a science-based decision, not a political one. Mr. Young's team is here to look at the roads. He added they may end up with the same five roads but it gives the Commissioners an opportunity to at least look and see the process.

Mr. Ford stated that there were other funding opportunities available as well. This is not his expertise but look to professionals who could help. He said he felt Hurricane Sally did more damage to the roads but the wind from Hurricane Michael took trees down that loosened the soil, which washed out the roads. He said they were working with FEMA now to get monies to make repairs. But in addition to the repairs associated with that, they will have an opportunity for HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) that was a FEMA grant that is regulated or passed through the State Department of Emergency Management that could be applied for. He recommended if there are some dirt roads that wash out on a regular basis, apply through that grant program to mitigate those roads. The State recognized that it is a flawed system. He said they were focused on the DOT grants because of the time frame but there were other opportunities out there.

Chair Holt asked if he could compile the public dirt roads by district. She said it would be easier for the Commissioners to see where they were and how long they were. Mr. Ford said the County actually got \$20,000 to do a road way inventory of every road in the county. He said they met today and will be bringing that proposal back to the County to allow them to utilize that money to complete the inventory of every road in the County and would give them what they were asking for.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that he was the Board representative on CRTPA (Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency).

Chair Holt stepped out at 5:32 p.m.

He is the one to get the information for the Gadsden county area and to speak for the County. He said the money was there but not enough votes.

Chair Holt returned at 5:33 p.m.

If the matrix does not match, the County will not get funded. He said they have a five-year work program and was about to put together the next five years. He said the most pressing roads should be on the list and asked they give him the list of those roads. He said he pushed for a cross walk on Pat Thomas Parkway and was pushing for a reduction in the matrix for the funding qualifications. He also said Point Milligan was asking for a traffic light.

Commissioner Green asked with the lack of participation from other municipalities, did that prohibit the County from getting funding and Commissioner Viegbesie said no, it was based off voting. Gadsden County only has one vote but two was better than one.

Mr. Dixon commented on the weighted voting. He said there was hundreds of millions of dollars and most of it was staying in Tallahassee. It was by population. Commissioner Viegbesie stated they were not bashing Tallahassee but they have the blue print funds. They can match the funds. This also gave them an upper hand over the other counties.

Chair Holt stated they need to get this done because of the close turnaround time.

Mr. Ford stated the Disaster Recovery CDBG grants do not count against the total numbers. He said outside of Hurricane Michael, every year the County could apply for a Community Development Block Grant through various programs and under the Neighborhood Revitalization program, smaller streets could be paved. Chair Holt stated in looking at roads that are auxiliary road is not even a mile it might be cost effective to pave those when they were in the area to pave the bigger road.

Commissioner Nesmith stated as they move toward the environment of the County being open for business, there are certain elements in sending that message they needed to make sure were in place. He said one was addressing the issue with the blight and trash. He said now there was emphasis on cleaning up the County and that they were open for economic development and was hopeful more businesses would look at that as a place to do business. He said it was imperative that they fix the bridges and have the infrastructure to entice them to come. He said they needed to use any means necessary to get them here. They need to approach all the roads because that was a part of infrastructure. If they see our infrastructure in the roads could not be travelled, that impacts the quality of life of the individual that was coming with that company. He thanked Mr. Ford for informing them of the alternative resources and asked of the Administrator, any and all available resources they he was aware of, to please bring that to the Board's attention. He said time was of the essence.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that although he asked for those roads, they should go to Dewberry so they can put them on the Gadsden County Transportation plan for them to be considered by FDOT. It had to be in the Road Improvement plan and he could bring it to their attention.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if they had paid off the bonds.
Mr. Dixon said yes, to the first and was not sure of the second bond.

Chair Holt said they could bring that information back and see where they were with it. She said this information was very important. She said she would like to see something on Highway 90 and Bostick Road and knew the safety team has looked at certain roads for calming devices.

Mr. Ford said that was a DOT road and the County does not have the jurisdiction or ability to change anything about that issue. They have recognized the issue at that location and there is so much traffic. Mr. Dixon said just because DOT has the information did not mean they will do

anything, they do not want to slow down traffic. If the numbers are not there, they will not do anything. He also said putting up a traffic light was super expensive.

Chair Holt said to look at the gas tax they were getting from Flying J. They have a matrix they use regarding accidents, etc.

Mr. Ford said they talked about keeping politics out of the selection process, but that situation was one where politics was needed to get results. They have tried to go through the numbers and matrix, evaluation and have not gotten there.

Commissioner Green said he heard the question regarding traffic lights and asked who they would contact regarding the traffic lights. He said for instance, the traffic light at the corner of Jefferson and Adams takes forever to change.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated there was a note he made from CRTPA's meeting earlier in the day regarding how they obtained crash or fatality data from law enforcement for those intersections. Mr. Ford stated there was a website for that information. It generally was year behind for, they do not generally release new crashes. He said there was someone in his office that has access to that site and he could get the information pulled. He was unsure if Public Works had access to the site.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked Mr. Ford about the Attapulcus Highway. He said they currently have \$3.6 Million to resurface that road. When it was approved, they decided to widen the road and add shoulders. He asked today about the additional request. FDOT told him they had requested a letter from the County that explained the need for the additional funding. He asked where they were in regards to the additional funding. Mr. Ford stated he did not know they were waiting on a letter. Right now, they had the design funding, construction would come later this year or next year. When the design was received, it did not have the paved shoulders in the grant. They went back to DOT and asked if they would allow them to design at no additional costs and put the paved shoulders in the project under that premise and they agreed they would evaluate the construction costs once the design was completed. He said it was 60% done and they anticipated having the design completed around April or May. He thought they were waiting on the final design to see what the ultimate quantities and estimated costs would be so they would know where they stood. Once they finish the design, it would be more accurate. Commissioner Viegbesie said the award for that project should be 2021 and construction should be completed in 2022. Mr. Ford said he would reach out to them tomorrow. Chair Holt said if they do the widening, that would increase the amount. How would that affect the County in having that road chosen. Mr. Ford stated more than likely, if it was gotten in early enough and they could program it, they would modify the amount. If that did not happen, they would do a supplemental agreement. That was done on a fairly regular basis.

Chair Holt said to Commissioner NeSmith, when he received his list of dirt roads for him to come in and lobby to get them paved. She said she had requests from two different groups to adopt a road; Martin Luther King/Barack Obama Blvd by Gadsden County FAMU Alumni and the Men of Gadsden County, Inc.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that he was going to suggest they implement the reinstatement of the Adopt A Road program. He said if they were going to adopt the "Keep Gadsden County

Beautiful” they needed to reinstitute actively the road adoption plan. He said to give them pride to keep the County clean. Chair Holt said that way they had someone to help monitor and look at beautification money. She said there were certain funds they could get through FDOT if they applied for the grants and were able to get them. She said they should start pushing that.

Commissioner Nesmith thanked them for bringing up the Adopt-A-Road program and stated he had participated in the clean-up and asked from Pat Thomas Parkway to Barack Obama, was that County and Chair Holt stated that was city. She said they want to adopt that road, it starts in the city and ends in the County.

Chair Holt stated they had talked about looking at clean up. She said one suggestion was if they were going to put the schedule out for pick-up of large items, they should not encourage people to put stuff by the road before or after that date. Mr. Dixon said they will put that schedule out and adhere to that schedule. They were serious about keeping the streets clean and it will take all of them to come together to keep the roads clean. They want businesses to come.

Mr. Ford said he needed each Commissioner to give him two to three roads to evaluate and they will bring the top five back ready to proceed. Mr. Dixon said if it was their choice, Mr. Young and his staff would help them to decide to help Mr. Ford. He wanted them to be a part of the situation and part of the solution. Chair Holt said also the call volume on some of the roads were an issue. People do not just ride on fair weather. She added they were working on getting these things taken care of, it may not be fast, but they were in a better stride now than before.

Mr. Dixon introduced Ms. Georgette Daniels, who is the new Assistant County Administrator. She said she was happy to be here and looked forward to the job.

5. Review and Discuss the February 16, 2021 Regular BOCC Meeting Agenda

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 6:14 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

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

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk