

**IN A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN  
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MARCH 2, 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**

**INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Holt welcomed everyone to the Disaster Recovery Workshop at 4:30. She asked if there were any requests from citizens to be heard and Mr. Dixon said no. She said she would like to add that citizens were able to come to the meetings, especially if they had long items they wanted read, they could come make those announcements at the podium.

**1. Opening Comments (Chairwoman Brenda Holt)**

Chair Holt stated that they needed to work together to get prepared for the next round of funding.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**2. 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.

There were no citizens requesting to be heard.

**3. CARES Act Efforts & Progress -Since July 2020 (Gary Yates, Integrity Group)**

Mr. Dixon stated that staff asked the Integrity Group to come and speak on the disaster relief efforts.

Mr. Dixon introduced Mr. Tim Moore from Integrity Group. Mr. Moore stated that as a company have been helping State and local governments as well as other areas for the past 12 years.

*Commissioner Green entered the workshop at 4:41 pm*

He explained the existing agreement began in October 2019 under the Disaster Response Services. The contract began on March 18, 2020 and the contract is for five years with 3 years and 2 one-year renewals. He said they have a strong bench of professionals.

Mr. Moore introduced Gary Yates.

Mr. Yates revisited what the group has done.

**3a. Administration & Distribution of CARES Act Allocation of \$7,967,316.00.**

Mr. Yates stated that the original spend plan was implemented with \$7,967,316.00.

**3b. Multiple workshops and meetings regarding Spending Plan and Grant Eligibility & Documentation Requirements**

He explained they have had multiple workshops and meetings and prepared the original spend plan and it was transmitted to Division of Emergency Management. He said they implemented and was responsible for operating the Gadsden Grant program, focusing on the business community and residents. He said the County approved and paid out 202 business grants totaling \$1,371,500.00 and awarded 279 resident grants totaling \$562,789.95. The number of approvals was up to par with surrounding communities. They were meeting compliance regulations and had 10 people working on the applications. Fredericka Hamilton has been working on documentation. He said they were sitting with a residual of approximately \$1.3 Million dollars still to be awarded and they will be getting into the new appropriations.

Chair Holt stated on the funding that would be coming in the future, they should look more at the process so the Commissioners would have input.

Mr. Yates stated they looked forward to that and felt they learned a lot more over the past 6 months than they thought they would learn, good and bad. They can be better focused on what were the best guidelines and requirements, etc. He said they welcome the idea of working with the Commission.

Commissioner Hinson asked if they were focusing on the CARES Act or FEMA, if they were doing them separate or would both be in this workshop.

Mr. Dixon stated they would be going over multiple items that Integrity Group will be associated with.

Commissioner Hinson stated that it could be confusing to the people. He asked if they were talking about the money that has already come in or what has been recovered from FEMA.

Chair Holt stated this was not FEMA money. Mr. Dixon stated this was on the CARES Act.

*Commissioner Viegbesie entered the workshop at 4:50 p.m.*

Mr. Dixon asked Mr. Yates to talk about what the RFQ allowed for Integrity Group to do. Mr. Yates congratulated the County on developing a comprehensive request for proposal that talked about disaster recovery of all fields such as FEMA, HUD, and other mitigation and other Federal forces of disaster recovery. He said it was written to include anything that was related to a declared disaster. The Pandemic was one of the most historic and largest declared disaster in the United States and was a very comprehensive approach. They submitted a proposal that was evaluated by an evaluation team.

**3c. Implementation and operation of Gadsden Grant Program.**

**i. Business Community & Resident.**

**ii. Close focus on compliance with Federal/State Regulations.**

**iii. Deployed team (technology, paper processing, compliance, approval & submission for payment).**

**3d. Reporting to and requesting funding from FDEM.**

**3e. Several updates of Spending Plan as program progressed.**

**4. New CARES Funding for County (Eric Miller, Integrity Group)**

Eric Miller appeared before the Board and stated he was here to talk about new funding which is \$1.3 million. He said it was no longer considered CARES Act money because it was now County money. He said this money could be used for a new grant programs that will not be as strict. He said Gadsden County may want to defer programs until the State of Florida announces its relief opportunities from the \$850 Million that the State Now had in its possession to cover rental and utilities assistance. A possible goal of the County may be to get businesses qualified for future grant funding. He added by making sure businesses had proper documentation with the Department of State and line business owners up with a tax accountant and conduct workshops on proper business documentation to make sure that the business owners meet criteria for pre-qualification. The suggested plan could be to set up stations county-wide in each district, perhaps in libraries and certificates could be provided to business owners certifying they meet criteria for immediate relief CARES Act funding assistance. He said Mr. Dixon had requested that The Integrity Group do a sample survey of random resident assistance and small business assistance funding award recipients and applicants that did not qualify for earlier funding awards for whatever reasons. The Integrity Group would contact individuals via email addresses provided on the application and give such applicants the opportunity to provide feedback on the pros and cons of the process and to allow them to receive and report back to the Board the feedback on their experience.

**4a. Emergency Rent & Utilities**

He said the 26 largest counties in Florida received \$513 Million in funding directly from the U. S. Treasury and the State of Florida received \$871 Million. The Governor announced that \$850 Million will be dispersed to 41 smaller counties through the Department of Children and Families. Applicants in Gadsden County would have to apply through Department of Children and Families for the rental and utilities assistance. They have reached out to them but do not have details on how it will be administered or the timeline.

**4b. New CARES funding directly to County.**

In addition to the emergency rent and utilities funding, the new CARES Act II funding will provide \$350 Billion to state and local governments nationwide. The money will go directly to the county and Gadsden County will be awarded \$8.93 Million and not through the State. This money can be used for lost revenue and to qualifying nonprofits. Non-entitlement cities will receive their funds through the State of Florida. The County will not be required to funnel their

money out to the cities. The municipalities in Gadsden County would have to go through the State and the County would have to go through the U.S. Treasury for funds.

**5. CDBG-DR Grant Pursuit (Sheree Keeler, Integrity Group)**

Sheree Keeler with Integrity appeared before the Board stated that currently there are four (4) different grants for the County. One is for Hurricane Michael Recovery. She stated that four grants were prepared and only 3 was sent out because of issues with getting the hospital grant completed. The Multi-purpose complex application valued at \$9 Million; the EMS facility update and renovations valued at \$2 Million and radio towers construction valued at \$500,000. DEO has not decided regarding the grants but Integrity was staying in constant contact with them and will let staff know when they hear something. Integrity Group was now working on getting CDBG COVID-19 funds that will be for small cities and counties in responding to, preparing for and mitigating COVID. She said a workshop was scheduled for the following Tuesday night where they will get an in-depth review of the grants. She said there was a CDBG grant open for small town revitalization and was an economic recovery grant which requires partnership with businesses for commercialization upgrades.

Commissioner Hinson stated they could not hear what she was saying.

**5a. Hurricane Michael CDBG-DR \$735 million (ten most impacted counties).**

It was announced on February 2<sup>nd</sup> that Florida had been awarded mitigation funds for the counties impacted by Hurricane Michael. Deo had not issued any specifications or grant cycle begin date yet or when applications were due. Integrity will advise staff as soon as possible on that topic.

Commissioner Green asked if the workshop was for Integrity.

Mr. Dixon stated it was for the commission to agree to apply for the grant.

Commissioner Nesmith asked the date for the workshop and Mr. Dixon answered March 10, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Commissioner Green asked about the workshop projections for the grants and the Chair answered yes.

**5b. Grant proposals have been submitted to Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.**

**5c. Grants now being developed, Economic Development & Infrastructure.**

**6. FEMA Public Assistance Program (Fredericka Hamilton)**

Fredricka Hamilton with Integrity appeared before the Board and stated that FEMA has a funding source available to communities as it related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program offered 100% federal funding and meant there was no local or state match requirement. The funds can be used to supplement the CARES dollars the County has been using. There is also the ability to request for advances on the dollars.

**6a. Developing project worksheets for COVID expenses.**

**i. Now 100% Federal, no local/state match.**

**ii. Indication of faster payments.**

**iii. Complement/Supplement CARES funding.**

**7. General discussion (All Participants)**

Chair Holt asked how long was the contract and Mr. Dixon said five years. Mr. Miller further explained it was three (3) years with two 1-year renewals.

Commissioner Green asked if they were focusing their energy on making sure they simplified the process. He has heard a lot of citizen talking about the complicated process. He said there were some residents still in jeopardy with their property and could they still apply?

Mr. Dixon stated that the residual pot of money was designed for those who did not receive money in the first pot. He said they were meeting with Integrity and Tuggerson and 30 days before they let the program start, they will dispatch teams to certain places where potential applicants, business or otherwise, can come in and get information checked to see if they meet the qualifications. They were trying to get funding to those who did not receive funding. He said there will still be people that will not get qualified. He added they would have to bring things back to the Board and then make decisions on who would qualify. He said they will do the application process up front and help them through it. He added the money was coming and they hoped to get people up and running and empower them.

Commissioner Green said if he recalled, there were 2-3 people who worked in that department and asked if they could add more people. Mr. Dixon stated that was the pre-process and there were now 5-10 people in that queue to help with the process.

Commissioner Hinson said there was \$1 Million set aside for the hospital. Could they prorate the money and give half to the businesses and half to the citizens? He asked where that money was located.

Ms. Hamilton stated when the plan was revised, she provided a spreadsheet to the Board showing where the dollars were re-appropriated and was presented in that revised spend plan. She said she could provide that if needed.

Commissioner Hinson asked where it re-appropriated. Chair Holt stated she thought it was moved to broadband.

Commissioner Hinson stated that they might could re-review the on how the citizens could re-apply.

Mr. Dixon stated that the workshop on the 10<sup>th</sup> was for CDBG and COVID-19 shelter.

Mr. Dixon stated that opportunities were there but nothing was shelf ready. Chair Holt stated they could meet more often, once they get the programs started, they have to have them ready.

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If people qualified before, do they qualify now for the next round. Mr. Dixon stated that would be up to the Board. He said everyone was expected to re-apply for the new pot of money.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that he understood the eligibility for the CARES Act had federal requirements that people had to qualify for and the residual was determined by the County. They could then begin to work on what the eligibility should be to make it more flexible. For the COVID-19 relief bill that was \$1.9 Trillion would have its separate requirements. They need things in place and shelf ready projects for them to apply for the money and need to have a unified mind for specific, shelf ready projects that was good for Gadsden County as a whole.

Chair Holt stated they have said the same thing over and over again. She said they put people out there that was able to contact people that before was not able to get the information so they can look at what citizens need. They need more meetings and get outside ideas. She asked if there were any questions about the presentation.

Commissioner Hinson asked who was in control of the \$1.3 Million to get that money out. He said they also had the Figgers contract out there for \$1.7 Million and the needed to make sure they satisfied that first. He said based on what Integrity said, rules had changed.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if they had the \$1.3 yet. Mr. Dixon stated they were waiting on that money. He stated they had been meeting with Integrity, Tuggerson and other groups. They will roll out the program as fast as they could. The County office was not built for this and they were trying to do it as fast as they could. There were no program development people and it was intense work. He added, inworking with Integrity and the other groups, they will present the Board with the package needed and what could be sent to other folks that would represent the needs of Gadsden County.

Commissioner NeSmith asked there was a number of grants that have been submitted. Mr. Dixon stated there were four (4) applications and all have been submitted but they have not heard from them yet. Commissioner NeSmith asked what the limitation were that could be applied for. Mr. Dixon said they charge every time they were asked to write one.

Mr. Yates stated that the CDBG-DR grants come from \$735 Million that was appropriated by Washington after Hurricane Michael. Some have been available and they submitted three (3) large projects that was still pending review but was moving slow. The economic grants were due April 16<sup>th</sup> and they had some ideas they hoped to develop with Staff to bring to the Board to get approval for them to submit to DEO get the HUD money. They want to come up with a list of projects that was good for Gadsden County and some may go to HUD, some could be shelf-ready for that money coming down the pipe. He said the good thing was, everything they do will be federally funded and their fees were added to the grant application and there was no local match or investment on the CDBG. Also, the good news for FEMA was it was also 100% federally funded and no local match required.

Mr. Dixon stated that was if that was the only projects they wanted to do. There were other projects they will want to do and they need to put money aside for engineers and architects to develop those programs.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if an application was not funded, did Integrity Group get paid.

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Mr. Yates stated if they do not receive the grant, Integrity Group does not get paid. Mr. Dixon stated that they get the money but do not have staff in place to manage it.

Chair Holt asked how could they get funding for the hospital. Mr. Yates stated they were not able to get all the agreements in place but was still something that was on Ms. Keeler's drawing board. He was hoping they could still make it a winning proposal. Chair Holt stated if they could pull that off it would affect everyone in the County, it would affect healthcare and drive the healthcare status and the economy would take off. She said they needed a lot of input. She told the Administrator they needed applications and needed to have them on the website. She added they also needed to look at a workshop.

Mr. Yates stated there was a lot of interest in broadband. He said Ms. Keeler was "hot on the hill" and there was a \$7 Billion appropriation that was in the December bill the President signed and they were setting up an office in Washington. They will be closely monitoring that for funding and it was intended for rural communities and broadband.

Chair Holt said they were asked what they wanted and the mobile unit was a definite. She said everything related to health care and economic development and this was their opportunity.

Mr. Dixon stated that he did not want to get caught up in grant applications, that was like "pie in the sky", whether they were talking about county-wide broadband, etc. He said the County needed to take control of the county's future, if the grants came, good. Even with broadband the still had to have a plan for the county. They could not wait for the grant to come to have a plan.

Chair stated that money was given on how much work was done previously. She said shelters have to be put in place and there was a place needed for COVID and when hurricanes come.

Mr. Dixon stated that on the agenda for the regular meeting has a Ratification memo, Approval of Minutes, approval of the livestock shelter/4H program, Resolution of Recognition of Red Cross month, Approval of Adopt a Road agreement with Men of Gadsden, Inc. and Approval of a Proclamation for the 100 year anniversary for the University of Florida North Florida Research and Education Center; under General business has an Approval of COVID-19 public service campaign, have a Legislative Advocacy Service and Public Relations Services for the lobbyist, the Road inventory that was discussed at the previous workshop and the Task Order was being presented, and the replacement of the roof for senior citizen building. He said they were pulling the St. Hebron Walk and Bike trail that did not require the Board's approval since they had approved that in a previous meeting and the Grant Resolution for the roads to be submitted will be pulled.

Mr. Knowles stated that the Emergency Debris Removal contract will being added to the meeting.

Mr. Dixon stated the upcoming events Wednesday March 10,2021 is the CDBG workshop, Tuesday March 16, 2021 at 4:30 is the pre-BOCC Meeting and Gadsden County Development Council overview, on Wednesday March 17, 2021 is Legislative Day at the Capitol and Tuesday, March 23, 2021 is the follow-up to the Board retreat. He said they would also be adding a Proclamation honoring the National Association of Women in Construction.

Commissioner Hinson stated that he could not hear what the County Attorney said and Mr. Knowles repeated that item.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked if they were pulling item 12 and Mr. Dixon answered yes.

**8. Closing (Chairwoman Holt)**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 5:49 P.M.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**BRENDA A. HOLT, Chair**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**