

**AT AN EMERGENCY SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MARCH 25, 2021 AT
5:00 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- appeared remotely
Kimblin NeSmith, District 3
Ronterious “Ron” Green, District 5
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk
Hannah Pope, Clerks Office

WELCOME

Chair Holt welcomed everyone to the meeting at 5:01 pm.

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Due to COVID-19 and the efforts of 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.

Vice Chair Viegbesie read the above statement.

Tari VanWinkle, 2483 Shady Rest Road, wrote to the Board in regards to the broadband issue. She brought up the need for reliable internet in more rural areas of the county as well as the opportunity of grant funds by the State for rural internet opportunities.

Christina Travis, address unknown, wrote to the Board about the broadband issue. She stated her concern about the lack of reliable internet in the county. She expressed concern regarding patients in the county that may need internet for medical purposes such as the ability to monitor their machines by their doctors.

Bishop Green, address unknown, came before the board regarding the Federal Legislative Community Projects Request. He asked the Board to look at the priorities and look for the greatest impact for the citizens. He said he supports whatever will bring the most benefits to the most citizens.

Don Stewart, address unknown, appeared remotely before the Board regarding rural broadband for the citizens. He discussed funding that is available for rural internet. He suggested the County apply for two different sets of funding from the Department of Commerce.

Stanley Sims, 1320 Avondale Way, Tallahassee, appeared before the Board regarding the Federal Legislative Community Projects Request. He expressed his concern regarding federal money coming into the county and the implementation of such funds. He expressed the importance of having one voice during a global pandemic.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Approval of Federal Legislative Community Projects Request to be Submitted for Gadsden County (Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator)

County Administrator Ed Dixon introduced the agenda item. Mr. Dixon says the county was contacted by Congressman Lawson's office to inquire if Gadsden County had any Shelf Ready Projects. The applications for Shelf Ready Projects should consist of: Name of the recipient, address of the recipient, amount of the request, explanation of the request, including purpose, and a justification for why it is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds, evidence of community support, evidence the entity is a nonprofit organization as described under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code of 1986, evidence that nonprofits work is primarily focused on Florida's fifth district and late or incomplete applications will not be considered. Applications must be submitted by April 9, 2021 at 6:00 PM. Mr. Dixon says his office has prepared a list of five projects with site plans and preliminary budget information for the Board's review. These projects include the following: W.S. Stevens School COVID Shelter and Mobile Health Unit, Gadsden County Administration and Law Enforcement Complex, East Gadsden Park and Recreational Complex, Pat Thomas Eco-Tourism Park Expansion, and Gadsden County boys and Girls Club. The County Administrator's office recommends Option 4, Board direction.

Chair Holt stated that the Congressman needs these applications as soon as possible. She states that once the applications are turned in, they will not be funded until 2022.

Vice Chair Viegbesie asked if the application is for a guaranteed amount or if it is for all of District Five. Chair Holt stated that this money is not written in stone and that this has not been done in 8 years.

Vice Chair Viegbesie asked if this amount is for just the county or is it for the 5th District of Florida. Mr. Dixon stated it is not just for the County. It is a wish list from the Congressman and they did not write to the number but rather they listed with the county needs. Vice Chair Viegbesie stated that this project list is not prioritized.

Commissioner Green asked if there are any other cities asking for funding. Mr. Dixon stated Gretna and Midway are asking for funding. Mr. Dixon said it is first come first served. Commissioner Green clarified that this is not funding from CARES Act funds. Mr. Dixon said that is correct.

Chair Holt stated that the Congressman stated he wanted one big project. She said the four interstate changes are a priority as is infrastructure. She said this is a one-time deal so why not get the big project out of the way. She suggested a civic center to host the people.

Mr. Dixon also said that there are two programs coming out. One is for infrastructure and the second is for utilities, such as broadband. This proposal is for the understanding that there is funding for those other projects. Chair Holt stated that these are time sensitive. Mr. Dixon stated that other counties will not submit. Chair Holt said to look at these projects not just vote them through.

Mr. Dixon stated that project A is a COVID shelter that include electric vehicles. He said if the property is not big enough then add money to expand, an additional \$500,000.

Mr. Dixon said item B is the Gadsden County Administration and Law Enforcement Complex. Redesigned sheriff's office complex. He stated that it is the combination of an old opportunity in a new opportunity. He stated the Sheriff's office portion of the complex would be roughly \$4,000,000, while the administration offices would be roughly \$12,200,000. Chair Holt stated the original sheriff's complex had a court room, she asked if this would have one as well. Mr. Dixon stated no, it does not have a court room. He stated it does not have a courtroom because court has been moved to Zoom or the courthouse. He stated this is just administrative.

Commissioner NeSmith asked with the five projects that have been presented what puts us in the best position to be receive funding. Mr. Dixon stated that Gadsden County does not own the land or the interstate. Mr. Dixon said participation in every pot of money to increase chances for success.

Vice Chair Viegbesie stated 2 trillion dollars for infrastructure is coming after COVID relief deal is passed. Interchanges, water, broadband is coming through other agencies.

Chair Holt stated that they need to get ready. The Board can get healthcare done first.

Commissioner Hinson stated the county has collapsing bridges. He asked why are we not focusing on bridges and public health? He reminded the Board they have to take care of the citizens first. Chair Holt explains the Board can't send those projects in before infrastructure comes up. Commissioner Hinson said septic tanks are an issue. He said the Board should look at big projects that that it can't afford. Mr. Dixon said Midway would be submitting a project.

Mr. Dixon stated item C is the Saint Hebron Park, the East Gadsden Park and Recreational Complex. Commissioner Green asked if that project had been submitted. Mr. Dixon said not to the federal level but it was submitted to CDBG. Commissioner NeSmith asked if the Board has heard from that grant. Chair Holt said no. Chair Holt stated that she wanted the pool inside because of liabilities. Vice Chair Viegbesie that it is at the very bottom because of liability and not a pressing need. He also brought to attention that it is also a disaster relief shelter.

Mr. Dixon said item D is the Pat Thomas Eco-Tourism Park Expansion. The County has acquired that property but had to halt that project. Mr. Dixon stated RVs makes money for the county.

Mr. Dixon stated the item E is the Gadsden County Boys and Girls Club. He stated the county has a piece of land by the library. He stated they have updated numbers to make it COVID friendly. Commissioner Hinson said right now the Board is trying find land for a community center. He said he would like to put that building in Havana. Chair Holt said they have approved this one for that location. Commissioner Hinson said they may need a building like Family Dollar buildings as those may cost less. Chair Holt said the board is trying to get the money first.

Commissioner Green stated that they cannot approve what they do not see. Does not know when they will present.

COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE A MOTION TO SUBMIT THE LIST OF PROJECTS FOR APPROVAL. VICE CHAIR VIEGBESIE SECONDED THE MOTION.

Commissioner Hinson stated there hasn't been enough research on the project in question. He said he could bring information and by 8:15 the next morning. Chair Holt asked if the Board wanted to meet on Monday. Commissioner Green stated that it's not that the Board doesn't want that project but rather it is not ready to present.

Vice Chair Viegbesie asked Commissioner Green if he could amend his motion to include if the municipalities that would like to submit any proposals. Chair Holt stated that there is a need for a vote. County Attorney Knowles stated that there is a motion and second on the floor. Mr. Dixon asked if the Board would mind approving the plans that are in front of them then he will ask if the Board would like to meet again to discuss the projects in detail. Chair Holt agreed and reminded the Board to vote on these items.

A VOICE VOTE WAS CALLED BY CHAIR HOLT TO APPROVE THE ITEMS THAT THE COUNTY HAS INCLUDING THE ONE FROM GRETNA ON INFRASTRUCTURE. HEARING NO NAYS, THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if the information was not available to Mr. Dixon by Monday, would there still be a meeting? Mr. Dixon said no they would cancel the meeting. Chair Holt asked for a time for the meeting. Mr. Dixon stated 5pm

Chair Holt asked Mr. Dixon to please give feedback so the citizens can be informed. Mr. Dixon said none of the commissioners have seen this information until today because no one has seen until today.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:48 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

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

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk