

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN  
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MAY 4, 2021 AT 3:00 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  
Kimblin NeSmith, District 3  
Ronterious “Ron” Green, District 5  
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator  
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney  
Hannah Pope, Deputy Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Dixon welcomed everyone to the workshop at 3:03 p.m. Mr. Dixon asked for a moment of silence and then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

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

*Anyone wishing to speak on agenda items or non-agenda items should schedule or notify the County Administrator's Office before attending the meeting and will be asked to follow the Gadsden County Public Meetings Citizens Access Guidelines. Also, Public comment for Commission meetings can be submitted via email to CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until noon on Tuesday, May 4, 2021. Comments submitted after the deadline, but prior to the meeting, will be added to the official record. The County cannot guarantee that Commissioners and staff will have adequate time to review comments prior to the meeting.*

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**1. Presentation from The Integrity Group and The Tuggerson Group Regarding the American Rescue Plan Act.**

Mr. Dixon introduced the above item and corresponding staff to the Board.

*Commissioner Green entered the workshop at 3:05 p.m.*

*Commissioner Viegbesie entered the workshop at 3:06 p.m.*

Mr. Dixon stated initially the County was awarded \$8.9 Million related to COVID-19 in two equal allocations. He stated that unlike the previous CARES Act funding, this funding was directly awarded to the County. The time frame for this allocation of funding was not as stringent and the County has until December 31, 2024 to use the allotted funds. This program does not require the submission of any documentation from any agencies unlike the last program. The cities and utility companies will receive their own funding so, a large portion that the County was responsible for is no longer a part of the program. The Board of County Commissioners gave away most of the CARES Act money to its residents in phase one. Mr. Dixon stated that out of the \$4.5 Million, staff recommended to keep \$995,488.50 in reserve for internal programs. The following

grant programs will be a first qualified, first served basis. Staff has done their very best to make it easy for the citizens to apply for these programs.

1. **Gadsden County Church Assistance Program** is allotted a total of \$900,000. The Board made it known to staff that the churches were helping the community during the pandemic. Grant amounts are based off of the number of members in the congregation. Churches with 10-100 members can receive up to \$2,000 dollars and those with 100 or more can receive up to \$5,000 dollars. Mr. Dixon stated that the eligibility and documentation requirements are very minimal to allow as many churches as possible to qualify for the program.
2. **Residence Assistance** is going to be a **Food Card Program**. Mr. Dixon stated that the allotted total amount for the program would be \$600,000. The card for each household will be granted \$150 once they meet the eligibility requirements. Mr. Dixon stated that citizens would need to sign an attestation, have a Florida Driver's License/State Identification showing residence in Gadsden County, copy of their most recent utility bill, and the full names of those who reside in the household. Mr. Dixon stated that this was for eligibility requirements and to keep proper records.
3. **Non-Profit Organization Assistance Program** will help non-profit health care and regular non-profit organizations. Mr. Dixon stated that the reason non-profit health care was so important was because health care services are nonexistent in Gadsden County. He stated that the County needs these programs that help the citizens. These health organizations have shown themselves more important during the pandemic than ever before since they were testing and treating those who needed care. There are also non-profits that have been making sure that food was distributed and educational materials were being disbursed. The amount of funds allotted would be \$400,000. The eligible recipients would be based off of loss revenue or new cost. Mr. Dixon stated that the amounts that would be awarded would be in the \$5,000-8,000 range.

Mr. Dixon stated the Non-Profit Organization Assistance Program is one of the programs that staff struggled with. That is because non-profits may or may not be able to show loss. Mr. Dixon stated that none of these figures were set in stone yet since this was a workshop and they were wanting the Commissioners' direction on these amounts.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked, based on the information that has been provided, was the Health Council that was created by the Board of County Commissioners being considered as a non-profit. If they were not, why are they being placed along with the non-profits that will be applying for assistance when these programs become available.

Mr. Dixon stated that most health care organizations belong to the Health Council. He stated that the Health Council has been a major distributor of COVID-related information for the County. Also, the Health Council provided a screening service for the organizations that were coming to the County so there were no duplicate programs.

Commissioner Green asked what was puzzling Mr. Dixon regarding the non-profits.

Mr. Dixon stated that some non-profits may not have documentation to show the loss of money per say or they may not be able to prove the loss of money. Some non-profits changed the way that they served the County during the pandemic and those organizations may not be able to show losses.

4. **Small Business Assistance Program** will look at eligibility requirements that were directed by the Board of County Commissioners during the last CARES Act Program. The funds that have been set aside for this program will total \$750,000. The determination of funds will be based off of loss of revenue and the maximum for each allotment will range from \$8,000-\$20,000. Mr. Dixon stated that most will easily qualify for the \$8,000 amount.
5. **Directed Funding** was created to help programs that were already helping citizens before COVID. Mr. Dixon stated that those programs will be ones such as Second Harvest and Farm Share. The total amount for this funding will be \$25,000 and will be allotted via the Board's discretion.
6. **Other Support and Funding Available for Gadsden County** is using resources provided by the Integrity Group and Tuggerson Group to locate all of the funds that the citizens can acquire. There will be technical support and workshops to aid the citizens on preparing the documents for grant submittal. Mr. Dixon stated that staff wants the citizens to get this money. There will be people at each and every step of the program to help aid in the grant process for citizens. Also, the Commissioners need to pass on the word to the citizens in their districts as well.

Commissioner NeSmith asked which organizations will be aiding in the outreach efforts.

Mr. Dixon stated that the Tuggerson Group will be bringing in a number of people to help who are from Gadsden County. What was on the schedule was technical system workshop dates and they were dedicated to helping every city and citizen.

Mr. Stanley Sims asked about the role of the citizens to help aid in education for these programs.

Mr. Dixon stated that they have set aside 30 days to assist with these issues.

Mr. Sims asked how would citizens educate other citizens on what needed to be done to receive these grants.

Mr. Dixon stated that citizens could come to the technical workshops or call the center and staff will assist them. Also, that staff will not just be in the offices, they will be out in neighborhoods and at churches.

Mr. Sims asked what was the method of outreach that would be used.

Mr. Dixon deferred to Ms. Tuggerson to answer Mr. Sims' question.

Ms. Tuggerson stated that this was a layout to show how this would be ran. She stated that this was to address the dates and the times for the program. Also, she stated that this was about the people that Tuggerson Group will be contacting to work this program.

Mr. Sims asked if The Tuggerson Group already had staff.

Ms. Tuggerson answered no, since this was a workshop, her group wanted to hear from the Board and public before they finalized everything. All information that was shared tonight was to be taken into consideration for the finished project.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that this model should also be used to educate citizens on probate and heir property laws.

Mr. Dixon then went over the proposed time line for the program.

Mr. Dixon introduced the following timeline for the proposed Rescue Plan:

**May 3-10:** Present Program for Board of County Commissioner Approval  
Finalize Outreach Plan/Schedule/Locations

Finalize Marketing Campaign

Finalize Program Eligibility Criteria and Standards

Draft Application forms, attestations, and other program aids

**May 11-14:** Receive First Rescue Funding Allocation from U.S. Treasury

Develop Grant Portal and Management System

Finalize paper applications and other application tools

**May 17-31:** Communication Soft Roll-out (Radio, Newspaper, Website, Facebook, etc.)

Implement media campaign

Final modifications of Portal, Management System, Applications

**June 1-30/July 1-2:** Conduct County wide workshops (Chattahoochee, Greensboro, Gretna, Quincy, Midway, Havana)

**July 1- Aug 31:** Implement Application Phase

Award grants to qualifying applicants (beginning July 15)

Audit/Closeout Phase One

**Sept 1-30:** Implement second Application Phase (for any remaining grant funds)

**Oct 1-31:** Award grants for second Application Phase

Audit/Begin Closeout of Phase Two

**Nov 1-30:** Final Audit, Reporting and Closeout of Grant Program

Commissioner Viegbesie suggested that the citizen preparation for this plan be a continuous process.

Mr. Dixon stated that it was going to be a continuous process.

Commissioner Viegbesie stated that all citizens needed to be ready for this opportunity so that when the program opened up, those citizens could get the funding as soon as possible.

Mr. Dixon stated that the intention of this program was to help get citizens ready for the opportunity.

7. **Marketing and Communication** is one thing the County has allotted \$50,000 to ensure that every citizen gets the information that they need. This campaign will be digital and in print.

Mr. Sims asked who was being hired to do the marketing and communications and how the citizens would apply for these job opportunities that were arising.

Mr. Dixon stated that this program was not finished and once a timeline is finalized, the issue would be dealt with then.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked if staff would be considering using the local churches to help get out the information.

Mr. Dixon stated that churches will be used as a resource.

Commissioner Green stated that it could be an incentive for those churches to apply for grants.

Mr. Sims stated that staff also needed to understand that many were not attending church physically right now so to look at Walmart and other businesses as well to get out the information.

Mr. Dixon stated that this time around, staff wanted to know what services the County was paying for through groups that was processing the applications for the County.

Commissioner Green stated that the Board should hear from The Integrity Group.

Mr. Eric Miller stated that with running a grant program, there was a large amount of administrative duties that are in the background. They start out with an analysis of the current controls that are imposed by law and look at all of the requirements. Their staff stays up to date on the changes to the requirements set by the current laws so there are no implemented legalities. They assist with developing the application process that will be available as a paper application as well as the online application. Also, they defer individuals to programs that might assist them and work with the Clerk's office for payments. Their staff documents all interactions with applicants and keeps in contact with them to get the appropriate information. They also do the reports for the Federal and State level regarding what has been distributed. They also report the amounts of applications that have been approved to the County.

Mr. Sims asked if the small business grant determination was based off of the number of expenditures. He asked for it to be explained to him so he could tell citizens which application to apply for. Also, was it based on the loss of revenue or added expenses.

Ms. Tuggerson said that one of the techniques used was to get citizens' documents ready. So, if citizens did not have those documents, staff would work with them to get the appropriate documents. She stated that every case is different and it took time to address each case. Also, this type of grant work was not done in an hour and her staff will work with citizens one on one to ensure the best outcome.

Karen Wells stated that the County has to be very careful on how they advise people as well. Citizens need documents so they do not have their bank accounts locked up.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked how cash and carry businesses document their loss. If they do not have receipts how do they show their loss.

Mr. Dixon stated that this was what Ms. Tuggerson was saying. We will take the time to get all of the required documentation for each citizen. The goal is to help most, if not all, of the citizens who need assistance.

*Commissioner Green exited at 3:59 p.m.*

Mr. Dixon stated that all commitments were taken into account and that staff will take its time to get each citizen the help they need. He also stated that the Board may want to consider a bonus for the employees who have worked diligently during this difficult time.

Chair Holt stated that the Health Council made sure that people got their funding before time ran out. Also, to look at staff because they were having more work than personnel for continued programs.

**2. Review and Discuss the May 4, 2021 Regular BOCC Meeting Agenda (Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator)**

There was no discussion regarding this agenda item.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, MR. DIXON DECLARED THE WOPKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 4:25 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**