
WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

August 17, 2022, 9:00 a.m., Commission Board Room

1331 South Blvd., Chipley, FL 32428

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT 5
Alan T Bush	Charles Kent	Tray Hawkins Chairman	Todd Abbott Vice-Chairman	

I. PROCLAMATION

- A. Call to Order – Chairman Hawkins
- B. Invocation – Johnny Evans
- C. Pledge

The following persons were present: Chairman Tray Hawkins, Vice-Chairman Todd Abbott, Commissioners Alan T. Bush, and Charles Kent. Also present were County Administrator Jeff Massey, County Attorney Clay Milton, Fuqua & Milton, P.A., Clerk of Court, Lora C. Bell, and Deputy Clerk, Risha Brantley.

Agenda Additions

Rural Infrastructure Grant – Ted Everett

II. AGENDA ITEMS

- 1. Rural Infrastructure Fund – Ted Everett requested board approval to apply for a study grant for the industrial park. The Rural Infrastructure Grant (\$300,000.00) is for master planning, roadway design, water, sewer, and natural gas design. After the study is done another grant can be applied for that will cover doing the work and put those into the industrial park.

The county will be back in possession of the spray field after November when the new spray field is online. There is an agreement with the city to sell the land back to the county, which will give the county 201 acres at the location.

Commissioner Bush confirmed that there is no cost-share and no requirements beyond the grant.

Ted Everett responded that is correct.

Elijah Hooks asked if the Chipley Industrial Park is what is being discussed.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that it is the county's industrial park located behind the Department of Transportation.

This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

2. County Boat Landing – Commissioner Hawkins addressed the board and the public. An ordinance was drafted a couple of months ago and was discussed in the meeting last month.

Commissioner Kent expressed concern about being able to enforce ordinances, commenting that he does not want it too extreme.

Commissioner Hawkins spoke. There was concern about the paddle return from the springs back to Cotton Landing being too tiresome for some individuals. Cotton Landing is utilized only for paddle boats or canoes/no motor vessels.

After traveling the path, he felt that if an individual could paddle from the mouth of Holmes Creek to their destination it is half the trip back to Cotton Landing.

Commissioner Kent suggested that some of the issues stem from everyone stopping at the same place.

- Donna Land, property owner at multiple locations at Culpepper Lane addressed the board to express her feelings and to provide results from research that she had done. Example: If you own a business in Vernon

and you take your canoers to the creek the property is insured by liability, and the vehicle is insured under the vehicle coverage. Once the customers exit the van, Washington County is responsible at that point for the business. Nobody gives liability insurance to canoers.

She suggested if a business would like to use a public boat ramp for commercial use the county should request valid liability insurance from the business.

They will not be able to provide it.

In Bay County, each hotel must have liability insurance for their entire property and a contract with a liability insurance company that is connected to the hotel. Each motorized vessel pays approximately \$5,000.00 for insurance for commercial use.

If you own property connected to the creek it is possible to get insurance.

A person can apply for a mixed-use classification instead of residential to get the county to insure them and start a business.

The county is responsible for the customers once they enter the water. The state, county, Water Management, and the Army Corps of Engineers have authority.

If something occurred while on the water, the county could be sued because it is closest to the issue. It is the county's dock and entry.

Is Vernon willing to open the ability for property owners to change their land use to mixed-use and open businesses?

Many issues need to be addressed.

Per the Army Corps of Engineers, if a boat is put in the water at a boat ramp a fee must be paid to purchase a sticker on each vessel no matter the type of vessel.

Commissioner Abbott suggested that the county has a blanket insurance policy that would cover the county in some of those areas.

Chairman Hawkins commented that the ordinance is to prohibit commercial use. No-wake and idle speed only signs have been ordered as previously requested. FWC Boater Safety approved the signs being ordered.

Donna Land commented that something needs to be given back to the community. They need to have a residential place to go.

- Elijah Hooks addressed the board. The county has ecotourism as a tourist attraction. There are two major waterways and over 221 lakes in the county. They should be shared by residents and commercial businesses. When the landing is being used by commercial businesses it is like companies using county property to bring their materials for free. There should be a charge for the usage just as there is for recreational facilities.

Another view of the issue is that the businesses that have been using the location for years profited.

Chairman Hawkins commented that the board does not intend to harm any business. There is another boat landing that is owned by Water Management that is specifically for non-motorized vessels.

Commissioner Abbott commented that the county facility rental fee is used

to offset expenses to the facilities. The waterway does not have the same expenses.

- Pamela Andrews asked where the new businesses would relocate if the ordinance passed. Will a fee be implemented for commercial use?

Chairman Hawkins responded anywhere but Culpepper Landing. The board is not looking at a fee today. The issue today is restricting the utilization of Culpepper Landing.

- Velma Murphy, Lynn Haven informed the board that she reached out to them via letter on June 21 regarding the Charles Brock Center. She thanked the county for the Ebro facility, however, she does have issues with the upkeep.

The board members commented that they had not seen the letter.

Velma Murphy read the letter and identified the following issues she noticed when she rented the facility on June 18, 2022.

- The roof is separating from the walls, which allows the sky to be seen from the inside.
- There is mold in the facility.
- The floor needs to be cleaned.
- It is impossible to cool the building due to the lack of insulation
- The grass should be cut more often during the summer and when there is an increase in rain.
- The acoustics are very poor and no WIFI is in the area. There is no phone service within the building.
- A large mirror is needed in the women's bathroom.

She is aware that the building was moved from another location.

Bringing the items to the board's attention is not meant as criticizing the board. She feels as if the building received leftovers and after it was put there nothing else happened to it.

Commissioner Bush responded that he was on the board when the building was put up. The footers on the building are 8 ft. x 8 ft. x 8 ft. A lot of money was spent on the building, and he used money from his county coffers to help complete the building due to a shortfall. It was not thrown up with disregard and does not want the community to think that it is something secondhand that was put up. He fought to have the building put there and put a lot of time into the building. It was one of the nicest county community centers. If the cost was known to reconstruct the building at the beginning, a new building would have been built.

Chairman Hawkins commented that he and Wade Brown met months ago to discuss the needs of the park. A list was made that day and it was discussed that the community would come together along with him and work on the issues with the county buying the materials. If anything needed to be contracted out, it would be. There is a plan in place and the board understands the needs.

The mowing situation will be evaluated.

Velma Murphy informed the board the back of the building that is used for the entrance does not have any lighting.

- Pamela Andrews addressed the board. The community appreciates the park. Nothing can be changed until it is faced. Concerns are listed below.
 - Mold in the building.
 - Repairs that need to be made to the building.
 - Security is a concern.
 - Lighting is an issue.

- The front door of the building is at the back of the building.
- Safety concerns/Ditch at the back of the building.
- Safety of the children.
- Rental fee.
- No check is being done on the property.
- Illegal activity at the park.

Sheriff Crews has been a source of help.

Commissioner Hawkins redirected the meeting back to the county boat landings.

- Benita Crittendon (Greenhead) informed the board that she is an advocate of workshops and would like to see them monthly. More community involvement would also be good.

She shared her recent personal experience on a visit to Culpepper on a Thursday morning. Around 10:00 a.m. groups of canoes and kayaks started coming around every 30 minutes to an hour. When she decided to start counting that day there were over 400 commercial canoes and kayaks. The problem was when everyone left the creek and went back to Culpepper. There were rows of canoes and kayaks in the boat landing waiting for their commercial pick-up, which caused a traffic jam. This blocked the landing from citizens being able to load their motorized boats and leave the creek.

She informed the board that she does not support an ordinance that would shut down the small businesses in the area. As a citizen, she sees the problem.

It is suggested that the board look at alternative routes, pick-ups, and drop-offs for commercial businesses.

After a discussion with a resident that lives west of the Vernon Bridge, she found out that after the installation of the new bridge they are experiencing a lot of erosion due to the motorized traffic in the area.

The board should keep in mind that implementing the ordinance may cause more traffic at the Vernon launch. There are many views on the situation.

Commissioner Bush commented that a portion of the boat ramp registration fees is used to maintain boat ramps. The registration is not on the canoes and kayaks and that is a concern that has been voiced.

- Taylor Elliot, Coldwater Excursions (canoe livery) addressed the board. The high usage is on the weekends. Regarding Cotton Landing being the same distance from the creek to the spring is true. The current is tougher on the creek than it is on the spring run. Cotton is 6 ft. wide, which is too small.

He informed the board that he has an insurance liability policy that covers him and his business, however, the policy does not cover pets on the canoes.

A tax, permit fee, or staff sitting at the boat ramp to move kayakers out of the way would be acceptable.

Commissioner Bush responded. In an ideal situation, each livery would have its property to launch from like any commercial establishment would and not utilize the public landing. The ordinance is only to change landings.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that the plan is to make the landing more user-friendly. Cotton Landing can be used for commercial.

Donna Land commented the children need a place to go.

- James Brooks, (Vernon) addressed the board. The county Tourist Development Council website promotes ecotourism. Cypress Springs is beautiful, and it is promoted. People are searching for outdoor activities. The county needs to find a way; expanding Culpeper with more ramps is a suggestion. There is a concern with the number of motorized vehicles that are destroying the ecosystem.

Another concern is when they put in at Cotton Landing and a storm comes. Could a provision be included in the ordinance to address emergencies?

This item will be listed for approval to advertise on the regular agenda.

3. County Parks Plan – County staff has been working with multiple entities regarding a park plan. The objective is to have something that is user-friendly and attracts people to come and enjoy outdoor activities with their families. The health department will do a feasibility study and user-friendly study of what they see in the county parks. The role of the sheriff's office would be security and monitoring. Security cameras will help in holding individuals accountable that are vandalizing the parks. Tourist Development will be used as a marketing campaign by including a full list of county parks and featuring them. Water Management parks will also be marketing and the county will see that their parks are utilized, safe, and secure. One of the largest parts is the schools. Students can receive community service hours that are required for some scholarships by taking a picture of a park twice a week and submitting them to the county via electronic means. The county will approve

2-hours per week of community service hours for this task. The picture will assist in determining the timeframe if illegal activity is noticed. It also gives the student a personal interest in the park. A community committee on each end of the county is key.

There is \$100,000.00 in the 2022 – 2023 budget for community park improvements/maintenance.

Deputy Clerk Note: *This budget has not been approved yet.*

County Administrator Massey has a plan with an existing inmate supervisor to use that person to oversee the parks.

Each school has an art program. A thought is to have the option for them to paint murals on the outside of the park buildings. The idea is to attract attention to the park, which is putting more eyes on the park. This gives the student a personal interest in the facilities.

Destiny Wiggins of David H. Melvin addressed the board regarding the FRDAP Grant for a splash pad. The only issue now is that the restroom needs to be repaired.

This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

Commissioner Bush confirmed with the board that all the restrooms at the county parks are closed because they have been destroyed.

Commissioner Abbott commented that years ago many parks were created, however, money was not set aside for maintenance.

Commissioner Bush commented that there was a Parks and Recreation Summary Minutes Prepared by Risha Brantley

Director in the past and the ordinance still references that. There needs to be someone solely responsible for the parks.

County Administrator Massey advised that there will be a dedicated person, however, it will not work unless everyone pulls together. Other staff will be utilized that are out in the county. It has been working well with animal control.

Chairman Hawkins suggested that the board should be voluntary. Will a committee from the north and south side in an advisory capacity be required to meet the sunshine requirements?

County Attorney Milton informed the board that if the committee is strictly in an advisory capacity that should be okay. Decision-making is a different thing.

If the committee only provides recommendations and has no decision-making authority, that should be okay.

Commissioner Abbott advised that all the parks need to be evaluated. Jane Dellwo will be the head of putting the committee together.

Commissioner Bush advised that money needs to be put forth on the security issue.

Wade Brown (Vernon) addressed the board regarding concerns at Campbell Park. Items of concern are as follows:

- The lighting was an issue from the beginning. When it is used as a voting precinct the darkness is an issue as well as when family functions are held there.
- The pieces that were put at the top of the building were not matched

correctly, which caused the gaps. Foam insulation would help with mold and mildew, the openings, and the utility bill.

Commissioner Hawkins requested that County Engineer Knauer investigates the issue of sealing the building.

Commissioner Hawkins confirmed that he would contact the utility company regarding lighting.

- The restrooms need to be redone.
Once the updates are made, cameras will assist with any vandalism.

Sheriff Crews sends a deputy to ride the area, however, when a routine is known those committing crimes will steer clear of the area.

There are also people in the community that check the park. The restrooms have also been cleaned by the residents in the community.

- Exiting the gazebo, you will notice the wooden handrail (all that stuff is demolished). It is a safety hazard.
- The board has been removed from the seesaw. Other playground equipment is damaged and there is mold and mildew on it.
- The playground area is covered with miscellaneous vegetation. The area originally had white sand.
- A trash bin would prevent those that rent the facility from having to haul it off. If a dumpster is put next to the building it can be locked.
- Many people cannot afford to pay the increased rental fee.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that the price would justify itself when the community sees investment in the park. The plan is to use

the fees toward the parks and recreation person.

Wade Brown confirmed with the board that all the park rental fees are the same.

Wendy White, HR advised that the ag center rental fee is higher.

Commissioner Bush asked who inspects the buildings before releasing the deposit.

Wendy White, HR responded there is an employee at the ag center under maintenance.

Priscilla Brown (Vernon) addressed the board. There is an issue with the building being checked before rental. Seeing things from a prior rental at the building once it is rented does not show that it has been cleaned. After renting the building, renters have to clean it.

Chairman Hawkins advised that the parks and recreation position will handle that.

The parks are not maintained by grant funds. (This is in response to a question asked by Priscilla Brown)

The plan is to have the first community meeting in September.

The funds will not be available until the next budget.

Commissioner Abbott commented that Campbell Park will be up first for the use of the \$100,000.00.

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- Pamela Andrews thanked the commissioners for mentioning community work. A community day should be held to keep the parks clean. Bringing the students in on the process teaches the children how to preserve what is the counties.

The number of chairs at the building is adequate; however, renters must bring in additional tables. The south end of the county feels forgotten.

Commissioner Hawkins responded that four new tables have been added as requested by Ronald Brown.

Elijah Hooks agreed with the idea of a committee, suggesting that it could be named the Parks and Recreation and Waterway Advisory Committee. Committees in other counties have the authority to create policies and procedures for all the parks and waterways and recreation facilities with board approval. They also have the authority to create a county-wide comprehensive recreational plan. The committee should also be able to establish a fair priority system for the parks and recreation facilities and identify new revenue sources and grants. Overall, the committee should be a voice for the constituents that use the facilities. The committee could be composed of two members that own a commercial business affected by parks and recreational waterways, three of them citizens, and the remaining two would be someone with law enforcement and someone with a parks and recreation background. For a five-member committee, the board could include one person from a commercial business affected by parks and recreational waterways, residents, and someone with a law enforcement and parks and recreation background.

A summer work program could be implemented with students as park attendants. The committee could also be used to assess the condition of parks.

Commissioner Abbott suggested that the committee should be composed of residents from different areas in the county because people are passionate about their neighborhood.

County Attorney Milton informed the board if the committee is appointed by the board the committee is subject to the sunshine law.

The FRDAP Grant requires an advisory committee appointed by the board.

Elijah Hooks suggested the board consider the parks being sensory-friendly for those that have disabilities.

Commissioner Hawkins responded that is a hot topic item for the board.

Benita Crittendon requested information regarding the grant.

County Attorney Milton responded that the FRDAP Grant is through DEP and the funding depends on the grant cycle.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that there are many different grant cycles. Melvin Engineer contacted the county to see if there was interest in them applying for the grant for Washington County.

County Attorney Milton commented that Melvin Engineering does not get paid for the application.

Destiny Wiggins informed the board the resolution requested for approval tomorrow is specifically for the capital improvement plan. \$200,000.00 will be applied for. The advisory board is recommended for FRDAP, however, it is not required. It does help in being awarded the grant. City or County

Commissioners are not considered an advisory board.

The full name of the grant is the Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program.

- James Brooks (Vernon) addressed the board. Once the plan is put together for the park security, vandalism, and litter should be addressed. After weekend attendance at Culpepper, litter is in abundance. Cameras and trash receptacles could assist with this. Where is the enforcement? Are there funds in the budget for the sheriff's department to make rounds in the parks? The Board should review the budget and investigate supporting an increase in the sheriff's department's personnel. Is drinking allowed? Alcohol is a big component at Culpepper and Vernon Landing. Family-friendly places need security. Disorderly conduct should have legal consequences. If the county does not follow up the events will be reoccurring.

Commissioner Abbott commented the board is looking at changing the past.

Commissioner Hawkins went back over those that will be involved in the new parks and recreation plan.

James Brooks suggested no alcohol signs should be displayed at the parks. Much of the litter is beer bottles.

Commissioner Hawkins advised that no alcohol language is included in the rental agreements that are signed.

Pamela Andrews commented that no matter how many additional people are hired, citizens must take responsibility for their community.

Commissioner Hawkins requested that Pamela Andrews consider being on the committee.

The park budget of \$100,000.00 will be used to address the needs as seen fit.

Pamela Andrews asked if the parks received any Hurricane Michael funds.

Wade Brown commented that signs do not prevent people from doing what they plan to do.

James Brooks asked who is responsible for illegal activities on or at the waterways.

Commissioner Bush advised that any law enforcement has the authority to address the issues, but the most likely entity to do so would be FWC.

Donna Land suggested that ordinances and code enforcement could be used in enforcing illegal activities at the parks/landings.

County Attorney Milton commented the ordinance is already in effect.

4. Budget Discussion – Commissioner Bush informed the board that he had an issue with the increases and that concern has been shared and updates have been made.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that the raises that Commissioner Bush is referring to will bring the Washington County Public Works Department up to a good place.

Donna Land addressed the board regarding the recreational facility rental fees. It could be recommended in this park and recreation. There is business here; going back to the canoe and kayak rentals that are making thousands daily that the county is not benefiting from. If some of that money could be utilized for the fees of the parks and the building.

They are paying twice. They are paying taxes and paying to rent the facility.

Commissioner Hawkins asked what occurs if someone outside the county would like to rent it.

Donna Land suggested charging them.

Commissioner Hawkins responded that the same thing could be done at the boat ramps. Anything that is connected under federal funds must be done equally.

James Brooks asked if the isolation park will be included under parks and recreation. Around \$175,000.00 was spent there. Will that be part of the budget process or is that remaining under FEMA?

James Brooks clarified his question; will part of the \$100,000.00 designated for parks be used at the isolation park?

Chairman Hawkins commented if it was needed.

James Brooks asked if it would be under the umbrella of park and recreation.

Chairman Hawkins commented, yes, it is a park.

Elijah Hook's asked what the isolation park is.

Chairman Hawkins commented it is the equestrian center and the facility there.

III. FEMA COORDINATOR – None

IV. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – Jeff Massey informed the board that an interlocal agreement is in the process with the City of Chipley concerning flood plain management. The county provides that for Vernon and Wausau, however, Chipley is a little more detailed in what must be done. The state has implemented some requirements. This will be brought to the board meeting next month.

Commissioner Hawkins addressed the board. Several small fiscally constrained cities in the outlying areas are maintained by the county. The cities could apply for MSCOP Grants, which is what the City of Vernon applied for to do Church Street in Vernon. The city held onto it due to the reimbursement process.

Would the board support the cities applying for the grants? The county has non-reoccurring funds that could be used to offset the cost of the road construction and get reimbursed from the state.

This would help the city and give the county public works department some relief.

The city would apply for the grant and the county would administer them by implementing an inter-local agreement.

Commissioner Hawkins responded to a question on the floor regarding the advisory board not falling under the Sunshine Law.

The Sunshine Law requires the meetings to be recorded and minutes will have to be prepared. The committee will not be making any decisions. Advisory will be brought to the board and transparency will fall on the BOCC. The meetings will not have to be advertised.

Pamela Andrews commented that the Sunshine Law makes you accountable.

V. COUNTY ENGINEER – Cliff Knauer addressed the board.

- Williams Road Bridge – The bid has been extended. The results will be presented to the board at the next meeting.
- Spring Update – Dewberry is designing the improvements for Cypress Springs. The project includes public restrooms, a beach area, drainage improvements, around 1,200 ft. of a walkway around the spring, landscaping with native vegetation, and access in and out of the spring to the boardwalk to prevent trampling the shoreline and wetlands. The project is in permitting. The projected bid schedule is toward the end of the year.
- Donald Stanley, HMB Engineering presented for approval change order #4 for ITB 2021-08 FEMA project. The change order will remove the Type B stabilization, increase the rock thickness to accommodate for that, and decrease the asphalt to 1 ½ inch for Hicks Lake Lane, Hicks Lake Road, Territory Road, and Andara. This is consistent with the other projects. This will result in a net decrease of \$60,213.00, which will be added back to the contingency line item that will result in a net \$0.00 change for the contract amount.

Change order #5 for ITB 2021-07 for C.W. Roberts. The contract is scheduled to expire on August 19, 2022. 11 weather days need to be added back to the contract as of this previous Saturday. The days will need to be increased to 36 to make it to the next meeting. Rain is in the forecast for the next week. The change order has been prepared for 36 weather days, which will extend a day after the next board meeting. This will prevent the contract from expiring in between. The roads include Peel, Earl Gilbert, Cheverie, Laster, Toole Circle, Hartzog, and Coon Hollow. The contractor is actively working on the project.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that a special meeting will need to be held on day 11 to add additional weather days if the 36-day change order is not approved tomorrow.

Both change orders will be listed on the consent agenda.

VI. ADJOURN