

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

May 30, 2023, 9:00 a.m., Commission Board Room

1331 South Blvd., Chipley, FL 32428

DISTRICT 1 Alan T Bush	DISTRICT 2 David Pettis, Jr.	DISTRICT 3 Tray Hawkins Chairman	DISTRICT 4 Wesley Griffin	DISTRICT 5 David Corbin Vice-Chairman
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I. PROCLAMATION

- A. Call to Order – Chairman Hawkins
- B. Invocation – Danny Jackson
- C. Pledge

Present – Commissioners Bush, Pettis, Hawkins, Corbin, and Griffin. Also, in attendance were Kayla Corbitt, Court Director, Attorney H. Matthew Fuqua, Fuqua & Milton, PA, Risha Brantley, Deputy Clerk, and Jeff Massey, County Administrator.

II. ADOPT THE AGENDA

Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

- III. NON-AGENDA AUDIENCE – Effective October 1, 2013, Florida Statute 286.0114 mandates that members of the public should be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before a board or commission. Each individual shall have (3) minutes to speak on the proposition before the board before the time a meeting has been called to order. Should an individual or group wish to address an item that is on the agenda for consideration, the individual or group may obtain, from the commission secretary or clerk, a public comment form and may write on the form their name and the agenda matter which they wish to address. The completed form(s) shall be returned to the clerk or secretary who shall supply the form(s) to the Chairperson. Should a particular group wish to address an item, they shall nominate a spokesperson to voice their ideas, comments, and concerns. In the event an individual wishes to speak on an item and has not signed up in advance, those who have signed shall be given priority and those who have not signed up may be allowed to speak at the discretion of the Board Chair. – None

IV. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Wheeler EMC Contract Discussion

Commissioner Bush offered a motion to extend the contract for one year. The contract is active. An extension would just need to be done. The county cannot afford to have another contractor take over for them. Commissioner Corbin seconded the motion to extend the contract for one year.

Benita Crittendon told the board that it was her understanding that this item was going to be continued at the next regular commission meeting. Is there a reason for the special meeting?

Commissioner Bush responded the reason for the special meeting is that the contract ends, and it

needed to be renewed by June 1. If it is not renewed and the contractor does not wish to renew it by June 1, the county will be without a contract and nobody overseeing the project.

Benita Crittendon mentioned at the last meeting the board agreed to extend the contract for 90 days.

Commissioner Bush responded the board agreed to extend the contract, however, the contractor did not.

Benita Crittendon said something you brought up at the end of the last meeting.

Commissioner Bush said that was his exact thought. What if the contractor does not agree to this? It was very upsetting that the county was about to be in the millions of dollars, that the county does not have. The loan is \$6 million, which would have been used within a month. It was shocking that the county would put this at risk.

Benita Crittendon suggested that two commissioners should recuse themselves from the vote. Chairman Hawkins has family interests with his father being a full-time employee of Wheeler and Wheeler. If the contract is not continued, a reasonable person would assume that Commissioner Hawkins's father would no longer have a job with Wheeler and Wheeler, at least in Washington County.

The second reason is, it is thought that there has been a history of friendship or association outside of county business with Commissioner Hawkins and the owner of Wheeler and Wheeler, which is documented in a Facebook post by Commissioner Hawkins in June 2022. In the post, he thanks Ben Maddox and his family for their hospitality on the previous day. (The Facebook post was passed out to the commissioners).

Commissioner Bush responded. The continued harassment between you, Commissioner Griffin, with Mr. Maddox is an embarrassment to the county. Why single one person and vilify him, because he has never seen him do anything to either one of you.

Commissioner Griffin responded to Commissioner Bush; if he wants to call him out, after what was brought to their attention last week and the stuff that he discovered last week in the meantime of other stuff they approved. There are concerns.

Benita Crittendon addressed the board. It may be perceived that she has an issue with Commissioner Hawkins; his issues seem to be the most obvious.

Commissioner Bush said Jessica is the same way. You continue to bring his sister and his dad up. You all continue to bring Ben Maddox up. What is the personal vendetta between you and Commissioner Griffin with Ben Maddox?

Benita Crittendon responded; it is not a personal vendetta. It is calling out facts.

Commissioner Griffin informed Commissioner Bush that he has some black and white if he would like to see it after the meeting, he would be glad to show it to him.

County Attorney Fuqua told Commissioner Griffin that he cannot do that.

Commissioner Griffin asked if he could show it during the meeting, to which County Attorney Fuqua responded, no.

Benita Crittendon told Commissioner Bush that she does not have a personal vendetta against him. They have had good discussions over the years.

Commissioner Bush responded that he does not have a personal vendetta against her either.

Benita Crittendon suggested that Commissioner Bush should recuse himself from the vote based on a decade-long friendship with Kevan Parker.

Commissioner Bush confirmed that is correct.

Benita Crittendon suggested Commissioner Bush has an interest in a friend if the contract is not continued, he stands to lose his job in Washington County.

Commissioner Bush suggested that the extension of the contract for another year would not be the deciding factor whether Kevan is successful or fails.

Benita Crittendon addressed Commissioner Bush. When anybody questions, it is automatically thought that it is a personal attack; that there is a personal vendetta. It is not a vendetta. It is questioning ethics. FACT was recently here to meet with each commissioner individually to explain ethics on votes.

There is a proper chain of doing things where commissioners go to Jeff Massey, and he distributes things and concerns to the staff. Commissioners are not to go to the staff. Yet, a chairman meets daily. It was common knowledge throughout the building that he met with Kevan Parker in Wendy White's office every morning. They had breakfast together, as well as lunch. That is exceeding what his scope of practice is as a chairman of commission. Those should be things that Jeff Massey handles. He may allow some of it to occur and may be overrun. It may be that both happens.

Things are being brought to attention. If someone else makes a vote on that, they may be criticized. There may be votes that Commissioner Griffin may have a conflict of interest with or a personal vendetta. There is a lot of hypocrisy amongst the commissioners when it comes to that type of discussion.

Two commissioners should recuse themselves from the vote. There may be more.

Commissioner Hawkins addressed the Facebook post that was distributed. The picture is of his son at a travel ball tournament in Marianna. They had stayed at an RV park in the area, went to Blue Springs, saw Mr. Maddox on his dock, and stopped for about 45 minutes. His hospitality was appreciated. He did not supply anything to them.

Benita Crittendon commented that she did try to ensure the pictures of the minors were blackened out so that they could not be shown.

Attorney Fuqua addressed commissioners voting. All the commissioners have an ethical obligation to vote on things that they are not ethically prohibited from voting on. Friendship is not a conflict. Commissioner Hawkins's father working for a company is not a conflict under Florida Statute 112.

Commissioner Griffin asked Attorney Fuqua if he should recuse himself based on what the two of them and Mr. Peel discovered.

County Attorney Fuqua responded no.

The motion to extend the contract carried 3 to 2, with Commissioners Pettis and Griffin voting against the extension.

Commissioner Pettis addressed the board. What has them in the position that they are in is if Wheeler leaves, they will bankrupt the county. It is concerning if they decide to leave the county that would still happen.

Commissioner Pettis offered a motion to issue an RFP for a continuing services agreement with the same scope of work. This would mean redundancy and if there was another large storm, they could take on some of the responsibility. If one of the contractors decides to leave, there is a backup plan. It has been said by everyone they talked to that if Wheeler leaves the county will be in bad shape financially.

Commissioner Bush seconded the motion above, which carried unanimously.

V. ADJOURN