

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

October 19, 2023, 9:00 a.m., Commission Board Room
1331 South Blvd., Chipley, FL 32428

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT
Alan T Bush	David Pettis, Jr.	Tray Hawkins	Wesley Griffin	David Corbin

1. PROCLAMATION

- 1.1 Call to Order – Chairman Hawkins
- 1.2 Invocation – Johnny Evans
- 1.3 Pledge

Present – Commissioners Bush, Pettis, Hawkins, Griffin, and Corbin. Also in attendance are Clerk Bell, Deputy Clerk Brantley, County Administrator Massey, and County Fuqua.

Judge Peel swore Deidra Pettis in as the newly appointed Washington County Supervisor of Elections. – Agenda Item 7.1

Deidra Pettis thanked the board for having her swearing-in at the county annex and went on to thank her family and friends for their support. She looks forward to serving the people of Washington County and is humbled that Governor Desantis has confidence in her to hold the position.

Pastor Orr offered prayer.

Sheriff Crews supplied updates on the Washington County Sheriff's Office. When he took office in 2017, the numbers allowed to be reported through the FBI were large but have since declined. The sheriff should not be measured by the number of arrests that are made but instead by the absence of crime. The clearance rate for the crimes committed in any jurisdiction, the annual state average will run 24% - 25%. Washington County Sheriff's Office has been at 47% and every other year it has ranged over 50% - 60%. The department is not allowed to report fraud and identity theft in the figures. The department strives to reduce criminal activity. The drug arrest is still solid. In almost every jurisdiction everything revolves around illegal sales or the addiction problem.

Some of the high spots include the following.

- Highway 79 and Highway 20 – The daily average traffic count is about 10,000 cars.
- Mudhill Road and Highway 77 average daily traffic county is at 5,000.
- Traffic has increased coming from Highway 231, which filters down the Campbellton Highway, through Chipley and Vernon to access the beach. The average is 15,000.
- State Park Road is averaged at 1,500 daily.
- Gainer and Falling Waters Roads numbers have increased.
- Highway 79 and Spool Mill Road are at 6,500.
- Highway 77 and Moss Hill Road are at 9,000 for a single-lane highway.
- New addresses assigned since 2017 are over 1,100. Growth is just starting.
- 911 calls (2021 and 2022 are missing due to a server swap on the vendor's side) – 2018 - 3,955, 2019 - 8,692, 2020 - 12,686, and for 2023 through October the total is 12,480.
- Administration Calls – 2023 – 77,000

In most cases, there are two employees in dispatch, which dispatches everything.

The sheriff said that the board has been good to them. The board recently approved a 12-hour truck for EMS and he is uncertain how the department has been going thus far. EMS answers every call. There are some things the sheriff's departments can decline, however, EMS cannot.

The board has been good to the department about staff salaries. The department has three open positions at the jail and two open positions for patrol. In the past, the numbers stayed around 5 – 6 in both places. The adjustments to the pay scale have helped. Patrol began at 19 and is currently at 20 road deputies. 19, which includes their lieutenant, which is an administrative position. The jail began with 21 and the current number is 23. The added positions at the jail in addition to a nursing position at the jail were done so by the support of the board.

This is a heads-up that growth is coming. Once the growth comes the level of service that is being held up now will not be able to be continued with the same amount of staff.

Recognition of Service - The board recognized Margaret Riley for her years of service as the clerk of the Town of Wausau for 27 years. – Agenda Item 7.3

Margaret Riley expressed her thanks to the board.

A recess was called from 9:22 a.m. – 9:48 a.m.

Introduction of West Florida Electric's New CEO, Shawn Walling said that he has been in the current position for 11 weeks and has 20 years of experience in the electric utility industry. The company has been set up for 86 years, being incorporated on December 11, 1937. The company serves parts of Calhoun, Holmes, Jackson, and Washington Counties. In 2017 the typical transformer serving a house cost about \$700.00, and the last set bought was \$3,700.00. In the same year, orders were in stock or would be ready in 12 weeks. Now the time for an order is one year. The big trucks that were ordered at the end of the budget season would be received within 9 – 12 months. Now, for example, if one was ordered today, it would be received in 2028. This impacts creating a 5-year budget.

If the county has anything large coming up, West Florida Electric needs notification as early as possible since they are having material issues. A road being moved impacts many things.

2. PUBLIC HEARING

2.1 Small Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment (Williams) – Highway 77, Chipley. Proposal to change existing Future Land Use Map category from General Commercial to Agriculture/Silviculture to allow for residential development – Dawn McDonald, Senior Planner presented the land use change application request. The property is located at the southern end of the county, north of Crystal Lake Drive in Crystal Lake Airpark. The applicant does not want to develop commercially. They would like the land use to allow for residential use, which is keeping the rest of the subdivisions that the lot is a part of. The parcel was divided but it was included in the deed restrictions/covenants of the community which was found on the Clerk of Courts website.

The Bruner parcel is found to the south.

The public noticing requirements were met, and the neighborhood information meeting was held which no one attended. The planning staff and commission

recommended approval.

- 2.2 Small Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment – Highway 77, Chipley. Proposal to change existing Future Land Use Map category from General Commercial to Agriculture/Silviculture to allow for residential development – Dawn McDonald, Senior Planner presented the Bruner land use request, which is located in the south end of the county, south of the Williams case discussed above. The parcel is 4.4 acres. Both parcels will have driveways to Highway 77.

The public noticing requirements were met, and the neighborhood information meeting was held with no one attending. Planning staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

- 2.3 Small Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment (Benson/Chambers) – St. Mary’s Road, Caryville. Proposal to change existing Future Land Use Map category from Agriculture/Silviculture to Residential Low to allow for multiple single-family residential dwelling units – Dawn McDonald, Senior Planner told the board the property is approximately 9.81 acres.

The public noticing requirements were met and there were two in attendance, who had concerns about added residents moving to the property. According to the applicant, at this time there would not be any more than three dwelling units on the property, however, they have the choice to include a fourth unit. One of the residents mentioned wanting quiet and how that would affect them.

The planning staff and commission recommended approval.

- 2.4 Animal Control Ordinance Amendment – Clay Milton, Fuqua, and Milton, P.A. read the ordinance by title. This is a revision to Ordinance 2011 - 4, which is in the code. Many of the changes are to address dangerous dog issues, of which much is governed by statute. Some of the updates are to adopt language from the statute that has changed since 2011.

3. ADOPT THE AGENDA - Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda.

4. ADOPT PREVIOUS BOARD MINUTES

4.1 Tentative Budget Hearing for September 18, 2023

4.2 Workshop for September 18, 2023

Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to approve the above-referenced minutes.

5. NON-AGENDA AUDIENCE/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - Effective October 1, 2013, Florida Statute 286.0114 mandates that “members of the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before a Board or Commission.”

- The Washington County Board of County Commissioners has expanded this provision to allow members of the community to speak on a topic which is not currently before the Board/Agenda. To do so the community members should, prior to the start of the meeting, sign the public participation form provided at the door of commission room, and shall state their name and the topic on which they wish to speak. During the Non-Agenda Audience portion of the meeting, the individual shall be given up to three (3) minutes to speak.
- Each individual shall have three (3) minutes to speak about a proposition before the Board.

Prior to the time a meeting has been called to order, should an individual or group wish to address an item which is on the agenda for consideration, the individual or group shall 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 Commission Secretary/Clerk, who shall provide 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.

- Any public comment before the board shall be directed to the Chairperson of the Board. It is not a question-and-answer period. Public comments concerning individual employees (other than those hired directly by the Board (County Administrator/County Attorney) shall not be entertained. Any comment, pro or con, regarding a county employee who does not report directly to the Board shall be addressed to the Human Relations Department or the County Administrator. – None

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1 FEMA Time Extension Discussion – Wheeler Emergency Management
- 6.2 Approval for Reappointment of Ross Statham to Tri-County Airport Authority
- 6.3 Approval of Cancellation of November Workshop Due to Holiday Conflict
- 6.4 Approval of Medical Examiner Interlocal Agreement for Fiscal Year 2024
- 6.5 Approval of 2024 Board Workshop and Meeting Schedule
- 6.6 Approval of the 2024 Holiday Schedule
- 6.7 Approval of FDACS Ag Center Portico 3rd Bid Opening Results
- 6.8 Approval of Mudhill Remediation System Task Order
- 6.9 Approval of Worley Road Time Extension to 115 Days
- 6.10 Approval for Medical Examiner Agreement for FY 2023 – 2024 (Item 6.4)

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

7. AGENDA ITEMS

- 7.1 This item was addressed earlier in the meeting.
- 7.2 This item was addressed earlier in the meeting.
- 7.3 This item was addressed earlier in the meeting.
- 7.4 Legislative Update – Chris Carmdoy, Gray Robinson – This item was not on the agenda.
- 7.5 Small-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment (Williams) –

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush, and unanimously carried to approve the Williams land use amendment request. (Ordinance 2023 – 14)

- 7.6 Small-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment (Bruner) – Highway 77, Chipley

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the land use amendment. (Ordinance 2023 – 12)

- 7.7 Small-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment (Benson/Chambers) – St. Mary's Road, Caryville –

Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush, and unanimously carried to approve the land use amendment for Benson/Chambers. (Ordinance 2023 – 13)

- 7.8 FY 2023 –2024 Emergency Management Performance Grant Agreement – Connie Welch requested approval of the annual federal EMPG Agreement, which normally

aids with salary and benefits. There was an increase, which made the total \$43,818.00.

Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the 2023 – 2024 EMPG Agreement.

7.9 Animal Control Ordinance Amendment –

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Pettis, and unanimously carried to approve the animal control ordinance amendment. (Ordinance 2023 – 15)

7.10 Greenhead Volunteer Fire Department Generator – Justin Leach, Fire Coordinator requested approval of a generator for Greenhead Fire Station. They requested feedback from several companies and received feedback from four of those with quotes. Greenhead has asked to go ahead with Forrest Jordan and Associates for \$33,363.23, which will be covered through the Greenhead Volunteer Fire Department’s budget.

Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Pettis, and unanimously carried to approve the generator purchase as presented above.

7.11 TDC Public Relations Services RFP Approval – Heather Lopez, TDC Director requested approval to go out for bids for public relations services for TDC for the new fiscal year. It will be an informal bid process. This would be a firm that would pitch to journalists to get articles written to help with press trips.

Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush, and unanimously carried to approve the bid RFP process as requested above.

7.12 TDC OST Printed Guide Rebid – Heather Lopez, TDC Director requested a rebid for the Old Spanish Trail Guide, which is part of the Division of Historical Resources Grant. This is the third request for this item because bids were not received the first two times. The second round of advertising increased the advertising range by including the bid request in the Tallahassee Democrat.

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve rebidding for the OST Printed Guide.

7.13 Engagement Agreement Fuqua & Milton, P.A. – Attorney Fuqua told the board the prior contract included an annual renewal. The updated contract includes language that it will automatically renew annually, however, there is a 30-day out clause, which is like a 30-day contract.

Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and carried 3 to 2 with Commissioners Pettis and Griffin opposed.

7.14 Loan Agreement Discussion – Attorney Fuqua updated the board. They attended a Zoom meeting on Monday, October 16 with First Federal about extending the line of credit and making a part of the line of credit a continuing bond obligation with an extended pay period and First Federal Bank was receptive. The bond counsel attended the call and said that it could be done. First Federal Bank is waiting on a feasibility study. At this time no terms and rates have been received. It will be a revolving line of credit and a portion at the end (\$4 - \$5 million) that will continue to be paid over a period. It is not envisioned that the entire line of credit will be paid off.

Chairman Hawkins said if it is the board's pleasure, they can call an emergency meeting once the information is received. It is the same as now; it is taken as needed. Instead of Mrs. Bell using the general fund to borrow from, the loan will be used to borrow money from.

Clerk Bell said that it would be a separate account.

Chairman Hawkins asked that Mr. Massey meet with each commissioner once more information is received.

Commissioner Griffin asked if they were seeking a \$20 million line of credit to keep the contracts going in the event the time extension does not get approved.

Chairman Hawkins said so that they do not have to stop work. It will be for Mrs. Bell to use at her discretion.

Commissioner Griffin asked if work could be slowed down instead of seeking a \$20 million line of credit. Maybe it could be throttled down before it reaches this point.

Chairman Hawkins said they have stopped all future work. In the future, the line of credit will allow them to start and stop at a pace they see fit.

County Administrator Massey said they will have an element of control that they have not had.

Commissioner Griffin said that he does not agree with putting the county on the hook for a \$20 million line of credit. Other options are available, such as issuing work/slowing work down to make sure they receive their extension on time. It has been 7 months.

Chairman Hawkins said it has been since March. He went on to ask Mrs. Bell if she would like to set up a meeting with Commissioner Griffin.

Mrs. Bell said they are always available. She has not had any discussion with Commissioner Griffin about this. Last year the extension was received close to Thanksgiving. The talks with the state are encouraging that this will happen, but it must be done through FEMA. With the amount of money that is being spent now, this is a better choice.

Commissioner Griffin told Mrs. Bell that he would meet with her sometime in the future.

Commissioner Bush said when they discussed FEMA work at the special meeting and the workshop, they agreed to allow the contractors to continue to work until this meeting with the hopes that the extension would be in place for all the projects, however, they have only been received for some of the projects. What is being done with the projects that do not have approved extensions?

Chairman Hawkins said that he thought the direction was that they had until the 19th to get things cleaned up.

Per Commissioner Griffin's request, County Administrator Massey said the current extension is for culverts and two small road zones.

Chairman Hawkins included the bridge and the culverts. They are waiting on the rest of the time extensions.

Commissioner Bush clarified that they would take everything that they do not have extensions on and give them a stop work order until the extension is received.

Chairman Hawkins said a special meeting could be called once they get an extension and everything is in line with the bank to bring everything back to order.

Commissioner Bush said that even with the line of credit they need to move at a slower pace.

Commissioner Griffin mentioned getting the amount to see how much money it will take for the contractors to finish the projects they are on.

Clerk Bell said that is something the clerk's office has asked.

Commissioner Griffin suggested borrowing what they needed to finish.

Commissioner Griffin said that he did not like the sound of \$20 million and Commissioner Bush agreed.

Commissioner Bush said that when he started the county was \$11 million in debt with some of being from 1992.

8. FEMA COORDINATOR - None

9. MSBU ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE - Gary Hartman told the board they deferred their meeting this month to a workshop to discuss the mowing in Sunny Hills. Currently, it is 30% of the budget and they are looking for ways to lower it. Based on what they have heard the community is more interested in having the roads paved than they are mowing. A meeting is scheduled for the 1st of next month and a recommendation will be before the board at the next meeting.

10. PUBLIC WORKS SUPERVISOR – Johnny Evans clarified that the contractors are officially shut down today.

Chairman Hawkins said yes, everything.

11. PARKS UPDATE – George Swauger updated the board.

11.1 Update on outdoor furniture upgrades, portlet service contract, and all active or completed park projects. – George Swauger told the board that his focus has been on Blue Lake. The next step is to add lighting. The dock has been completed to include seeding at the end. The new outdoor furniture is solid/recycled plastic with a wood look. ADA compliance is being addressed with some of the tables. Public Works has brought in dirt and allowed him to be able to move on to other projects quicker. The dirt work and new sod allow the ability to walk off any gazebo. The intent has been to knock down maintenance issues. Crepe Myrtle trees are also being looked at as a natural barrier instead of fencing. The bathrooms were closed for 10 years and have been made functional, however, the walls and ceilings are the same, which is in bad condition. There is too much organic material that has been used. A building entirely made of blocks would be an ideal situation. The design of the sign is in the final stages.

A company has been found that will replace and service the portable toilets. They have

the best price and service promise. Taylor will reach out to them for a contract.

Commissioner Bush asked what needs to be done at Gap Pond to raise the dock while it is low.

George Swauger said that he has someone looking at it. A material called through flow is being looked at. A movable gangway will also need to be put there.

Commissioner Bush suggested looking to put something floating at the end of the dock if it did drop significantly there would be an easier way to access the boat. It would be ideal to move the building that is there with the picnic tables up there and get it out of the drive. Sometimes if you open it, you can still drive through the building, but the building does not have a purpose when that is being done. If there is enough property to tear it down and build it back up closer to where the bathrooms are to have that back as a road as it should be. It would make the flow of the park better.

12. ENGINEERING PROJECTS UPDATE

12.1 Williams Road Bridge Replacement Award to Murphee Bridge Corporation – Jonathan Sims, Dewberry said the contractor with the low bid was contacted and informed him that he was not able to lower the bid by 5%. Text in the bid documents reads: the board reserves the right to waive informalities in any bid and to accept and/or reject in and all bids in whole or part with just cause and accept the bid that in their judgment would be in the best interest of Washington County. Washington County encourages MBE/WBE businesses to participate. It is a lump sum bid and the contractor is about \$80,000.00 below the next lowest bidder, therefore, the bid they submitted is his recommendation.

County Attorney Fuqua said that he feels since it is a lump sum bid, he is okay with awarding the bid. As far as a county perspective and any kind of audit perspective, since it is a lump sum bid it would be okay to award the bid.

Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to award the contract to Murphee Bridge for Williams Bridge.

12.2 Change Order No. 1 for ITB 2022 - 17: Rogers, Sylvania, and Owens Community Road – Eddie Lewis, HMB Professional Engineers, Inc. said the change order is to add concrete slope pavement and rip rap to Sylvania Road to address some of the erosion, which would be an increase of \$44,950.00 and a 60-day time extension.

Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Pettis, and unanimously carried to approve change order 1 for ITB 2022 – 17 as requested above.

12.3 Change Order No. 1 for ITB 2023 – 02: Cross Drain on Union Hill Road – Eddie Lewis, HMB Professional Engineers, Inc. told the board this change order is for the installation of the 18-inch cross drain on Union Hill Road for an increase of \$4,000.00.

Commissioner Bush offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the change order for ITB 2023 – 02 as listed above.

Note – This would be once work starts back up.

13. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR - None
14. COUNTY ATTORNEY – None
15. CLERK

- 15.1 September Vouchers Totaling \$8,220,374.82
- 16. ADJOURN - Commissioner Griffin offered a motion to adjourn.