

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Location: 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 Pettis
- 1.2 Invocation – Chairman Pettis
- 1.3 Pledge

Present – Commissioners Bush, Pettis, Hawkins, Griffin, and Corbin. Also attending – Deputy Clerk Brantley, Clerk of Court, Lora C. Bell, County Administrator, Jeff Massey, and County Attorney Milton, Fuqua & Milton, P.A.

2. ADOPT THE AGENDA

Agenda Amendments

- 4.6 - SHIP Resolution
- 4.7 - EMS Ambulance Discussion
- 4.8 - Milled Asphalt Discussion – Tray Hawkins

Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush, and unanimously carried to adopt the agenda with the above additions.

3. 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 the 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

speaking 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, pros, or cons, regarding a county employee who does not report directly to the Board shall be addressed to the Human Relations Department or the County Administrator.

- David Syfrett asked the board where Syfrett Road physically stops as far as the county is concerned. Where does the private road pick up and the county road end?

Commissioner Griffin asked if he meant as far as being county-maintained.

Commissioner Hawkins suggested that Johnny Evans, Public Works Supervisor, would be the contact for this.

County Attorney Milton said that it would be based on the maintenance records of the distance they had maintained on the road.

Direction – Mr. Syfrett will provide his contact information to Wendy White, Human Resources for a follow-up.

4. AGENDA ITEMS

4.1 Vulnerability Assessment Public Meeting – Candace Thames, Grants/Procurement Specialist told the board the first public meeting for the Comprehensive Inland Flooding for the Vulnerability Assessment will be on March 26, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. at the Washington County Agricultural Center, which is open to the public.

4.2 Washington County Vulnerability Assessment Advanced Payment Request – Candace Thames, Grants/Procurement Specialist told the board that advance payment is being requested from the Department of Environmental Protection for Project 23PLN71 for the grant amount of \$490,681.00, which is in the best interest of Washington County to conduct the assessment effectively and within the period of the grant agreement. The county is considered at a financial disadvantage for a small community according to FS 380.09352E. The county has both a population of 50,000 or fewer and a per capita annual income that is less than the state's per capita income.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush to request advanced payment for the vulnerability assessment, which was carried unanimously.

Candace Thames told the board the notice for the meeting had been published.

Item 4.6 - SHIP Resolution – Per F.S., Washington County Board of County Commissioners approved a 3-year Local Housing Assistance through LHAP outlining the strategies having program guidelines about how funding would be used for 2023 – 2026 to include replacement homes for low-income families. An applicant exceeded the low-income requirement for a replacement home by less than \$2,000.00. The deed to the family's property has been owned by them since 1997 and they have been residents for 27 years. Due to the small amount above the income requirement and the length of residency, the allowance is before the board for approval.

Commissioner Hawkins commented on the current inflation, saying that salaries have increased but not to the extent of inflation. This may need to be looked at across the board. If the income threshold is a specific amount, it would be surpassed now because salaries are higher but that does not mean that the net income is higher.

County Attorney Milton said the income may be set by statute.

Commissioner Hawkins mentioned that he is on the ECRC Board and would like to present this concern before them.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin to approve the SHIP resolution as presented.

Larry Zezula suggested that a raise would be fitting for the cost of living.

The motion on the floor carried unanimously.

Chairman Pettis confirmed with Commissioner Hawkins that he would like the concern mentioned earlier presented to the ECRC Board.

Commissioner Hawkins asked County Attorney Milton to verify who sets the income level.

4.3 SCRAP and SCOP Project Discussion – Jeff Massey, County Administrator

Jane Dellwo, Administrative Assistant said the applications are due by March 15.

Jeff Massey said the first suggestion he has is to resubmit a part of Greenhead Road, which will be half of what was submitted before. \$300,000.00 +/- has already been invested in the road. Twin Pond was submitted last year. The next suggestion is Holmes Valley Road, which has increased activity with expected growth. Holmes Valley is close to being ready for submission.

Commissioner Hawkins said that Holmes Valley has much of the design

and engineering done as well as some right-of-way. It also serves as a corridor from Highway 79 to Highway 279 (Moss Hill Road).

County Administrator Massey told the board per the state it is better to submit in increments.

Commissioner Hawkins mentioned contacting the state to see what the limits are, and they could make their applications fit within that.

County Administrator Massey recommended they should seek roads that funding has already been invested in.

Commissioner Bush said that Twin Pond came to light due to environmental issues and went on to ask if they had been stabilized.

County Administrator Massey said that it has been years since he heard of any issues.

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to submit a portion of Greenhead Road, and Holmes Valley Road for SCOP Project submissions.

County Administrator Massey told the board the largest one they submitted last year was Clayton Road, which was Highway 277 towards Highway 77. It is optional to submit this year since everything is ready. The other road that was mentioned was Corbin Road, which is like Alford. Alford from the Jackson County line toward Orange Hill was previously resurfaced. Any upfront work on the road is not believed to be done, however, it could be pulled together if that is the board's direction.

Commissioner Hawkins said that he would like Moss Hill Road to be considered due to safety concerns. There are spider cracks throughout it. The road is being lost rapidly and needs 2-foot shoulders.

Commissioner Griffin mentioned that Pioneer Road needs attention as well.

Commissioner Hawkins asked if there was enough time for the engineers to review the roads and give a recommendation.

County Attorney Milton clarified that he would like the engineers to have a list of the roads mentioned and they prioritize the top two.

All the upfront stuff on Greenhead was done by Dewberry and Melvin has done some on Clayton and others. The work may be a combination of both.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush to have the engineers ride Corbin, Creek, Moss Hill, Clayton, and Pioneer Roads and decide out of the five roads and give direction to Mr. Massey to move forward with submitting two for the SCRAP Project per the engineers ranking.

Larry Zezula said that Moss Hill has caught a lot of attention on social media about safety features, which should be a priority.

The motion carried unanimously.

- 4.4 MSBU Mowing Contract Discussion – David Pettis, Chairman said the MSBU Committee would like to put the mowing contract for Sunny Hills back out for bid, with an adjusted scope of work.

Commissioner Griffin asked if they met with Fresh Cut as was discussed in an earlier board meeting.

Chairman Pettis responded, yes and their recommendation remained to continue with the bid.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin to go ahead with the recommendation of the MSBU Committee to put the mowing contract out for bid. The motion carried 4 to 1, which Commissioner Griffin opposed.

- 4.5 Highway 79 Authority Assumption – Clay Milton, County Attorney Milton told the board that he wanted to have this discussion before the next Highway 79 Corridor Meeting.

Jane Dellwo, Administrative Assistant said the next Highway 79 Corridor meeting is March 13.

County Attorney Milton said the board and the county are spending money on the Corridor Authority, whose original purpose was to receive grant funding. Washington County received job creation grants from DOT and DEO. They have grant requirements of a certain amount of investment and a certain number of full-time employees during a specific time. The main purpose was to install the infrastructure, with the intent to attract growth. The infrastructure was constructed in three different entities, which included property in Washington County, Holmes County, and property inside the city limits of Bonifay. Bonifay provides the sewer services and water for the Authority. The question has been presented as to whether the Authority would remain in place or allow it to be dissolved. The concern is Washington County was the recipient of the grants. There are clawback provisions in the grants that state if the private investments do not occur or the number of employees is not met then the state and/or

DOT can clawback the funds or a part of them. The City of Bonifay would like the Authority to convey all the improvements to them. If that clawback provision goes away, as the attorney for Washington County an issue is not seen with that as long as Washington County does not have a financial obligation attached to it. Last year, this discussion came up and at that time the City of Bonifay had not moved forward with the request to say they would like to take over the facilities and they had not moved forward with applying through DEO. The Authority gave directions to Nabors, Giblin to contact DEO to find out the requirements. DEO's response was they would allow the Corridor Authority to transfer the improvements and assign the grant agreements to another municipality or county entity. One of the mechanisms for that is to only assign the grant. If the Authority assigns the grant to the City of Bonifay, Washington County stays responsible for the clawback. There is an option of entering into an indemnity agreement with the City of Bonifay where the City of Bonifay will agree to indemnify Washington County if that ever occurs. The second option is the full assumption of the grant where the City of Bonifay applies with DEO a new grant application and DEO assigns and allows them to assume the entire grant, which removes Washington County fully. A draft agreement has been provided to the board; however, it has not been reviewed by him. Bonifay has not moved forward with applying with DEO. DEO needs direction from this board allowing or not allowing the transfer. Busy Bee will likely satisfy the private investment requirement; however, it is unknown if it meets the employee requirement. It is preferable for the City of Bonifay to fully assume the grant versus an indemnity with the City of Bonifay. Board direction is needed.

Commissioner Hawkins suggested that the agreement be between the City of Bonifay and DEO, which would be cleaner. The first job is complete. It is costly annually to run a corridor when what essentially is being done is babysitting stagnant lines. Once the corridor starts developing it will be self-sufficient.

County Attorney Milton said initially part of the Authority was to get the improvements installed and secondly once they were installed, they were to be run. To a certain extent, the Corridor will be at the mercy of the City of Bonifay, because they hold the supply lines. The City of Bonifay is always going to have a say in deciding the rates that are charged to the customers and/or the Authority. Washington County initially needed to be involved because they were the grant recipients and to have a voice in what the rates would be for the parcels that were part of the improvements that were in Washington County. If the improvements are conveyed to the City of Bonifay the county no longer has a voice in that. There is a provision in the Corridor Authority Agreement that says that it cannot be resolved while the grant agreement is active because Washington County is the grant recipient.

Commissioner Hawkins said if it were resolved it would remove the middleman/entity which would cover/offset future fees. It is not recommended to the board to have an indemnity agreement between Washington County and the City of Bonifay. It should be between the State of Florida, DEO, and the City of Bonifay.

Commissioner Pettis agreed with Commissioner Hawkins' opinion about the indemnity agreement.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion for them to begin conversations with DEO to move forward with the contractual agreement with the City of Bonifay and DEO to remove Washington County as a placeholder for the Job Growth Grant. Commissioner Corbin seconded the motion.

County Attorney Milton confirmed that the motion includes the DOT grant as well.

Commissioner Hawkins agreed. Both grants were given as Job Growth Grants, but DOT was given as the distributor of funds for the other project.

Larry Zezula proposed selling the water to Bonifay and they pay a fee to process and condition it with the plan maybe both entities could get the grant doing it that way.

The motion carried unanimously.

4.6 SHIP Resolution – This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

4.7 EMS Ambulance Discussion – Randy Truette, EMS Director told the board some of the older ambulances need to be replaced and they have an opportunity to buy one. In the past, ambulances were bought through a lease purchase title option. The department would like to buy an ambulance through financing from a local bank. For them to get a tax-exempt rate for the ambulance, they need the consensus of the board and a letter saying that they are tax-exempt, and the bank will not hold the title.

Randy Truette asked County Attorney Milton if they pledge \$237,000.00 from ad valorem saying that is the collateral for the loan. Is that the way that it is?

Attorney Milton responded that he was not familiar with the structure of the loan. Generally, that is correct. An option letter would be issued saying that Washington County is a tax-exempt entity, and they will go ahead with the loan without a lien against the vehicle.

Randy Truette told the board that Seamus O'Neil has obtained three quotes from local banks, with One Florida giving the best rate as long as the tax-exempt status through the Board was received. The ambulance is located in Maine, which is \$40,000.00 +/- less than the contract pricing. Maintenance of the ambulance can be provided by Ten-8 in DeFuniak. The ambulance is ready to be picked up, unlike other ambulances which have a delivery schedule of 24 months out.

County Attorney Milton confirmed with Randy Truette that the ambulance is not listed under the state contract.

Commissioner Hawkins said the last two ambulances were bought in the same manner.

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin to set aside the procurement policy for the purchase of the ambulance as presented by Randy Truette.

Commissioner Corbin confirmed with Randy Truette that the purchase would be covered by the EMS Budget.

Randy Truette said that is correct.

The motion on the floor carried unanimously.

Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin to go ahead with the loan to buy the ambulance as presented by Randy Truette.

Commissioner Hawkins asked if the pledge would be against the standing ad valorem or any added ad valorem because it is spoken for.

County Attorney Milton said that he would need to review the language.

The motion carried unanimously.

4.8 Milled Asphalt – Commissioner Hawkins informed the board that he had been contacted by James Finch, Finch Construction about milled asphalt at the old airport for \$400.00 per load with pickup being on the county. Finch Construction would load it upon pickup. This item is for informational purposes.

5. ADJOURN