

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Location: 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 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 Bell, County Administrator, Jeff Massey, and Attorney Fuqua, Fuqua & Milton, P.A.

2. PUBLIC HEARING

2.1 Tourist Development Council Tax Levy – David Pettis, Chairman spoke on behalf of Heather Lopez, TDC about the tax levy increase from 3 percent to 5 percent. The tax is only charged on lodging for less than six months. The ballot language has been approved and placed. Voting on the referendum will be held in conjunction with the general election on November 5, 2024. If passed, the added tax revenue will be used for further marketing and promotion of Washington County to drive markets to encourage more overnight stays, generating more economic impact for the county, more local business revenue, increased quality of life, and new jobs. The legal display advertising of the local referendum has been scheduled with the Washington County News to run in the fifth week (October 9, 2024) before the election and the third week before the election (October 23, 2024) to meet statutory requirements. The Central Panhandle Association of Realtors has approved an advocacy campaign through its government affairs committee for \$13,750.00 to be carried out by its pact on behalf of the referendum. The campaign will begin in October. The ordinance was read by title.

3. ADOPT THE AGENDA

Agenda Additions - Cyber Bullying – Skyla Jones
County Administrator – Waste Management CPI (12.4) –
Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hawkins, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

4. ADOPT PREVIOUS MINUTES – Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to adopt the minutes listed from 4.1 – 4.3.

- 4.1 Board Workshop for August 8, 2024
- 4.2 Regular Board Meeting for August 15, 2024
- 4.3 Budget Workshop and Special Meetings for August 29, 2024

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 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 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, 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. – None

6. CONSENT AGENDA – Jane Dellwo, Administrative Assistant informed the board that Holmes County will donate \$46,500.00 as opposed to \$57,000.00 to the Highway 79 Corridor Authority, therefore Washington County will match that amount. (Consent Agenda Item 6.4) Commissioner Hawkins confirmed that the Highway 79 Corridor Authority is aware that they will have to use cash carried forward to balance their budget.

- 6.1 Approval of Amendment One M0131 for Generator Project
- 6.2 Approval of Agreement CDBG-ED Project
- 6.3 Approval of FDACS Contract for Mosquito Control
- 6.4 Approval of Highway 79 Corridor Authority Interlocal Budget Agreement
- 6.5 Approval of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with Curalinc with Attorney Modifications to Contract
- 6.6 Approval of 2024 – 2025 WCBOCC Pay Plan

- 6.7 Approval of Value Adjustment Board Appointees to be Chairman and Vice-Chairman per Requirement
- 6.8 Approval of 2024 – 2025 MSBU Road Project Plan
- 6.9 Approval to Advertise Dumajack Road for Construction
- 6.10 Approval to Detour for Construction of Drainage Improvements on Dumajack
- 6.11 Approval to Terminate Incomplete Contracts with CWR Contracting, Inc., American Sand and Asphalt Paving, and Anderson Columbia
- 6.12 Approval of 2024 Tax Roll Extension
- 6.13 Approval of FTE for Fire Services Position: Fire Services Specialist
Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hawkins, and unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda.

7. AGENDA ITEMS

- 7.1 Sheriff Crews Update – Kevin Crews, Sheriff updated the board on a free Federal Insurance Program they will be implementing that is income-based. It does not cover dental or vision, however, it covers pharmacy, hospital visits, and mental. There is no deductible or premium. Coverage begins the following month when the inmate is signed up and ends once the inmate is sentenced. Preexisting conditions are not considered.
- 7.2 How Cyberbullying is Affecting Commission Meetings – Evelyn Zezula, Citizen spoke on how the antics of a group in previous meetings have affected her husband's attendance at the board meeting and has experienced cyberbullying outside of the meeting by the same group. She requested if comments are not constructive or helpful to the county the concerns should be taken up outside of the meeting. The First Amendment was not made to protect bullies but to defend the questions opinions and ideas of citizens. The request before the board is a vote to end the bullying as well as an investigation of the group, excluding the members responsible from all county meetings permanently. Cyberbullying is a crime.

Sheriff Crews responded that the route she would begin with for the criminal side would be with an investigator.

Chairman Pettis will speak with the sheriff and the attorney and follow up with the citizen.

Skyla Jones addressed the board suggesting that the previous agenda item did not pertain to county business and was a violation of the public speaking policy put into effect last summer. She went on to speak on County Attorney Fuqua liking a meme and following a page on social media designated to humiliate a private citizen. Commissioner Hawkins has spoken negatively about a private citizen who dares to post information that does not paint him in a flattering light. The comments on the posts were appalling. The commissioner's page is frequently used to post county business.

Cyberbullying is a problem in Washington County that is not only being perpetrated by private citizens but also being led by a commissioner.

- 7.3 2024 National Estuary Week Resolution – Melinda Gates, Interim Executive Director for Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program (was not present) – Commissioner Bush suggested that the board support the estuary program. The goal is to have the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program as part of one of the national estuary programs, therefore, it will receive added funding from the federal government. Okaloosa, Holmes, Washington, and Walton County make up the estuary program.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the resolution supporting National Estuary Week.

- 7.4 Washington County Health Department Core Contract and Fee Schedule – Traci Corbin, Administrator/Health Officer – Chairman Pettis informed the board there are no changes to the 2024 -2025 contract and most of the fees in the updated fee schedule mirror Medicare and Medicaid rates.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to approve the 2024 – 2025 WCHD Contract and fee schedule.

- 7.5 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule – Dawn McDonald, Senior Planner (Not Present) – Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush, and unanimously carried to approve the 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule.

- 7.6 E911 Grants for E911 Maintenance and New Digital Recorder – Clint Erickson, E911 Coordinator (Not Present) – Chairman Pettis informed the board no matching funds are needed for either annual grant. – Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to approve both grants for E911.

- 7.7 Request for Approval for the Chairman to Accept and Electronically Sign the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grant – Candace Thames, Grants/Procurement Specialist (Not Present) – Chairman Pettis referenced the press release that was sent from Washington showing that Washington County was awarded an EDA Grant for \$4.9 million for infrastructure improvements at the industrial park. – Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush, and unanimously carried to authorize Chairman Pettis to accept and sign the grant.

- 7.8 Interlocal Agreement Amendment for Medical Examiner FY 2025 – David Pettis, Chairman – Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to approve the medical examiners' agreement for FY 2025.

- 7.9 Adoption of TDC Tax Ordinance – Matt Fuqua, County Attorney told the board the

ordinance calls for a referendum on the general election. The Board is not approving the TDC tax. – Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the TDC Tax Ordinance.

8. FEMA COORDINATOR – Kevan Parker updated the Board.

8.1 Sally Road Projects Discussion – After payment was issued, they realized they did not have enough backup documents, such as pipe size, location, GPS, closest address, road name, etc. The contractor was contacted by email and gave a response that they did not have pictures. Using the invoice they have visited the listed locations, documented every new headwall, and associated information, and put it on a spreadsheet that was sent to the contractor asking for confirmation of the headwall, which they have not received. There are around 178 headwalls that need to be confirmed by the contractor. Direction is needed from the board.

Chairman Pettis said to move forward with the information.

Commissioner Griffin questioned the time extension for Hurricane Sally Roads.

Kevan Parker responded that they have not been received but they are being told that they are going to approve them and back the date up. The money has already been received by the county. The county can stop the work. The State has already approved this.

Commissioner Griffin questioned how much reimbursement has been received on Hurricane Michael and Sally for Wheeler Emergency expenses.

Kevan Parker said about \$4.5 million has been received linked to Hurricane Michael.

Chairman Pettis questioned the reason for time extensions for money that has already been received.

Kevan Parker said that it is FEMA's process to give 12-month increments to finish the projects to ensure the applicant is moving forward on the projects.

Chairman Pettis said that he would feel more confident to stop the work until the extensions are approved.

Commissioner Hawkins said time extensions are important to file RFA's and RFR's. The money is in the coffers and the scope of work is already approved. It is understandable either way.

Commissioner Griffin added that he does not want to continue the work without the extensions.

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion to stop the Hurricane Sally work until they have the time extensions in place.

Commissioner Hawkins confirmed that it was because of funding. Reimbursements stopped so they are not going to move forward.

Commissioner Griffin agreed.

Commissioner Hawkins seconded the motion.

Commissioner Bush added that it is almost like they are saying they do not need the work and will put it on hold until they get the paperwork in order. They have already received the funding, and it is being done in-house. He would like to get the work done.

Commissioner Griffin added that it seems that paperwork/documentation is a big thing with FEMA. He would rather documentation be in place, followed by the work being performed. Correction, the time extension.

Commissioner Bush said that documentation is important as it was mentioned earlier about the headwalls. They are waiting on a contractor. Who is the contractor?

Commissioner Griffin responded that he was the contractor, A & W Excavations.

Commissioner Corbin said that he could see it both ways. It seems like they are limiting their period. With the time being pushed off, there are about 6 – 8 months to work on something.

Kevan Parker added that the projects were approved about 4 months ago.

Commissioner Griffin added to his motion, that once the time extensions are received the work will resume.

Commissioner Hawkins clarified with Commissioner Griffin that the reason the work is being stopped is that they do not have a funding mechanism to pay for the work because of the time of extension.

Commissioner Griffin agreed, asking why it is taking so long to get the extensions for Hurricane Sally.

Kevan Parker said they were put in way back. From his experience, they do not look at them until they have expired.

Commissioner Griffin said that he does not want to get them in a bind financially.

Kevan Parker added that the time extension ended on September 23. The FEMA state representative is working on it.

The motion to stop the Hurricane Michael work carried four to one, with Commissioner Bush opposed.

Kevan Parker informed the board that the actual cost for the fabric was \$4.14 per square yard, which is about ten times as much. They have approved that cost. They are still looking at the cost of sod.

The state is working on some RFRs.

9. MSBU ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE - None

10. PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR – Trey Barbee addressed the board.

10.1 USDA Contract Renewal – The renewal of the annual contract may not exceed the cost of \$11,510.91. - Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hawkins, and unanimously carried to approve the renewal of the USDA contract.

10.2 Tumble Creek Easement Request – West Florida Electric has requested the easement for powerline improvements near Hero Pit. There will not be any impact on the pit. – Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to approve the Tumble Creek Easement.

10.3 Gap Lake Dock Discussion – Quote from Gatordocks for the dock at Gap Pond for \$57,876.00. Commissioner Bush has said that District 1 has funds that he is willing to apply toward the dock. Two other companies were contacted but did not provide quotes.

Commissioner Bush said there will be a transitional part from the ground up to a fixed aluminum dock that will go out the length of the existing dock. There will be an additional 40 feet of floating dock.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to go ahead with the proposal from Gatordocks for \$57,876.00.

Commissioner Bush confirmed with Wendy White that nothing needs to be done regarding the procurement policy.

Wendy White said the attempts can be documented.

11. ENGINEERING PROJECTS UPDATE – None

12. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – Jeff Massey addressed the board.

12.1 Request for RFP for Engineering Services – The contracts will expire at the end of the year. Board approval is needed to issue an RFP for those services. – Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried to approve of issuing an RFP for engineering services.

12.2 Crystal Lake update – The conversation from Monday night was followed up on. The decision before the board is to decide to proceed with the original project or cancel the project.

Jane Dellwo, Administrative Assistant told the Board she was advised that everything has been received and they would like a decision to be made as soon as possible.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bush to move forward with the bid process for the Crystal Lake Project with the original plans. The motion carried unanimously.

12.3 Tax Deeds Available to Acquire – Follow up from Monday about the county tax certificates for two lots in Sunny Hills. County Attorney Fuqua said statutes direct them to purchase those \$5,000.00 or more.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, to purchase the two lots.

Commissioner Corbin questioned the reasoning the lots are before them.

Commissioner Bush provided the theory that the lots were two that someone held the certificates on, and they forced a sale and there was no bid. It will be added to the public list of properties, or the county has the option to purchase them.

There was a discussion about selling county property again, which County Administrator Massey will follow up on.

The motion carried unanimously.

12.4 CPI for Waste Management – Annual CPI increase of 4.64 percent for solid waste services which is included in the contract. – Commissioner Corbin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hawkins, and unanimously carried to approve the annual CPI increase for Waste Management.

Commissioner Griffin asked who the point of contact was for the new storm.

County Administrator Massey said they are currently working with Wheeler Emergency Management. They have reached out to Metric, and they are willing to step in at any

level. A clear understanding is needed from the board on how to handle these storms and who they want to handle them. The minutes did not reflect a clear vote.

County Attorney Fuqua added that the last motion was to have Wheeler Emergency Management with Metric being the backup. The discussion was over two meetings and was confusing.

Commissioner Griffin said that he understood it as Wheeler Emergency Management would handle Hurricane Michael and any new storms would be picked up by a new contractor. Clarification is needed from the board.

Commissioner Corbin added there were three equal continuing services contractors, which are Wheeler, Metric, and True North. Using one of the other companies is fine. They met with Metric. Work would be done by task order.

Commissioner Hawkins added that he would think that some work has already been done.

County Administrator Massey said this is different than having multiple engineering firms and they decide who is going to do the CEI. It is a big deal. By saying this right here, you are saying the county administrator can make the selection of which firm to use without consulting the board.

Commissioner Corbin said the board should give the administrator direction.

Commissioner Bush suggested to continue going the way they were going. The decision needs to be made before the storm event to allow them time to be integrated with all the decisions. It would not be fair to Wheeler Emergency Management at this point because they have been working on it. It would not be fair to a company to call them asking them to start. Knowing how the firms work, they have their employees where they are supposed to be.

Commissioner Hawkins offered a motion to leave the current contractor (Wheeler Emergency Management) in place for Helene. Commissioner Bush seconded the motion.

Larry Zezula asked Commissioner Griffin who he would like to see with the contract.

Commissioner Griffin responded that they did not have clarification as to who was in charge. There were three contractors in place. The way the last motion was understood was Wheeler Emergency Management would handle Hurricane Sally and Michael and any new storms the next contractor; the three that they have in place. He would go with Metric.

James Brooks requested a roll call vote.

Commissioner Corbin said that he does not have an issue with going with Metric, but the point is seen that it is coming this afternoon. This discussion was needed.

Commissioner Griffin agreed that he does see his point as well.

Commissioner Bush told the board at the beginning of the hurricane season the decision should be made. You do not make the decision 4 hours before landfall. There is a lot that goes into it. During Hurricane Michael, 1,200 people were working.

Chairman Pettis asked County Administrator Massey if selected if Metric was ready for this storm.

County Administrator Massey responded that was the indication given.

Commissioner Corbin said they would be ready to go whenever if ever needed for anything. The concern is the storm is out there now.

Commissioner Bush added that he is familiar with the process. You do not begin 4 hours before the storm event. You are in place before the storm event making the necessary preparations.

Chairman Pettis clarified the motion to move forward with Wheeler Emergency Management for Hurricane Helene. The motion carried three to two with Commissioners Griffin and Pettis opposed.

Commissioner Griffin offered a motion, seconded by Commissioner Corbin, and unanimously carried to have Metric Emergency Services in place for the next storm/tropical depression.

County Administrator Massey clarified that the board approved the sod farm/industrial park as a possible staging area. Is board approval required for staging there?

The consensus of the board was that County Administrator Massey has that discretion.

13. CLERK – Clerk Bell documented the August vouchers on record.

13.1 August Vouchers Totaling \$2,444,379.34

14. COUNTY ATTORNEY

15. ADJOURN