

AT A SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON AUGUST 29, 2017 AT
4:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: **Sherrie Taylor, Chair, District 5**
 Eric Hinson, Vice Chair, District 1-arrived late
 Dr. Anthony "Dr. V" Viegbesie, District 2
 Gene Morgan, District 3
 Brenda Holt, District 4-arrived late
 Robert Presnell, County Administrator
 David Weiss, County Attorney
 Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

1. WELCOME

Chair Taylor called the Special Budget Meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. OVERVIEW

Mr. Presnell gave a brief overview of the budget.

Commissioner Holt arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

Mr. Presnell said they were currently sitting at \$49,280,931 that was balanced and there was a request for \$1 Million for the dirt road paving program they previously approved from General Funds with a caveat that the County maintained a General Fund balance of \$5 Million but if they did that, it would dip below the \$5 Million in reserve. He said to maintain the \$5 Million as they had directed, they could reduce that to \$800,000.

Commissioner Viegbesie wanted to make a request for an additional \$50,000 for a real veteran memorial monument to be erected on the grounds of the County Courthouse to represent the Armed Forces of the military. He added that the one there was actually funded by Chester Bernard in 1998 and honored Veterans of specific wars.

Commissioner Morgan said he was the one that originally proposed \$1 Million and had no problem with dropping the amount to \$800,000 to maintain the fund balance. He said he thought it was a great idea what Commissioner Viegbesie mentioned, but he had concerns about the amount of money and there may be other ways to fund it and was not sure that amount of money was needed.

Commissioner Holt said she had her list of wants: \$500,000 for Economic Development, borrow the \$800,000 for the road paving project instead of it coming out of General Fund; then said they could up the amount to \$1 Million to be bonded for road paving. She said after they do the selection of the County Manager, that person and staff could decide on whether to use that much money out of the General Fund or Revenue.

Commissioner Morgan said he appreciated what Commissioner Holt brought up. He said he

mentioned about the paving initiative was a “pay and pave” to not incur more debt and the Board would be the ones to determine how the money was spent and the overall budget.

Chair Taylor asked if Commissioner Hinson would be joining them and Mr. Presnell said he had not spoken with him.

Chair Taylor said Commissioner Morgan had not expressed his feelings on Economic Development and he said to leave it where it was.

Commissioner Viegbesie said since the Commissioners could not stop anywhere without being asked about jobs, the thought they needed to do whatever they could for economic development. He said as much as he wanted a Veterans Memorial, he would sacrifice for Economic Development. He said he was not in support of bonding \$1 Million for roads, maybe they could half it and bond half and take the other half from the Reserve.

Commissioner Holt said she no problems with the monument; she had not thought of bonding half the amount for paving and asked where they were on bonds. Mr. Presnell said the current ones were for the hospital, library and a current road bond was possible and they could restructure but they just did that two years ago and may have to do a separate financing.

Chair Taylor said Commissioner Viegbesie said \$1/2 Million in bond and the other half to come from the paving project to make a full \$1 Million. Mr. Presnell said he heard bonding of \$500,000 for roads but the roads were reduced to \$800,000 total.

Commissioner Viegbesie clarified and said ½ Million from the bond; ½ Million from bond reserve; \$50,000 from whatever coming out of bond reserve and would keep the bond reserve over \$5 Million. He said anything over \$5 Million in the Bond Reserve suggested be bumped into Economic Development funding.

Commissioner Hinson appeared at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Holt said if they did what they currently had for economic development at \$180,000, if they took that from \$300,000 it would leave \$120,000 and she asked that that amount be added to Economic Development for a total \$480,000. She said she did some calling and research and they were below other Counties and what they were spending on economic development.

Chair Taylor caught Commissioner Hinson up to speed since he arrived late to the special meeting.

Commissioner Viegbesie said his goal was to keep the Reserve above \$5 Million and the Administrator said if they reduced the \$1 Million for the roads to \$800,000 that would keep the Reserve above that amount. He said he was suggesting they bond half a Million and take half a Million as opposed to \$800,000 from the Reserve, that would give them the Million needed to pave the dirt roads and they would still have a little leeway to keep them above the \$5 Million.

Commissioner Morgan said he recommended getting out of debt, not going deeper in.

Commissioner Hinson concurred with Commissioner Holt on the bond idea and said they could go to \$1.5 Million then instead of taking the whole \$1 Million out, take out \$100,000 a year from General

Fund over a long period of time. He said they needed to prepare for tomorrow and it made sense to bond and thanked Commissioner Holt for thinking of that.

Chair Taylor asked the Administrator what bonds they had to date and asked him to name them. Mr. Presnell said the Hospital bond and it was serviced by the Indigent Care tax and would not affect the General Revenue; Library Bond and the Road Paving bond that they refinanced and got the money to \$7 Million two years ago and the gas tax serviced the road paving bond.

Commissioner Hinson asked how much the Library bond per year was and Mr. Price said \$1.3 Million. Mr. Presnell said it was refinanced to build the Chattahoochee Library eight years ago.

Commissioner Holt asked what was owed on the Library bond and Mr. Price said he did not have the figure and she said it should be in the Budget. Mr. Presnell said they had the annual payments, not the total and she said they needed the balance on the library, hospital and the road.

Commissioner Viegbesie said if they go with the alternative of bonding \$1 Million and it be specific for road paving; that bond could be funded through gas tax revenue and Mr. Presnell said no, there was already a bond funded by that and dedicated to that.

Commissioner Hinson said if not mistaken, they had \$800-\$900,000 in reserves for gas and if they decided to go with it, a Bond would give them the flexibility and they could take \$1 Million out for a community center in each district for the next five years and there would be more people coming into the district and staying in the district.

Commissioner Morgan said he knew the Board wanted to make the best decisions for the County and they were here to promote good policy. He asked them to think about a lot of rural counties being in economic straits because of decisions that were made to raise taxes and acquire additional debt and we could learn from those lessons and avoid. He said the reason he mentioned the “pay and pave” approach was it made sense to take advantage because the asphalt was cheap now and was not for raising taxes or the debt. He encouraged them to avoid taxes and additional debt to be able to stay in good financial strength. He said they could accomplish what they wanted to without taking on new taxes or adding debt that could get them in trouble in the future.

Commissioner Holt said she knew she was the senior person and the reason they run into problems was because they do not have budget workshops before the budget season. She added they could not discuss bonds if they did not know what they owed.

Mr. Price said the total long-term debt was \$41.6 Million and that included the hospital bond of \$7.6 Million, the Library bond was \$1.2 Million and the Road was \$8.4 Million.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Holt asked the debt service on each and he said the Hospital was \$682,000; Library was \$223,000 and the Road bond was \$727,000.

Commissioner Morgan returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Chair Taylor said they needed to be mindful that the \$41 Million represented everything from the

audit report 2016 and back; 2017 there were some debts that have been paid off and no longer existed and the \$41 Million included what they had in 2016. She said she agreed in part that some should be in the debt service but not all of it.

Chair Taylor said she was not for additional debt at this time but wanted to go around the dais to see everyone's opinion regarding the \$1 Million debt service for road paving for the County.

Commissioner Viegbesie not in favor for bonding the whole \$1 Million;

Commissioner Hinson yes

Commissioner Morgan no

Commissioner Holt yes

Chair Taylor said no for the whole amount

Commissioner Morgan said for clarification, there was \$39 Million and change still in total current debt after paying off what was paid off earlier.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked if the Sheriff's Department had nothing paid off and was unsure of the balance; the balance payment on the Hospital was \$7.6 Million and the balance payment on the Library bond was \$1.2 Million; the balance payment on the Road paving bond was \$8.4 Million and that total was \$17.2 Million. He said the Sheriff's unpaid bond accounted for \$39 Million minus \$17.2 and asked where the numbers were coming from.

Chair Taylor asked that Mr. Price give a breakdown.

Mr. Price said according to the Auditors, the long term debt as of September 30, 2016 was \$41,600 Million. He said what was due this current year was \$2,256,000 and was the principal payment to make and would give them the \$39 Million. He said included in the \$39 Million were not just bonds, it included pension liability and those types of things and was a big number. He said approximately \$24 Million was liability for pension, etc. but the Auditors considered that long-term debt.

Commissioner Viegbesie said they were talking about financing bonds, not revenue from taxes but if they were looking at the entire expenditure for the County that was a different thing.

Chair Taylor asked that they move on this item now. She said she heard half bond and the other half to come from General Revenue. She asked that they take that around the Board and see where everyone was with that and asked Mr. Presnell if there was a source to pay for that. Mr. Presnell said if they did half a Million and put this debt service on the Transportation fund it would strain that Department. He said the gas tax was not going up like they did and cars were now more fuel efficient. Chair Taylor asked Commissioner Viegbesie if he wanted ½ million from debt service and ½ from Reserve and he said yes or any other form of creative financing that would not cause them to take the Reserve below the agreed level.

Mr. Presnell said he was concerned with the restricted gas fund being at a low level.

Chair Taylor said they needed to come up with a solution and they were far more intelligent than this, the meeting started at 4:00 and it was now 5:30 and she wanted to move it. She said on the Board currently was ½ Million from Debt Services and ½ Million from Reserve.

She asked their position:

Commissioner Viegbesie -Yes

Commissioner Hinson-No

Commissioner Morgan-No because there was a drastic need for those funds at Public Works and they did not need to assume more debt

Commissioner Holt-If at \$39 and three debt services not paying they may be able to do that and she was not in favor of bonding half

Chair Taylor said the ½ Million from Bond and ½ Million from Reserve died and did not pass. She said the next one on the floor was \$800,000 from Reserve paving and she asked for round table vote.

Commissioner Morgan-Yes

Commissioner Holt-No

Commissioner Viegbesie-No

Commissioner Hinson-No

Chair Taylor said it died whether she voted or not.

Commissioner Morgan said he was for taking it off the table and Chair Taylor agreed.

Chair Taylor asked Mr. Presnell to bring back accurate numbers as to where they were with regard to debt service.

Commissioner Morgan asked that the Administrator have the Auditor come before Board and explain their long-term debt.

3. OTHER BUDGET ISSUES

Chair Taylor said for them to talk about the monument that Commissioner Viegbesie wanted on the Courthouse Square-\$50,000 for a Veterans Monument.

Commissioner Hinson said his Grandfather was a WWII vet and could not vote against it.

Commissioner Morgan said the budget was about priorities and if they said no to funding dirt roads, he said no to anything less than that.

Commissioner Holt said she was not sure how to do it since the monument issue would be coming up soon because she emailed the Manager and asked it be placed on the Agenda.

Chair Taylor said the monument was something they needed to look at and they needed more discussion and it was a touchy situation. She asked Mr. Presnell to add \$50,000 to the budget for the monument.

Commissioner Hinson said Havana had a monument and citizens helped with the funding.

Commissioner Morgan asked if they were putting \$50,000 in the line for it. He asked them to think what they were saying no to and what could be funded through private sector and was for the monument but was a matter of prioritizing what was important. They were telling citizens no to dirt roads, telling non-profits less money and now doing things like this and made no sense.

Chair Taylor said they were telling people on dirt roads later until they could come to agree on how it would be funded.

Mr. Presnell said the tentative budget had \$180,000 for Economic Development; \$120,000 to GCDC

and \$60,000 to the Chamber. Chair Taylor said she understood \$180,000 for Economic Development period and not ear-marked for any specific group.

Commissioner Holt said her proposal was for \$500,000 for Economic Development to not be divided up to show they were interested in getting people jobs.

Commissioner Morgan said he was not in favor, they were funded enough currently and had other needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Hinson said he thought years ago that money would be geared towards interstates and to build infrastructure. He said he believed in funding it but they needed to make sure the money was going into the right location and they needed to be serious about it.

Commissioner Viegbesie said they were all interested in Economic Development and he was for any amount. He said Commissioner Hinson made good points and they needed to be specific with this money.

Commissioner Holt said she understood what they were saying. She said she could see on the ground what GCDC was doing and not so much with the Chamber and they had to be able to check to see if things were being done. She said they needed to get on the bus and go to the sites to check to see what was done. She said they were asking the money to be set aside and no-one was getting money yet.

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD

Jim McShane, 6678 Chevy Way, Tallahassee, FL - GCDC Funding

Jim McShane appeared before the Board and showed a video of what they have done.

Mr. McShane said the video was something they would be putting on their website.

Antonio Jefferson, GCDC,

Mr. Jefferson appeared before the board and agreed with what was said tonight, the interstate exchanges were important and asked that the BOCC continue their funding level as in the past. He said there was 600 acres under option to begin the freight logistics zone and that was the beginning and there were more opportunities.

Commissioner Holt said happy to hear about the options and it was very important. She said Gadsden County was the first County to get certified. She further stated the County invested in running sewer to Gretna at the I-10 exit and she was the one that asked for that. She said they needed to get together and look at the developments.

Commissioner Viegbesie said he felt and saw they were going in the right direction of economic development and the funding was needed. He said going back to Tallahassee/Leon County, they started infrastructure development at Munroe/I-10 interchange and moved to another interchange. He said two weeks ago they (Leon County Commission) was at Amelia Island for an Economic Development Retreat. He said they were now working on Highway 90/I-10 where the Car Museum was located.

Commissioner Hinson asked how much the cities contribute to GCDC. Antonio Jefferson reappeared before the Board and said the City of Midway contributed \$500; City of Gretna was \$2,500; City of Chattahoochee was \$2,500; Havana was \$500; Greensboro was \$500 and City of Quincy was somewhere around \$5-10,000.

Commissioner Hinson said he was curious about private partnership. He said there were a lot of folks in Midway that understood politics of things and even though they were business people, they made major contributions also and even the Governor would come to their houses sometimes and party with them. He thought if they were going to be bold as a County, they needed to get out of their comfort zone and be more aggressive.

Chair Taylor said she was not for taking away from the two entities they had, but they all knew if they were going to spend their dollars, they wanted to see a return on their investment and there were no deliverables in the contractual agreement. She said there was nothing they could say they wanted done and before being paid, this **MUST** be done. She continued and said once the contract was approved, one of the entities would go to the Courthouse and present an invoice for half of the amount in the Budget and they would receive their check with no work done, no work performed, and no deliverables, no nothing. She said that was not fiscal responsibility. She said infrastructure was the key and they just put together a Million dollar incentive package. She said they needed economic development but did not have an engine working for the County. She further stated of the \$120,000 given to GCDC, \$90,000 was going towards salary and left them with less than \$20,000 for economic development.

Commissioner Holt said she sat with Mayor Marks on the Blueprint 2000 and it took them years to get to this point. She said they could not get an Economic Development plan going in three years and it took Jackson County 12 years. She said they wanted to hold someone accountable for something they did not have in place for them to do and the reason it was not in place was they did not know how to do it. She added that until they became educated on how to evaluate whatever group out there, they could not offer them a good contract.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Holt said this was the most progress made yet and the only thing they did better was sending the sewer line out (Highway) 267 for the two hotels. She said what was a shame about the whole process was they would rather fund the Chamber when they had Managers from each City sitting on the GCDC trying to help the County and volunteering their time.

Commissioner Morgan returned at the juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Holt said the incentive package may be \$1 Million package but there was no infrastructure there. She further stated they must have a plan for the I-10 exits and they needed to push this one way or other. She said for them to put the \$500,000 aside, take out what they wanted to give them.

Commissioner Viegbesie said growing up, parents used to say no-one planned to fail; that people failed to plan which was why they failed. He said at the last Chamber retreat (Leon County) they worked on Blueprint 2020.

Commissioner Holt stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Viegbesie said the blueprint justified the .1¢ sales tax revenue generated and with the blueprint they then had deliverables they were looking for. He said the County had no blueprint and no idea what they were looking for and no plan. He said they needed to come up with what

they wanted GCDC to do.

Commissioner Holt returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Viegbesie stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Hinson said he believed the focus should be on infrastructure more than anything else.

Commissioner Viegbesie returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan said he thought they were here to discuss the budget and did not know they were here for a lengthy discussion.

Chair Taylor said she concurred with him trying to move this meeting and they said early on that economic development as well as some of the earlier items would be a hot topic and would take time and was the reason for the special meeting. She said she heard a few things and wanted to see if they could come up with one consensus on some of it.

- \$500,000 being set aside for Economic Development;

Commissioner Viegbesie said he was for \$500,000 if it could be worked into the budget without too much of a strain but he was for more than what they had on paper and he wanted to see specifics.

Commissioner Hinson said he was with infrastructure and asked if they were voting. Chair Taylor said she wanted to know where he was with Economic Development.

Chair Taylor said she knew Commissioner Morgan stated earlier they knew his position and he wanted to put \$180,000 in Economic Development. She asked him what he wanted after that. He felt they did not need to undo the progress they had made the past few years through the Chamber and GCDC.

Commissioner Holt said she was at the \$500,000 level and for deliverables. She also said they needed a plan for the infrastructure because the State and Federal Government would not buy into it otherwise.

Commissioner Hinson said he concurred and thought they needed to be bold but did not want to distribute the money.

Chair Taylor thought they needed to put money in economic development in a line item.

Mr. Presnell said he wanted to make them aware if they went over \$750,000 it would take them below the \$5 Million mark.

Chair Taylor said Commissioner Morgan was at \$200,000 (she rounded up); Commissioner Viegbesie was at \$500,000 and she said for them to split the difference and come up with a figure; at any given time they could go up or come down but they needed a number to budget it. She said she heard everyone say infrastructure and they needed to figure out how to get it done. She said they were at \$400,000 for economic development and they needed to set dates to come back to make it

work. Commissioner Holt and Commissioner Viegbesie said they were good with that.

Commissioner Morgan said it sounded like she had her vote. He said always when they start talking about budgeting they needed to look at how to prioritize dollars. He said they could have differences and not take away from the ambition as far as economic development but was not his number one priority this budget. He said it was very important but was not above what they took money away from from the promises they made to people years ago about paving their roads. Chair Taylor said they would figure out how to pave the roads. She asked for a motion for the \$400,000.

Commissioner Viegbesie asked if they needed a vote or did they need to decide to give direction to the County Administrator to work the money into the budget. Mr. Weiss said this was a special meeting and they could vote but did not have to vote and was subject to potentially change at their subsequent budget hearing.

UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE MOVE \$400,000 IN THE BUDGET FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER HOLT, THE BOARD VOTED 4-1 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE THE MOTION. COMMISSIONER MORGAN OPPOSED.

Commissioner Holt asked if she could ask GCDC some questions. She said she said hoped in the future they would have numbers in place.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR TAYLOR DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:02 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

BRENDA HOLT, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk