

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON JANUARY 19, 2016 AT 4:30 P.M.,
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS WERE HAD, VIZ:

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

1. Welcome

Chair Holt called the workshop to order at 4:38 p.m. and welcomed everyone present at the Workshop.

2. Overview

Beth Kirkland, CECD, Gadsden County Development Council, appeared before the Board and gave a brief overview. She said it had been just shy of a year since they had first discussed the incentives policy and since then, other communities had chosen similar models to what had been presented for consideration and was implemented and was working.

She said they were the sales force for the County in terms of jobs and capital investment and every sale force needed a product and they had worked very hard to document their product in great detail. She added that 20 potential light industrial sites had been identified for future development and there had been quite a bit of marketing done the past year through the Havana Herald Outlook and the 850 Magazine. She said both documents had been leveraged to support their engagement of over fifty business site location consultants and were the entities that helped to establish over thirty-five percent of business relocation decisions annually.

She said a Business Retention and Expansion program was launched in 2015 and it was a partnership with the CareerSource Board, the TCC Workforce Development Office, Gadsden Technical Institute and some of the financing arms in the State, including Access Florida and the Florida First Capital Finance as well as Quincy and Chattahoochee Main Street Programs.

She further said in May through a grant from DEO, they partnered with Opportunity Florida to host a forum that attracted stakeholders from ten different counties and featured national economic development consultant and author, Eric Canada. She said they also arranged a tour in July with the Board of County Commissioners to see many of the expanding businesses in the County.

She said they had also realized the value of the County’s tremendous transportation assets here and had been able to facilitate the first Gulf to Gadsden Freight & Logistics forum. She said they also had participated in their first Freight Advisory Committee for District Three.

She mentioned some of the active projects that were being worked on and listed some of the objectives and strategies for business development in the County. She also listed several reasons

why a strong economic strategy was needed in the County and the need for them to be aggressive in implementing the strategy and it was important because of jobs.

She also informed the Board as they moved into 2016, they would be launching a new comprehensive Economic Development website that would include a social media strategy to go with it.

Commissioner Hinson arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

She introduced Dr. Alvin Jackson with Economic Development in Suwannee County and said he would share the implementation of the policy that was borrowed from St. Johns County.

Before he appeared before the Board, Commissioner Viegbesie asked if the projected jobs were regional or if they were specific for Gadsden County. Ms. Kirkland said all of the projected businesses would be physically located in Gadsden County.

Chair Holt mentioned that looking at the money for the incentives program, it had to be clear it was for new businesses or expanding businesses, big or small and wanted everything out there so there was no confusion of what they were looking for.

3. Program Outline

Dr. Alvin Jackson, Economic Development Director, Suwannee County, appeared before the Board.

He talked about the incentives program and said the challenge here was how to compete with Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina and incentives were a tool and Ms. Kirkland hit on things some of the companies were looking for. He told the Commissioners incentives were an investment to creating jobs within the community and expanding the tax base. He added there was always certain a need that everyone needed and was always a difficulty funding; education, public safety and infrastructure and said as the economic development grew, money become available to fund those needs. He also said the bottom line was the job creation was raising the quality of life for every citizen in the county.

He told the Commissioners the tax abatement came up for referendum in Suwannee County and was not approved the second time around and felt one of the reasons was because there was no real mechanism of reporting the return on the investment program. He further stated with no money and extra cash in Suwannee County, he had to be creative and they looked for programs that were an attractive incentive or investment. He added that he and his Board felt very strongly about existing businesses as well as the commercial and retail.

He listed project criteria; several types of industries and how points were accumulated. He also talked about their incentive program for new industry along with their program for speculative space.

Commissioner Viegbesie commended him on a job well done and suggested that the Board needed to have a retreat to “think outside the box as opposed to keeping ourselves boxed in with what we are used to and what we are comfortable with”.

Chair Holt asked if with the incentives package, if businesses must stay afloat for x number of years

to get the incentives back and Dr. Jackson said they had to pay taxes, if they could not stay afloat, they could not pay taxes and would not be entitled.

Mr. Presnell said "The outstanding part, Commissioners, is the model, which is based on this model, the policy that's before you, the incentive money you are giving back is the money you didn't have any way, it's money you collected off the new project. Win/win."

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Ms. Kirkland reappeared before the Board and asked if the Board wished to workshop this again to bring their own version back to the Board. Commissioner Viegbesie said he would like to have a retreat to further discuss this item.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HOLT DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:53 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**BRENDA A. HOLT, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk