

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKSHOP OF
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

JANUARY 14, 2021

Present: Commissioner Robert D. Bender, Chairman, District 4
Commissioner Jeffrey W. Bergosh, Vice Chairman, District 1
Commissioner Steven L. Barry, District 5
Commissioner Lumon J. May, District 3
Honorable Pam Childers, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Janice Gilley, County Administrator
Alison Rogers, County Attorney
DeLana Allen-Busbee, Administrative Specialist, Clerk and Comptroller's Office
Shamara Jernigan, Agenda Program Coordinator, County Administrator's Office

Absent: Commissioner Douglas B. Underhill, District 2

Location: Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building, Board Chambers, First Floor
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, Florida

Report prepared by: DeLana Allen-Busbee

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Chairman Bender called the Committee of the Whole (C/W) Workshop to order at 9:02 a.m.

2. Was the Meeting Properly Advertised?

The C/W was advised by DeLana Allen-Busbee, Administrative Specialist, Clerk and Comptroller's Office, that the meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on January 9, 2021, in the Board's weekly meeting schedule.

3. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Commissioner Bergosh led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and the Board held a brief Commissioners' Forum.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Board Items.

I. RESTORE Pot 1 Projects Update

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, titled *RESTORE Direct Component Update*, presented by Matt Posner, RESTORE Program Manager, Natural Resources Management Department, and the C/W:

- (1) Was advised by Mr. Posner on the flow of Deepwater Horizon funds in Florida, and how Escambia County accesses funds as one of the disproportionately affected counties; Mr. Posner also reviewed, and the C/W expressed support for, the Deepwater Horizon Restoration Projects and the RESTORE Direct Component Projects, as provided in the backup slides;
- (2) Was advised by Commissioner Barry that he needs help with two projects in his district and requested the support of his colleagues to access a portion of the unallocated funds for a community center (approximately \$500,000) and a large 7.5 acre holding pond (approximately \$2.3 million) to assist with flooding and drainage; Commissioner Barry further advised that the community center would need additional funding so he would be comfortable if it was put in the next pool of funds, but that he would like the funding for the pond to come to the Board next week;
- (3) Discussed the status of the \$8 million the County received from Haliburton related to the BP oil spill and was advised by the Honorable Pam Childers that the County must establish a repayment plan for its portion of FEMA funds and cannot continue to long-term borrow from Local Option Sales Tax funds;
- (4) Heard comments from Commissioner Bender regarding his concerns over what funds will be needed to finish projects already on the list;
- (5) Discussed whether the intent was equitable distribution of funds amongst districts, allocating the remaining funds, and heard comments from Commissioner Bender and Bergosh regarding needs in their districts as well; also discussed using Tourist Development Tax dollars for beach re-nourishment;
- (6) Heard comments from Commissioner May in support of getting grant money spent on projects to benefit the citizens as “today is the rainy day”;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

I. Continued...

A. Continued...

- (7) Was advised by Commissioner Bender that he would like to see an estimate on what funds are needed to spend on the projects on the list and a timeline so the Board can determine what funds are actually available for additional projects;
- (8) Was advised by Commissioner Barry that as long as the \$2.3 million pond project was coming forward next week he was happy to have any additional conversations and heard support among the commissioners for the pond project;
- (9) Discussed the importance of leveraging funds for projects, beautification of holding ponds, and was advised by Mr. Posner that staff is actively seeking other funds for all eligible projects; and
- (10) Was advised by County Administrator Gilley that staff will prepare an agenda item for the Board to vote on at next week's Regular BCC Meeting (January 21, 2021); and

B. Board Direction – None.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

II. Broadband Study

- A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, titled *Broadband Feasibility Study*, presented by Kyle Hollifield and Ashley Poling from Magellan Advisors, and the C/W:
- (1) Heard comments from Commissioner Bender and IT Director Bart Siders regarding an update on broadband service at the Bay Center; Director Siders also introduced the team from Magellan Advisors who completed the Broadband Feasibility Study, as directed by the Board;
 - (2) Was advised by Mr. Hollifield, Magellan Advisors, that:
 - Based on the study, there is a high demand for high speed internet in the County
 - The study identified about 3,000 under and unserved residents
 - The County desires to retain and expand economic development opportunities, as well as reduce costs and enhance services to both residents and businesses
 - Eight to ten percent of study respondents do not have internet access, and the backup slides explain various reasons for the lack of service
 - Median speeds vary greatly amongst providers and anything less than 25mbps is not considered broadband per the FCC (Federal Communications Commission)
 - (3) Heard comments and discussion from the Board and Mr. Hollifield regarding broadband in relation to census tracts and that according to the FCC, if a provider has connected service to one user in the tract, they are able to declare the entire census tract as served with broadband;
 - (4) Discussed the need for broadband for residents, businesses, and economic growth, and the concept of municipal networks where the municipality either becomes the broadband provider or works with partners to provide the service;
 - (5) Discussed the pros and cons of being the service provider, the financial issues with funding the project, whether CARES Act funds were the right source, and the time frame until positive cash flow;
 - (6) Heard comments from Commissioners Bergosh, Bender, and Barry in relation to the desire to work with partner providers rather than have the County actually become the provider and that getting the project started was important, but the plan beyond that would require a much larger conversation;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

II. Continued...

A. Continued...

- (7) Viewed a conceptual network map showing the fiber backbone that could provide wireless to 3,000 underserved residents, as well as the additional phases that would reach facilities, parks, community centers, and businesses;
- (8) Discussed procurement and the need for a proper RFP (request for proposals) to ensure that the process follows the appropriate procedure;
- (9) Heard comments from County Administrator Gilley regarding a Resolution related to access to broadband; and
- (10) Agreed to set aside approximately \$650,000 from CARES Act funds to fund design engineering, a detailed business and financial plan, and grant services and applications, and expressed support for a proper procurement process; and

B. Board Direction – None.

COMMISSIONER MAY WAS ABSENT DURING DISCUSSION OF THIS ITEM

III. CARES Family Grant Update

A. Board Discussion – The C/W:

- (1) Was advised by Chips Kirschenfeld, Natural Resources Management Director, that:
 - Of the 236 Family Grant applications that met approval and the deadline, 86 have already gone through the final review with checks ready to be cut next week
 - The number of additional applications that were submitted during the appropriate time frame, but still needed additional documentation, is about 2,500
- (2) In response to Commissioner Barry's inquiry regarding how many applicants will realistically provide the documents, Director Kirschenfeld guess about 1,500;
- (3) Heard comments from Commissioner Barry concerning his opinion that it was not unreasonable to reach out to those applicants and give perhaps a two-week deadline to provide missing documentation; and

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

III. Continued...

A. Continued...

- (4) Heard Board support for setting aside enough funds for 1,000 applications and a time frame of two weeks, with the direction to come back to the board to re-allocate additional funds if needed and for staff not to deny applications if the two-week deadline is met; and

B. Board Direction – None.

IV. Escambia County Insurance

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed slides related to County Insurance, presented by Ronnie Jackson, USI Insurance Services, and the C/W:

- (1) Was advised by Commissioner Bender that the Board will be taking up the insurance issue at the February meeting and that he wanted to make sure the Board is aware of what to expect when it comes up next month;

(2) Was advised by Mr. Jackson that:

- The County buys a loss limit policy with a \$75 million limit on a schedule of about \$450 million of insured values around the County
- There is a \$25,000 all other peril deductible, which includes flood
- There is a 3% wind deductible on hurricanes, with a minimum of \$25,000, and for that the County pays about \$1.6 million in rough premium
- The jail will come online and add about \$140 million in insured value
- The program described consists of about 10 different markets used to acquire the limits
- The drivers in the market include COVID-19, Hurricanes, Wildfires, and Social Unrest
- The County has sustained approximately \$51,978,946 in losses in the last 10 years, or about \$5,197,895 per year over 10 years

- (3) Discussed how the loss from the jail explosion was absorbed and how the County's losses compare to other counties;

- (4) Heard a review of the capacity and coverages relative to market drivers by Mr. Jackson;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

IV. Continued...

A. Continued...

(5) Discussed the importance of ensuring all buildings are properly valued and on the schedule, and that Mark Bartlett, Risk Manager, is working on getting them updated;

(6) Was advised by Mr. Jackson of the potential for price increases, which as a municipality with significant losses, could be in the 35%-60% range; Mr. Jackson further advised that his company's commitment to the County is to come back in February with a full program bindable so that the Board has a month to get it on the agenda; and

(7) Heard a review of the RMS modeling slide related to storm losses; and

B. Board Direction – None.

Speaker(s):

Terrence Mead

COMMISSIONER MAY WAS ABSENT DURING DISCUSSION OF THIS ITEM

5. Adjourn

Chairman Bender declared the C/W Workshop adjourned at 11:40 a.m.