

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

SEPTEMBER 12, 2019

Present: Commissioner Lumon J. May, Chairman, District 3
Commissioner Steven L. Barry, Vice Chairman, District 5
Commissioner Robert D. Bender, District 4
Commissioner Jeffrey W. Bergosh, District 1
Commissioner Douglas B. Underhill, District 2
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
Heather Mahoney, Official Records Manager, Clerk and Comptroller's Office

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 May called the Committee of the Whole (C/W) Workshop to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Was the Meeting Properly Advertised?

The C/W was advised that the Clerk's office did not receive the proof of publication for the C/W Workshop.

FOR INFORMATION: The Board discussed the Tech Park and potential plans for it, as well as the importance and necessity of setting aside money for training of the local workforce.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

3. ECUA Septic to Sewer Update

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, entitled *Emerald Coast Utilities Authority (ECUA) Sewer Expansion Program*, presented by Stacy Hayden, Director of Engineering at ECUA, and Tim Haag, Director of Utility Services and Planning at ECUA, and the C/W:

- (1) Heard a brief introduction from Mr. Haag explaining that the sewer expansion program began in the late 1990s and that the current project is in the Brownsville area;
- (2) Was advised by Mr. Hayden that:
 - Sewer service through the expansion program has been provided to approximately 6,100 properties
 - ECUA has spent over \$45 million since the program's inception, and to date, over 4,600 septic tanks have been abandoned as a result of existing homes connecting to the sewer system
 - The conversion rate from septic to sewer is approximately 76%
 - ECUA typically waives the sewer impact fee of \$1,600 for the first year to assist with new connections
 - The average cost for new connection is approximately \$7,000 and this cost is expected to rise
 - Prioritization of expanded sewer service is generally conducted by evaluating proximity of septic systems to potable water wells, water bodies, the history of septic system failure in the area, soil conditions, and property owner participation
 - ECUA frequently coordinates with other agencies to expand the sewer system during their capital improvement projects
 - In the Brownsville community, the intended benefit is to improve water quality in Bayou Chico and the Pensacola Bay system and to provide a foundation for economic development along the community's major corridors of Cervantes Street, Mobile Highway, and "W" Street
 - ECUA is interested in partnering with Escambia County to submit an appropriations request to the State through the legislative delegation for a 2 Phase stormwater improvement project in the Brownsville community
 - Currently, a new sewer main is being installed on Lee Street between "T" Street and Kirk Street
 - ECUA does not have available funding to commit to these 2 phase projects, but they have coordinated with County staff to join efforts to request funding for \$2.5 million for Phase 1 and \$4.5 million for Phase 2 from the State

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

3. Continued...

A. Continued...

(2) Continued...

- If funding can be secured at the requested levels, ECUA can then coordinate with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to install a sewer system along Cervantes Street and Mobile Highway prior to the FDOT roadway project initiation, which would represent a significant cost savings to the taxpayers and ECUA rate payers

(3) Was advised by Commissioner Bender that he would like to get an overview of all sewer services and the percentage of sewer in the County;

(4) Upon inquiry from Commissioner Bergosh, was advised by Mr. Hayden that the goal is to get citizens on gravity sewer versus low pressure, there are various ways the cost is covered for the switch from septic to sewer, citizens are made aware of the costs and the increase in bills, and that the switch is often driven by residents;

(5) Was advised by Commissioner Underhill that he is disappointed that Navy Boulevard is not included in the expansion and that he has concerns about the increase in cost of living;

(6) Was advised by Mr. Hayden that the targeted areas have the best chance of success when asking for appropriations from the State;

(7) Heard comments from Commissioner May regarding the need to lobby the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the championing of the bill;

(8) Was advised by Mr. Haag that Navy Boulevard has not been placed on a shelf and is still central to the long-term plan, and that DEP's support has primarily focused on areas with natural springs;

(9) In response to inquiry from Commissioner Bergosh, was advised by Mr. Hayden that ECUA does not require citizens to convert from septic to sewer;

(10) Discussed the potential of increased costs to existing businesses in Brownsville and whether those businesses would have the choice on conversion to sewer;

(Continued on Page 4)

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

3. Continued...

A. Continued...

- (11) Heard comments from Tim Day, Environmental Programs Manager, advising that the benefits of conversion from septic to sewer does not only take into consideration the existing businesses in Brownsville, but also the ability to develop the infrastructure to the highest and best use, and that there are incentives to convert for the first twelve months, but those incentives are lost beyond that time period;
- (12) Was advised by Commissioner Barry that he was supportive of allowing ECUA and their lobbyist to take the lead and the County acting as a supportive agent; he would also like to have ECUA follow up with his office concerning other areas in his district;
- (13) Heard comments from Commissioner Bender regarding moving the sewer treatment facility and his desire to see entities working closer together on coordinating projects;
- (14) Heard comments from Commissioner May concerning the importance of improving the Brownsville corridor and his concerns over the funding if the appropriations do not come through;
- (15) Was advised by Mr. Hayden that Lee Street is currently in the budget, but the other phases are not;
- (16) Heard comments from Commissioner Underhill regarding the lack of a District 3 representative on the ECUA Board and the recommendation to send a letter to the Governor; and heard comments from Commissioner May advising that a letter is in progress; and
- (17) Was advised by Mr. Hayden that ECUA has set aside \$500,000 for the Lee Street project and that Escambia County's Community Redevelopment Agency has set aside \$500,000; and

B. Board Direction – None.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Legislative Agenda

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, entitled *Legislature Appropriation Requests*, presented by David Forte, Traffic and Transportation Manager, and Tim Day, Environmental Programs Manager, and the C/W:

(1) Was advised by Mr. Forte that:

- The State Legislature is looking for projects that will have “regional impacts” (economic development, congestion relief, environmental, freight, hurricane evacuations, etc.) and there is a November 15, 2019, deadline
 - Looking for 2-3 requests per local agency, but there is no minimum/maximum requirement
 - Looks highly on “shovel ready” projects, but all project phases can be requested
 - Local match/contribution increases interest
- Projects that could impact State Work Programs could pose challenges if ultimately approved by the Governor’s Office
- Staff’s proposed requests
 - Pine Forest Road Capacity Project – I-10 to Highway 297A
 - FDOT 5 Year Work Program Support
 - Brownsville Septic to Sewer Expansion Project
 - Estuary Program
 - Palafox Workforce Development Master Plan

(2) Discussed the Pine Forest Road Capacity Project; alternative methods of accomplishing the widening; the importance of not jeopardizing the Beulah Interchange and the Transportation Trust Fund; acquiring right-of-way and using it as a local match; and safety issues on Pine Forest and getting off the Interstate on Exit 5;

(3) Agreed that there was a better way to take on this project than as a Legislative ask; and was advised by Mr. Forte that FDOT is looking at improving Exit 5 as part of the four-laning of Nine Mile Road;

(4) Heard comments from Commissioner Underhill and Andrew Holmer, Development Services Manager, regarding a parcel of property for sale on Pine Forest Road and the Development Order on that Property;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued...

A. Continued...

- (5) Discussed the FDOT 5 Year Work Program Support; was advised by Mr. Forte that the Department has programmed approximately \$420 million to Escambia County; and agreed to unanimously support the Program with a letter of support;
- (6) Discussed the Brownsville Septic to Sewer Expansion; was advised by Mr. Day that it would be a good water project; and agreed to drop the project off the County's list and support the project with ECUA taking the lead and the County being the supportive agency;
- (7) Was advised by Mr. Day that the Estuary Program has two parts, which includes developing a long-term strategic action plans and the funding of mini-grants;
- (8) Discussed whether this project would compete with the Brownsville septic to sewer project; was advised by Mr. Day that in his opinion the projects are different enough to not compete; and was advised by Commissioner Underhill that he would pull his support for this project if it puts the Brownsville project at risk;
- (9) Agreed to support this request and have staff fill out the applications once they are fine-tuned with a list of projects, but asked staff to find out if there were any risks to the other projects and to bring it back before the Board if there were; and
- (10) Discussed the Palafox Workforce Development Master Plan and agreed that this would be an excellent RESTORE project, but not a legislative ask; and

B. Board Direction – None.

COMMISSIONER MAY WAS ABSENT DURING THE DISCUSSION OF THIS ITEM

5. Progress Update on the New Correctional Facility

This agenda item was not discussed.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

6. ECAT Update

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, entitled *Escambia County Area Transit Comprehensive Operations Analysis Phase 2 Route Modifications*, presented by Tonya Ellis, Interim Mass Transit Director, and the C/W:

(1) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that:

- The four key areas identified to improve service for ECAT (Escambia County Area Transit) include: safety and security, system efficiency, customer experience, and employee engagement
- These elements have been shared with the Union
- A Homeland Security Transit System Safety Assessment has been scheduled in order to get additional funding
- ECAT is working with the West Florida Regional Planning Council and the TPO (Transportation Planning Organization) on bus stop accessibility
- Customer surveys are being completed and new technologies are being looked at
- ECAT has been selected for a potential pilot program by the FDOT for mobile ticketing
- National ridership is down around 8% and ECAT's ridership is down around 6%
- The routes with the largest ridership are around the Davis Highway area and Cordova Mall and areas with low ridership include the NAS to Airport route, the 12th Avenue East Pensacola Heights route, and the beach jumper routes
- Regarding the City versus the County, currently over 30% of ridership and locations are within the City and the remaining portion is within the County

(2) Heard comments and discussion from the Committee regarding infrastructure (such as shelters and benches) at bus stops and advertising dollars, including how they could be increased and are currently utilized;

(3) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that a grant has been applied for to increase ADA compliance and amenities on the street;

(4) Requested that staff bring back a plan for increasing ADA compliance and the number of benches at bus stops so that the Board can take a vote and align finances;

(5) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that ECAT's farebox fixed route recovery rate is at 10.6% for 2019 and that the revenue from the Summer Wheels program is around \$9,665 per year;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

6. ECAT Update

A. Continued...

- (6) Heard Commissioner Barry's request for staff to bring back a recommendation to the Board to implement the program all year, discussed the requirements to access this program, including age ranges and school attendance, and considered working with UWF to potentially reimburse a portion of fares for UWF students with funds set aside for a joint project;
- (7) Was advised by Commissioner Underhill that ECAT's farebox recovery rate is below average and he is not supportive of free rides to some but not others while mass transit is already inefficient;
- (8) In response to inquiry from Commissioner Bergosh, was advised by Ms. Ellis that ECAT has met with Navy Federal and the West Florida Regional Planning Council to look at a potential route and that park and ride lots are being considered;
- (9) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that after public outreach events and comment periods, the updated recommended route modifications include:
- Route 41 – Keep route, except Hyde Park Road to Firestone Boulevard and add service to Pensacola International Airport
 - Route 57 – Keep Saturday service, no service beyond Corry Station main entrance gate, add service to Peachtree Commons (Twin Oaks) Apartments
 - Route 59A – Eliminate route, portions of route 59A are added to Routes 41 and 59X
 - Route 59X – Add service at 10:00 a.m. and last trip at 8:35 p.m. (weekday); Sunday through Thursday service starts at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 7:50 p.m.; Friday through Saturday service starts at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 1:10 a.m.; add service on New Warrington Road
 - Route 61 – Keep Saturday service, begin route at ECAT Transfer Center, terminate south end service at Casino Beach, and increase from three to five trips daily
 - Route 64 – Keep Friday service, run service from Memorial Day through Labor Day
- (10) Ms. Ellis advised that public hearings would be required for route changes of the magnitude presented;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

6. ECAT Update

A. Continued...

(11) Was advised by Commissioner Underhill that he feels these modifications are moving in the right direction and that he is interested to see how the changes affect core routes; and

(12) Agreed that the route modifications are good as presented, and asked Ms. Ellis to work with County Administrator Gilley to bring recommendations back to the Board for approval; and

B. Board Direction – None.

7. Firefighter Cancer Benefits

This agenda item was not discussed.

8. Adjourn

Vice Chairman Barry declared the C/W Workshop adjourned at 12:16 p.m.