

Regular Meeting

Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
January 18, 2024 – 6:00 PM

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1(917)900-1022 and enter code 32628.

COMMISSIONERS

Jody Stephenson, District 1, Vice Chairman
Mark Hatch, District 3
Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

Paul Gainey, Acting Assignment County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Acting Assignment Asst. County Manager/
Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Della J. Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The Board Meeting was called to order at 6:07 by Commissioner Storey.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation was led by Commissioner Hatch and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by Commissioner Stephenson.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

Commissioner Osteen made the motion to approve Minutes from the Regular Meeting of January 04, 2024. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

Commissioner Osteen made the motion to approve the vouchers. Commissioner Hatch seconded. Board approved.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

None were present.

PUBLIC HEARING: THE PUBLIC HEARING MAY BE CONTINUED TO ONE OR MORE FUTURE DATES. ANY INTERESTED PARTY IS ADVISED THAT THE DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF ANY CONTINUATION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING SHALL BE ANNOUNCED DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING AND THAT NO FURTHER NOTICE CONCERNING THE MATTERS WILL BE PUBLISHED.

The motion to go into the Public Hearing was made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

Dixie County Land Development Code

As required by Section 163.2202 F.S.

Consistent with the Dixie County Comprehensive Plan

Repeals Land Development Code adopted September 1990 and all subsequent amendments

Adopts Dixie County Land Development Code consisting of the following articles.

ARTICLE I: GENERAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE II: ZONING

ARTICLE III: SPECIAL DISTRICTS

ARTICLE IV: NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION STANDARDS

ARTICLE V: ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES

ARTICLE VI: DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

ARTICLE VII: DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

ARTICLE VIII: SIGNS

ARTICLE IX: AGENCIES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

ARTICLE X: ADMINISTRATION

ARTICLE XI: INTERPRETATIONS, EXCEPTIONS, EQUITABLE RELIEF, AND ENFORCEMENT

ARTICLE XII: DEFINITIONS

(Second Reading Tabled 12-21-2023) This is the Second Reading.

Building Official Leon Wright appeared before the Board and requested the Dixie County Land Development Code Amendment be tabled until the next Board Meeting.

Commissioner Hatch made the motion to table the Dixie County Land Development Code Amendment until the next Board Meeting. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board tabled.

APPLICATIONS for SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

A petition by **James M. and Juli Sheehan** requesting a **Special Exception** to be granted, as provided in Section 4.3.5 Special Exceptions of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle in a (ESA) zoning district, in accordance with the petition dated 12/13/2023 to be located on the property described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 01-10-13-4512-0000-0900, 303 NE 791 St, Old Town, FL 32680.

(Commission District 2, Daniel Wood)

Mr. Wright appeared before the Board and read the Special Exception request made by James M. and Juli Sheehan. There was no opposition.

Commissioner Hatch made the motion to approve the Special Exception request made by James M. and Juli Sheehan. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

The motion to go out of the Public Hearing was made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

RESOLUTION 2024-04

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO APPROVE A SPECIAL EXCEPTION TO BE GRANTED, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 4.3.5 SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS TO PERMIT ONE RECREATIONAL VEHICLE IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA (ESA) ZONING DISTRICT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PETITION DATED DECEMBER 13, 2023.

James M. and Juli Sheehan

Mr. Wright appeared before the Board and read Resolution 2024-04 in support of James M. and Juli Sheehan.

Commissioner Hatch made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-04 in support of James M. and Juli Sheehan. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

ORDINANCE 2023-12

AN ORDINANCE OF THE DIXIE COUNTY BOARD OF DIXIE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, CROSS CITY, FLORIDA, REPEALING AND REPLACING ITS LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, ORDINANCE NO. 1990-04, AND ALL SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 163.3202 FLORIDA STATUTES WHICH REQUIRES REGULATIONS TO BE PREPARED AND ADOPTED WHICH IMPLEMENT THE COUNTY OF DIXIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, FOR THE SUBDIVISION OF LAND, THE USE OF LAND AND WATER, AREAS SUBJECT TO SEASONAL AND PERIODIC FLOODING, PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS DESIGNATED IN THE COUNTY OF DIXIE, FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN,(SIGNAGE RESERVED) , PROVISIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF POTABLE WATER WELLFIELDS, DRAINAGE AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, ENSURING THAT PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES MEET OR EXCEED THE STANDARDS ESTABLISHED IN THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT OF THE COUNTY OF DIXIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ARE AVAILABLE WHEN NEEDED FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PROVISIONS FOR ENSURING SAFE AND CONVENIENT ONSITE TRAFFIC FLOW AND CONSIDERING NEEDED VEHICLE PARKING; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

(Second Reading Tabled 12-21-2023.) This is the Second Reading.

Ordinance 2023-12 was tabled until the next Board Meeting at the requests of Building Official Leon Wright.

BRAD HOARD

Employee Insurance Update

Mr. Hoard appeared before the Board to discuss the Wellness program and any insurance questions or concerns. He stated that the Wellness Clinic will take place at the Trail Riders Club in Cross City on March 11-12, 2024. Snacks will be provided.

Commissioner David Osteen expressed his concern about the employee cancer and life insurance policies which use to be payroll deducted and are now directly deducted out of the employee's bank account. One of the insurance companies is Liberty National.

Commissioner Jody Stephenson stated that some county employees had the policy premiums payroll deducted, and this was supposed to have stopped. Once payroll deduction stopped the employee was supposed to have the premium deducted from their personal bank account; however, some employees are saying they were not notified, and their policies almost cancelled.

Mr. Hoard informed the board that in the summer of 2022 the board voted to consolidate insurance coverage offered to employees. The board saw the quotes of other vendors then voted to consolidate with a single vendor.

Human Resource Administrator Angie Crowley said the employees can still access these policies by having them directly deducted from their personal accounts, but the policies are no longer eligible for payroll deduction.

County employee Jimmy Jerrells stated that he was not notified of the change. He stated that he almost lost his life insurance policy and is now having to catch up on the payments to keep it from cancelling.

Ms. Crowley said Liberty National was supposed to notify the employees.

Mr. Jerrells said that the county continued paying the policy premiums out of his check for almost a year after the decision to stop the payroll deduction.

Ms. Crowley agreed that it was around a year and said this was because of the lack of communication from Liberty National. She also stated the lack of communication from Liberty National was one reason why the county stopped contracting with them.

Commissioner David Osteen asked Mr. Hoard what types of insurance he has that would be comparable to Mr. Jerrells' current life insurance policy.

Mr. Hoard suggested Mr. Jerrells keep the current life insurance policy. He states that Mr. Jerrells does have the option to change this policy to be deducted directly from his personal bank account.

Commissioner Jamie Storey asked Mr. Jerrells if the problem had been corrected.

Mr. Jerrells said the problem had not been corrected. He stated that his policy is still active, but he is having to pay all the premiums that have accumulated from September of 2023 to bring the policy current so that it will not cancel.

Commissioner Storey asked Mr. Jerrells if he still has his insurance policy.

Mr. Jerrells said yes, he did still have his policy, but he was catching up on the payments.

Commissioner Storey stated that the county can't do anything to change the contract with the insurance until Open Enrollment, which takes place in October of 2024. The county has a contract already signed for the 2023-2024 year with Standard.

Commissioner Mark Hatch asked Mr. Hoard to explain the difference between payroll deduction versus the employee paying the company. He also asked if the county can be set up to do payroll deduction with other carriers, while contracted with Standard.

Mr. Hoard answered yes, but the current contract must be amended to include the acceptance of other carriers. He also stated that generally the rules of group insurance are sole vendor contracts.

Insurance Agent Andrew Rains advised Mr. Jerrells to keep his current Life insurance policy. He also recommended Mr. Jerrells to set up bank account withdrawals. He stated that the beginning process of the insurance change was where the problem first occurred. He also said the county and employees were not able to reach a representative with Liberty National and the county wanted one person to be available to help employees with questions.

Commissioner Storey stated he wasn't sure if the county could fix the problem for Mr. Jerrells, but the county will look into it.

Mr. Hoard said that within the next few weeks they will start sending employees an online account link, in which they would use to schedule wellness check appointments.

Mrs. Crowley asked if the employees who attend the Wellness Check and have the accident coverage will qualify for the \$200.00 reimbursement.

Mr. Hoard answered yes if they have a particular accident policy.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Phil Bishop appeared before the Board to update them on the status of several projects.

He stated that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has submitted for the water management permit, and they are preparing for an onsite visit on January 30, 2024.

He also said they received three (3) bids on the Old Town Fire Station. The low bid came from Slack Construction in Ocala. After reviewing, Mr. Bishop recommends the board to award the contract to Slack Construction in the amount of \$2,189,040.00.

Commissioner Hatch made the motion to award the contract for the Old Town Fire Station to Slack Construction in the amount of \$2,189,040.00. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.

Mr. Bishop said they will have a change order for fire department furnishings to present later. He states they have approximately \$900,000.00 left in budget.

Mr. Bishop also updated the Board on the following items:

- Library roof: This will be completed next week.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application 95th and 97th street: They are scheduled for a field visit with thirty percent plans.
- 82nd Ave, otherwise known as, Hal Chairs Road: Plans were submitted to Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on December 07, 2023, and there has been no response from them yet.
- Sheriff evidence building: The Sheriff and staff are finishing their review of the first draft of the floor plan.

Commissioner Mark Hatch asked if there is money available to pave roads in Suwannee related to Hurricane Idalia storm surge damage.

Mr. Bishop answered that he didn't know the answer to that and would follow up with Greg Bailey at North Florida Professional Services to get more information.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Mr. Locklear appeared before the Board to discuss the Vulnerability Assessment Project. He stated that he spoke to The Department of Transportation (DOT) and The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) this week regarding the Vulnerability Assessment Project. He was told by both departments there is money available. Mr. Locklear recommended going ahead and meeting with the Board to identify key items that the county views as necessary and to go ahead and make an argument for those to get some planning and construction money. He stated this can be done even before the assessment is complete.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Ms. Bellot was not present for this meeting.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Mr. Fremen had nothing to discuss at this time.

STEVE HUTCHISON, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Hutchison was not present for this meeting.

DWAYNE CHAUNCEY, MOSQUITO CONTROL DIRECTOR

Mr. Chauncey was not present for this meeting.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Mr. Johnson was not present for this meeting.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

Building and Zoning Official Leon Wright appeared before the Board to discuss the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) auditor assigned to Dixie County. He stated that so far Building and Zoning has had two (2) meetings with FEMA with positive reviews. He also said the FEMA representative will be in the county until December 2024. Mr. Wright also mentioned that FEMA presents to them, each Wednesday, a list of properties they have researched and Building and Zoning provides answers on Fridays regarding the same properties.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Director of Emergency Services Darian Brown appeared before the Board to explain the change order for the new fire station. He stated that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) wanted to make sure the building was built first, and the change order was intentional. He also stated that the department will try and use local vendors for the appliances and furniture.

Mr. Brown mentioned that himself and Chief Scott Garner met today with a FEMA representative and completed the last of the site inspections for the Idalia storm damage.

Mr. Brown updated the Board on the EOC budget report. He said Mrs. Lisa Sumrall is \$96,595.00 over budget as of now and she is nearly \$100,000.00 over budget on collections based on a monthly average. Mr. Brown presented a printout of an article that was posted in the Florida Fire Service Magazine featuring Dixie County's EOC teams during training and storm coverage. He stated they should receive the new tanker next week. He also said they are receiving \$66,000.00 worth of ventilators received through a grant and CPR devices from the state and are expected to complete training for each in exchange for the equipment. He said the ambulance and rechassis are still coming.

Chief Scott Garner asked if the Board members are able to speak to our state representatives, please mention to them that the county needs help with the 12.5 percent match for the storm damage repair.

Commissioner Mark Hatch stated that the City and the County had a workshop yesterday, January 17, 2024. He said the city announced that they appointed Mr. Will Garner as the City Fire Chief. He offered congratulations.

Commissioner Jody Stephenson made mention of the First District (EMS) Station door on the back being open continuously.

Mr. Brown replied that they have applied for a grant to rebuild the First District (EMS) Station, but it was denied, and they are reapplying.

**SCOTT PENDARVIS, 911 COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
& I.T. ADMINISTRATOR**

Communications Director Scott Pendarvis appeared before the Board to discuss the new fiber internet coming to Dixie County. He stated that Central Florida Electric has been installing fiber internet throughout most of the First District and are waiting on The Army Corp of Engineers to give permission to run fiber across the river at Hwy 340 to service the northern part of the county. He added they are also running fiber down Hwy 349 and the county should have the service soon.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Ms. Carter was not present for this meeting.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Ms. Houghton was not present for this meeting.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Human Resources Administrator Angie Crowley appeared before the Board to discuss the Health Savings Act (HSA) and stated that the employees should have the funds available for use on Friday, January 19, 2024. She also mentioned that the employees that did not partake in the county's insurance will receive an Optum card.

PAUL GAINNEY, ACTING ASSIGNMENT COUNTY MANAGER

County Manager Paul Gainney appeared before the Board to request the approval of several items:

Manager Gainney requested the Board's approval of the Proclamation for the Hazardous Material Awareness Week of February 19-25, 2024.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve the Proclamation for the Hazardous Material Awareness Week of February 19-25, 2024. Commissioner Hatch seconded. Board approved.

Manager Gainney requested the Board's approval to execute the North Florida Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for another five (5) year term to expire June 11, 2028.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to execute the North Florida Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for another five (5) year term to expire June 11, 2028. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.

Manager Gainney requested the Board's approval for the SHIP Emergency Repair Reimbursement for Betty Gainney in the amount of \$15,000.00.

Commissioner Osteen made the motion to approve the SHIP Emergency Repair Reimbursement for Betty Gainney in the amount of \$15,000.00. Commissioner Hatch seconded. Board approved.

Manager Gainney requested the Board's approval for the SHIP Emergency Repair Reimbursement for Lori Fowler in the amount of \$14,900.00.

Commissioner Osteen made the motion to approve the SHIP Emergency Repair Reimbursement for Lori Fowler in the amount of \$14,900.00. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

Manager Gainney requested the Board's approval of the Anti-Drug Coalition space sharing, at the Department of Health (DOH), contract with an automatic yearly renewal.

Commissioner Osteen made the motion to approval of the Anti-Drug Coalition space sharing, at the Department of Health (DOH), contract with an automatic yearly renewal. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

Manager Gainey requested the Board's approval for the purchase of a CAT 309 Excavator and work tools in the amount of \$141,311.00 from Ring Power Corporation based off the Storm Water Task Force (SWTF) recommendation. ARPA money will be used for the purchase.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approval for the purchase of a CAT 309 Excavator and work tools in the amount of \$141,311.00 from Ring Power Corporation based off the Storm Water Task Force (SWTF) recommendation. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.

Manager Gainey presented the following information items:

- The Suwannee Gardens property will be re-advertised based on an interested party.
- Funding has been applied for through the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) for the dredging of McGriff Pass. This is in the Town of Suwannee.
- The Legislative Networking Reception for January 24, 2024, from 6:00 – 8:00 PM will be held at the Doubletree Hilton, downtown in Tallahassee.
- The Capitol Courtyard Event for January 25, 2024, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM will be held on the Capitol grounds in Tallahassee. This is Rural County Days.
- The NFEDP will sponsor an event for members on Friday, March 01, 2024, from 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM at Camp Anderson Anchored, 536 NE 168th Ave, Old Town, FL 32680. Registration is required.

Manager Gainey informed everyone that the center line stripping on the Willow Hole Road has been completed.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Attorney Watson appeared before the Board to discuss the mediation results for the lawsuit against the Board in Suwannee Gardens. She said that no settlement was reached. However, an offer was negotiated outside of mediation for \$100,000.00. The Board must vote to accept the offer to dismiss the suit.

Attorney Watson recommended the Board do so.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to accept the offer of \$100,000.00. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.

Attorney Watson stated that the Suwannee River Economic Council (SREC) has sent documents for review regarding short term rentals, otherwise known as Airbnb's. She states they are moving forward with this.

Attorney Watson informed the Board that the county is actively making efforts to improve the Building and Zoning Code Enforcement system. She said an attorney has reached out to the county regarding a Code Enforcement case that has been open for 3-5 years now and has not been resolved. She asked if she could work on these older cases, to mitigate and get the results the county wants, which is to clean the property. The case attorney is asking to allow the property owner to clean up the property, and he then offers to pay the cost for the clean-up and pay a smaller percentage of the fines that have been issued. Commissioner Stephenson asked how the code enforcement streamlining process is coming and have they considered and reviewed examples from other counties. He recommends that the county be allowed to come out to the property and clean it up after proper notification to the owner.

Building and Zoning Official Leon Wright stated the way the current code is written allows for appeals to come back to the Board of Adjustment. The new code will not allow for appeals to come back to the Board of Adjustment, but they would go straight to the judge. He says this should hold up better in court and takes the liability off the county.

Attorney Chana Watson stated they are working towards getting this settled.

Code Enforcement Officer Steve Fremen stated that he met with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding the site near the church in Old Town. DEP has given the owner four (4) months to clean up the property and get rid of the tires and then a fine will be issued to the property owners.

Mr. James Ward spoke of the adjacent property behind the above-mentioned DEP involved property. He stated that he was interested in purchasing the adjacent property but was concerned because some of the trash had encroached onto this property. He wondered if the county would make the owner clean the adjoining property as well.

Mr. Fremen answered yes, they would make the owners clean up the adjoining property.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Chief Deputy Clerk Verna Wilson presented the Board with a budget amendment for the Supervisor of Elections office in the amount of \$37,433.00 for the voting machines.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to amend the Supervisor of Elections Budget by \$37,433.00 for the voting machines. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Mark Hatch stated that he will meet with Mr. Locklear concerning the roads in Suwannee, to get feedback and get the roads repaired for our county citizens. He asked Emergency Manager Scott Garner and Emergency Management Director Darian Brown to give him some speaking points for next week for the meeting in Tallahassee in order to discuss the 12.5 percent match for the storm damage repair.

Karen Van Aernam said that the Economic Development Council (EDC) met with Duke Energy and the next EDC meeting is on March 01, 2024, from 8:30 to noon at Camp Anderson.

Town Council Kirk Mahefka reminded everyone of the 100-year centennial for the city scheduled for April 20, 2024, and encouraged everyone to attend.

Commissioner David Osteen stated he had nothing to add.

Commissioner Jody Stephenson thanked Attorney Watson, Code Enforcement Official Steve Fremen and Building and Zoning Official Leon Wright for streamlining code enforcement and thanked Emergency Operations Director Darian Brown for getting money for building repairs in the county. He also presented a photo of the harvest of the last planting of turnips that his father grew on their farm before he passed away and said he will be giving them away around the county.

Commissioner Jamie Storey stated it was a good meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Ms. Mary Goodrich asked when the culverts and ditches were going to be fixed in her area.

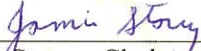
Commissioner Storey told her that the county is working on getting someone to run the ditch machine.

ADJOURN


Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to adjourn at 7:53 PM. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:



Jamie Storey, Chairman


Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

“Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771.”

The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.