

Regular Meeting

Dixie County School Board Meeting Room

February 04, 2021 – 10:00 AM

While adhering to the following State of Florida Executive Orders: 20-51 Establishing Response Protocol, 20-52 declaring a Public Health Emergency, 20-69 regarding Local Government Public Meetings and Dixie County Emergency Declaration 2020-27. The Board met and had limited access by staff to the meeting room while broadcasting the meeting via audio to the public who were provided other accommodations outside of the meeting room. The public could also participate via conference call at 1(917)900-1022 and enter code 32628.

COMMISSIONERS

Jody Stephenson
Mark Hatch, Chairman
W. C. Mills
James Valentine
Jamie Storey, Vice Chairman

STAFF

Duane Cannon, County Manager
Cheyenne Hutchinson, Asst. to the County Manager/Grant Coordinator
Michael Osteen, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Jacki Johnson, Chief Financial Officer
Della Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by Chairman Hatch.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

The Invocation was led by Commissioner Storey and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by Commissioner Mills.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to **table** the *Regular Meeting of January 21, 2021*. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

Attorney Osteen said he had some corrections to the minutes of January 21, 2021 that he will advise the Clerk of these in an email. He advised everyone to look over the minutes.

Commissioner Stephenson said he has some corrections to be made as well.

Commissioner Hatch said he had some corrections too.

Commissioner Hatch asked the Clerk how she would prefer to be notified of corrections and or revisions. He suggested email.

Clerk Higginbotham agreed that email is best for the record.

Commissioner Hatch asked if anyone has reviewed the November 19, 2020 minutes.

Several Board members and the Attorney said they have not reviewed them yet.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to **table** the minutes for the **Regular Meetings of December 17, 2020 and December 03, 2020 and November 19, 2020**. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

Commissioner Hatch said they will need to get the Organizational Meeting minutes as well for this Board to review. The others will need to be reviewed by prior Board members.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

Commissioner Mills made the motion to approve the vouchers. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

County Attorney Michael Osteen addressed the Board and said there is a personnel issue that has come up involving Department Heads and allegations. He said that it should not be discussed at a public meeting per Florida Statute. The procedure would be to have an investigation done. He said the Florida Association of Counties normally handle all our personnel issues. He said that because the County Manager is involved in the alleged incidents, he recommends the FAC handle the investigation and then report their findings and make a recommendation to the Board. If more discussion is needed or disciplinary action is needed it will be advertised that the Board will hold an Executive Session. A court reporter will be used to preserve the record and the Board can decide for disciplinary action and vote. He said the Board can vote to start this investigation today and he will make the call to FAC. He said that everyone knows what he is referring to.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to have an impartial party handle the investigation. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

The motion to go into public hearings was made by Commissioner Storey. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

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.

A petition by **John and Heidi Frasca** requesting a **Special Exception** to be granted, as provided in Section 4.4.5 subparagraph (9) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle in an Agricultural (A-4) zoning district, in accordance with the petition dated October 24, 2020 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 02-09-13-3948-0000-0260 (44 N. E. 626 Avenue, Old Town; Heritage Oaks S/D; Lot 26; 2.50 acres). (Commission District 1)

Ms. Tammi Clyatt appeared before the Board and read the Special Exception request made by John and Heidi Frasca. She informed the Board that one person had expressed opposition, but they have since changed their mind and are now in agreement.

Mr. Kevin Duraski appeared before the Board to ask questions about the Frasca permit issue. He said there are no other RV's in his neighborhood. He said he understands that the permit is attached to the property and not the owner. Therefore, if the owner sells the property then the next person can use the same permit. He said the permits should be re issued every year. Commissioner Hatch said they can be re issued every year.

Mr. Duraski said he feels that the neighbors should be informed when a property will be sold. He said that Cody and Ariel Corbin are neighbors to this property, and they oppose this and don't want an RV in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Stephenson said he wants to talk to more people about the Frasca request. Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to continue and table the Special Exception requested by John and Heidi Frasca. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved to continue and table the request.

Mr. Duraski asked how much it is to re issue the permit every year. Commissioner Hatch replied \$300.00 every year for the new permit.

A petition by **Vincent and Leslie Wan** requesting a **Special Exception** to be granted, as provided in Section 4.3.5 subparagraph (4) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle in an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA-4) zoning district, in accordance with the petition dated December 20, 2020 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 23-09-13-4368-0000-0480 (168 N. E. 395 Avenue, Old Town; Rambling Woods S/D; Lot 48; 3.0 acres (Commission District 1)

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read the Special Exception request made by Vincent and Leslie Wan to the Board. She informed them that she had one phone call inquiring about the matter, but the person agrees.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve the Special Exception requested by Vincent and Leslie Wan. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

A petition by **Michael L. Miller** requesting a **Special Exception** to be granted, as provided in Section 4.3.5 subparagraph (4) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle in an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA-4) zoning district, in accordance with the petition dated January 11, 2021 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 23-09-13-4368-0001-0690 (427 N. E. 674 Street, Old Town; Rambling Woods S/D Add. 1; Lot 69; 2.03 acres. (Commission District 1)

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read the Special exception request made by Michael Miller to the Board. She said there was no opposition.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve the Special Exception requested by Michael Miller. Commissioner Valentine seconded. Board approved.

A petition by **Toni M. Fremen** to request a **Variance** of three feet on the east side of the house and three feet on the west side of the house for a walk around deck (setback is ten feet on each side) as provided by the petition dated December 28, 2020 which is located within a Residential, (Mixed) Single Family/Mobile Home (RSF/MH-2) zoning district to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 19-13-12-2994-0003-4580 (96 S. E. 901 Avenue, Suwannee; Suwannee Shores S/D Unit 3; Lot 458; 0.129 acres). (Commission District 3)

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read the Variance request made by Toni Fremen to the Board. She said there was no opposition.

Commissioner Storey made the motion to approve the Variance requested by Toni Fremen. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

A petition by **Linda Musgrove** to request a **Variance** for setbacks on North and East sides of property from 25 feet to 15 feet as provided by the petition dated January 13, 2021, which is located within an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA-4) zoning district to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 16-13-12-2927-0000-1280 (105 S. E. 851 Avenue, Old Town; Suwannee Palms S/D; Lot 128; .493 acres). (Commission District 3)

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read the Variance request made by Linda Musgrove to the Board. She said she had one person call to inquire, but they agree.

Commissioner Storey made the motion to approve the Variance requested by Linda Musgrove. Commissioner Valentine seconded. Board approved.

A petition by **Marvin and Phyllis Hunt** to request a **Variance** for the placement of a 40x60 enclosed storage barn to be used in conjunction with residence located at 117 NE 803 St., Old Town (non-contiguous parcels) provided by the petition dated January 14, 2021 which is located within an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA-4) zoning district to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 13-10-13-4584-0000-0210 (107 N. E. 801 Street, Old Town; Suwannee River Oaks Unrecorded S/D; Parcel 21; .493 acres). (Commission District 2)

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read the Variance request made by Marvin and Phyllis Hunt to the Board. She said there had been some phone calls inquiring.

Ms. Joyce Hodge appeared before the Board and stated that there are 27 lots in the subdivision, she has lived on her property for seven years. Her concern is for the property value and she wants to make sure that Marvin Hunt's barn is maintained so it does not decrease the value. She does not oppose the residential development if the aesthetics make it pretty. She said the storage barn is not near Mr. Hunt's residence. She wants to make sure it is used for personal storage only and not his business equipment. She saw the sign posted on the property and noticed trees being cut down and dirt being hauled in. She said that Mr. Hunt spoke to her and her husband weeks later and explained everything. She hopes that it will be attractive in appearance and he can plant some shrubs and paint it an attractive color. She said that Mr. Hunt had met with her and explained his plans for the storage barn. She said she agreed if he did not store his house moving equipment in this barn.

Commissioner Mills said that he has always know that Mr. hunt stored his equipment on his property in town so he didn't believe that would be an issue.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to approve the Variance requested by Marvin and Phyllis Hunt. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

Mr. Leon Wright appeared before the Board to speak on the Hunt Permit. He said the improvements to the property also shifts the property out of flood potential. He said this barn is a new building.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to go out of the Public Hearings. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

RESOLUTION 2021-10

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO APPROVE A SPECIAL EXCEPTION TO BE GRANTED, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 4.4.5 SUBPARAGRAPH (9) OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS TO PERMIT ONE RECERATIONAL VEHICLE IN AN AGRICULTURAL (A-4) ZONING DISTRICT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PETITION DATED OCTOBER 24, 2020. *Frasca*

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to continue and table Resolution 2021-10.

Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved to continue and table the request.

RESOLUTION 2021-11

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 SUBPARAGRAPH (4) OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS TO PERMIT ONE RECERATIONAL VEHICLE IN AN ENVRIONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA (ESA-4) ZONING DISTRICT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PETITION DATED DECEMBER 20, 2020. *Wan*

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read Resolution 2021-11 in support of Vincent and Leslie Wan to the Board by title only.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve Resolution 2021-11. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

RESOLUTION 2021-12

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 SUBPARAGRAPH (4) OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS TO PERMIT ONE RECREATIONAL VEHICLE IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA (ESA-4) ZONING DISTRICT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PETITION DATED JANUARY 11, 2021.

Miller

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read Resolution 2021-12 in support of Michael Miller to the Board by title only.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve Resolution 2021-12. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

RESOLUTION 2021-13

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO APPROVE A VARIANCE TO BE GRANTED, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 12.3.1 OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, TO GRANT A VARIANCE OF THREE FEET ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE HOUSE AND THREE FEET ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE HOUSE TO ALLOW FOR A WALK-AROUND DECK, WHICH IS LOCATED WITHIN A RESIDENTIAL, (MIXED) SINGLE FAMILY/MOBILE HOME (RSF/MH-2) ZONING DISTRICT, AS PROVIDED IN THE PETITION DATED DECEMBER 28, 2020. ***Fremen***

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read Resolution 2021-13 in support of Toni Fremen to the Board by title only. Commissioner Storey made the motion to approve Resolution 2021-13. Commissioner Mills seconded. Board approved.

RESOLUTION 2021-14

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO APPROVE A VARIANCE TO BE GRANTED, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 12.3.1 OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, TO GRANT A VARIANCE FOR SETBACKS ON THE NORTH AND EAST SIDES OF THE PROPERTY FROM 25 FEET TO 15 FEET, WHICH IS LOCATED WITHIN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE (ESA-4) ZONING DISTRICT, AS PROVIDED IN THE PETITION DATED JANUARY 13, 2021.

Musgrove

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read Resolution 2021-14 in support of Linda Musgrove to the Board by title only.

Commissioner Storey made the motion to approve Resolution 2021-14. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

RESOLUTION 2021-15

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO APPROVE A VARIANCE TO BE GRANTED, AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 12.3.1 OF THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, TO GRANT A VARIANCE FOR THE PLACEMENT OF A 40' X 60' ENCLOSED STORAGE BARN TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE RESIDENCE, WHICH IS LOCATED WITHIN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE (ESA-4) ZONING DISTRICT, AS PROVIDED IN THE PETITION DATED JANUARY 14, 2021.

Hunt

Ms. Tammi Clyatt read Resolution 2021-15 in support of Marvin and Phillis Hunt to the Board by title only.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to approve Resolution 2021-15. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

KEITH SEGAR, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Mr. Keith Segar had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Greg Bailey had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

JERED LIZOTTE, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Mr. Jered Lizotte had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Ms. Cindy Bellot appeared before the Board and expressed her thanks for all their support.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Mr. Steve Fremmen appeared before the Board and requested they review the handout and they can discuss the decisions made by code enforcement and the Magistrate. He said the Court Order states that no crab traps are to be stored on this property. He said there is a fine of \$100.00 per day if the Mr. Naveen Rana violates this order.

Commissioner Hatch asked how long is the order in effect.

Mr. Fremmen replied forever.

Attorney Osteen added that he received an email from Attorney Ray Curtis who is representing Mr. Rana. He said they may file an appeal with the appellate court. He informed them that the main issue is the smell of the crab traps. He suggested they should try and figure a way to address this and he will submit this to the Board.

He said Mr. Rana would like to meet in the middle if the Board will agree that he can store the crab traps 30 days prior and 30 days after stone crab season.

He said that Mr. Rana indicated that he would pay the daily fine amount and consider it a cost of doing business.

Commissioner Mills asked who sets the price of the fines.

Attorney Osteen replied the fines can range from \$100.00 to \$500.00 per day and at the Magistrate's discretion and are set by the Magistrate. He said the Board can re-petition the Hearing Officer and request him to raise the rate of the fine per day. He said that if Mr. Rana were to appeal the current order may not be enforced until the appellate court makes a ruling. He said the Order may be stayed.

Mr. Fremen appeared before the Board on another matter regarding Mr. James Crown. He said the fine is \$100.00 per day from January 10, 2021 and will continue until the site is cleaned up. Attorney Osteen said the fines have begun to add up. He said the county can seek a lien for the unpaid fines and foreclose on the property.

Mr. Fremen said the fines are near \$3,000.00 now and pointed out that this property is on the water, so it is a very valuable property.

Commissioner Hatch said they should look at the assessed property value.

Mr. Fremen said there has been no attempt to clean up the property so far.

Mr. Fremen said the fines have accumulated at \$100.00 per day since January 10, 2021.

Attorney Osteen said that even if he cleans up the property, he will still owe the fines

Commissioner Hatch asked when does the Board stop assessing fines and start the foreclosure process.

Mr. Fremen said that if Mr. Crown is in violation of the Order that the Board can bring them back to court for a higher fine.

Commissioner Hatch asked what is the dollar amount of fines that should be reached before the Board starts foreclosure.

Attorney Osteen asked for guidance from the Board on what they want to do.

Commissioner Hatch suggested to decide when to foreclose per the property value.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion that when the fines reach the tax roll value of the property then they should foreclose. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

STEVE HUTCHISON, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Steve Hutchison appeared before the Board and informed them he cannot find the corner markers on the donated property on Chavous Road.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to get a survey on the donated property. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

DWAYNE CHAUNCEY, MOSQUITO CONTROL DIRECTOR

Mr. Dwayne Chauncey had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

MICHAEL LATSON, SOLID WASTE

Mr. Michael Latson appeared before the Board and discussed an issue at the transfer station. He said he needs a tag for another trailer per DEP regulations to haul garbage in. He said that the Transfer Station is a Direct Drop county. He said there are only 2 Direct Drop locations in the State of Florida and DEP can inspect them at any time. He said there is a possibility that DEP can impose fines on the county or lock the gate if the county is found in violation. He said they were hauling garbage twice on Monday and Tuesday to Greenville. They are now up to three trips on Monday and four trips on Tuesday. He tries to keep the weight under 80,000 lbs. per load. He said he needs a trailer and a part time driver to help haul and burn garbage.

County Manager Duane Cannon said the Board will need to discuss the county vehicle tag registrations and if they will transition from the Finance office to Human Resources. He said the Finance Department needs the property numbers for the insurance. He said that Ms. Melissa Long told him this responsibility was given to the Finance Department over the past three years. He said that Ms. Jackie Johnson found some old information. He has a number to put on the insurance and can pay for tag at Tax Collector with a county credit card. He said they need to do this for an ambulance too. He said they will need to address these duties in the upcoming workshop.

Manager Cannon said he will get the tags if the Board approves.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to allow the County Manager to get the tags that are needed. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING

Mr. Leon Wright appeared before the Board to discuss the solar farm information from the North Florida Regional Planning Council. He said they outlined district that solar farms are allowed however, ESA and commercial were left out. He said the Impact Fee calculation will need to be re calculated.

Commissioner Hatch said this is a recommendation only and that everyone should review this.

Mr. Wright wanted to discuss another matter with the Board. He said the legal fee is \$72,661.94 for Broadband Extreme Cable TV company in Suwannee. He said the Board can charge for this as non-permitted work fines and violations. He said the Board may get phone calls because the Cable TV company is notifying their customers. He said they don't want to pay the fines and feel they should not have to.

Commissioner Hatch suggested the Board decide what to charge for the fine, either the full amount or something more reasonable for a small business.

Mr. Wright pointed out that what they did was not reasonable.

Commissioner Mills said they should pay the full price back to the county.

Commissioner Stephenson said they were supposed to find out the cost to the county and then decide what to do.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion that the Broadband Extreme Cable TV company in Suwannee will need to pay the full cost back to the county. Commissioner Valentine seconded. Board approved.

Mr. Wright said regarding the mobile home park, he is still reviewing.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency Services Director Darian Brown requested the Board extend the State of Emergency for COVID-19 by approving Resolution 2021-17.

Commissioner Storey made the motion to approve Resolution 2021-17. Commissioner Mills seconded. Board approved.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about a letter that was received against an EMS driver. Director Brown suggested they not talk about this in public as the matter is under investigation. He said they can discuss in private.

Mr. Chuck Elton gave the Board an update on the 911 system. He said the upgraded system now allows a person to text to 911 if they can't make a phone call. He said the operator can text back. He said that if the operator can hear sounds over the phone and registers the incoming number. He said that before the system would only register 800 ft from the cell tower for the location of the caller. He said the system now registers within 5 ft of the caller. Uber and pizza delivery companies do use this as a tracking tool. He said per Florida Statute they must be able to track calls if someone is on the line and continue to track two minutes after the call has ended. He said the next generation 911 system will be in the cloud. He said that many rural areas cannot afford to purchase the system. He said the state is implementing this system within regions of service. He said the county can upgrade the maps online and the maps will show on the screen and can be used of mutual aid. He said you will be able to transfer calls and information by the cloud to another agency for mutual aid. He said an agreement may be needed between agencies. Commissioner Hatch said we currently have an EMS agreement with Gilchrist and Levy county to help each other.

Mr. Chuck Elton said we currently have one with Taylor County and we can transfer calls between the two counties.

Mr. Chuck Elton said that regarding mapping people must come to the Emergency Operations Center and get a 911 address for their property for the system to work properly.

Mr. Scott Pendarvis appeared before the Board and informed them that he is resigning his position as EMS Chief as of February 22, 2021. He said that since 2015 he has been over the communications system maintenance and that he is the only one who knows how to maintain and repair the system. He said he would like to make an offer to remain under a service contract as a part time employee and maintain the system for the county. He said he has terms to present if the Board agrees with this offer. He said that the Fire Department, EMS Department, Sheriff's Department, County Road Department and the School System all use this communication system. He said that ICOM charges \$70,000.00 annually to provide maintenance for the system.

Attorney Osteen asked Mr. Pendarvis to give a copy to him, the County Manager and the Board. Commissioner Hatch said he appreciates all that Mr. Pendarvis has done. Mr. Pendarvis said the cost could be \$25.45 per hour if maintenance is required. Attorney Osteen asked who will contact him if the system has a problem. Mr. Pendarvis said whoever is experiencing the problem they can call. Commissioner Stephenson asked if you are working in Perry for Taylor County, how are you going to address our needs? Mr. Pendarvis said he would have remote access and other contacts to help. He said he can do this off site. He said he monitors this continuously now. He said he can check on it remotely at no charge, but if he must perform any work then he will charge. Attorney Osteen said he does have stipulations and fees in this proposed service agreement. Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to table and review the proposal by Mr. Pendarvis. Commissioner Storey seconded. The Board approved to table and review the proposal.

Commissioner Stephenson said after talking to the Clerk and the Finance Department He would like to put a hiring freeze on non-essential hiring within the county until we get the finances straight. He said he can't justify hiring more people when they can't pay the ones they have on payroll now.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion to put a hiring freeze on non-essential hiring within the county.

Commissioner Mills clarified that this should be amended to state non budgeted people. If they are leaving and we need them, and they are budgeted they should be replaced.

Commissioner Hatch called for a second to the motion and then the Board can discuss.

Commissioner Valentine seconded.

Commissioner Stephenson said he understands Commissioner Mills and some positions may be budgeted and not filled but we are surviving without this person.

Commissioner Mills said the money is there whether you hire someone or not

Commissioner Stephenson asked then why can't we pay employees now and why did we have to do something special so the insurance would not be cancelled?

Commissioner Mills said that doesn't have anything to do with the Budget he said it just wasn't done.

Commissioner Hatch asked if Commissioner Stephenson wanted to amend his motion.

Commissioner Stephenson said an ambulance driver is an essential worker and we need them versus a person working a desk job.

Commissioner Storey said that we need certain people like the EMT, Paramedics and Fire Fighters. He said we need to pay the insurance and the bills. He said these are essential things we need. He said that if it has already been budgeted and we have the money and we need employees for the position then the position should be filled. He said that he knows that Mr. Hutchison and Mr. Latson both need more employees now. He said the Board should fill these positions if they have the money.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board has discussed and needs to vote on this.

Attorney Osteen asked for a definition of essential employee.

DUANE CANNON, COUNTY MANAGER

Manager Cannon asked a question regarding hiring new employees. He spoke of budgeted positions versus essential emergency services positions or essential daily operation like Road Department and Solid Waste. He wanted to know what to approve or hold off on at this time. Commissioner Mills stated that Fire, EMS, Road Department and Solid Waste staff are essential. Attorney Osteen asked for a definition of essential employee. Commissioner Mills said that essential is what you need. Commissioner Hatch said that we need all our employees. Commissioner Mills said he thinks that they are not talking about desk people. Commissioner Stephenson stated we need Ambulance and Road Department staff. He said if equipment breaks down, then we need the money for repairs. He said the Board needs to hold off until they find out more. Commissioner Hatch said before they advertise for anything new the County Manager should ask department heads what is essential for them. He said that the Road Department, Solid Waste and EMS are all short staffed. Attorney Osteen recommended they look at the employee chart of budgeted positions and define for the minutes what is essential and non-essential for the operation of this county. Manager Cannon said that they can do this. Commissioner Hatch said the Board should decide to advertise or not based on Manager Cannon's recommendations. Commissioner Mills said they should not hire new people unless they are replacing people that are leaving.

Manager Cannon said that the Road Department has already been advertising for a new hire to replace someone who left this position last year. Commissioner Mills said that's okay because it is a replacement. Commissioner Hatch said the Board took that position salary and gave raises to the employees. Commissioner Hatch said the position went from full time then to part time as needed position now it needs to be a full-time position. Commissioner Hatch asked if the Board wanted to hire at the Road Department or not. Commissioner Mills said this is not a new hire. Commissioner Stephenson said he has made a motion for a hiring freeze except for essential workers. He said we need to vote. Commissioner Mills said we have money in the budget for this certain position, and this is a rehire of a person that has been gone awhile. He said we need to know about our finances. There should be no new hires. Commissioner Stephenson said he has spoken to Mr. Hutchison about the situation. He asked if he could get by until we can figure this out. He said the Mr. Hutchison said he could get by for now. He said we are struggling as a county to survive. Commissioner Mills said we are struggling in a lot of areas. He said we have money we just don't know where to put it. He said that if Mr. Hutchison can get by for now without this person that's fine. He said the money for this position has been there since Ms. Sylvia Ruth retired.

Commissioner Stephenson reminded the Board that they couldn't make payroll when he took office. He said they need to figure this out.
Commissioner Mills said the some of the money has not been distributed like it should.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion for no new hires other than essential workers and the department heads can bring to the board if they think it's essential or not. Commissioner Valentine seconded. Board approved.

Manager Cannon asked for clarification about the Cost Accountant position that has been advertised. He said it was talked about last year to oversee board operation and have a second set of eyes and to help with finance. He asked if the Board wanted to stop or continue with this. Commissioner Mills stated that he is against hiring this position.
Commissioner Mills made the motion to give the money, that Interim Clerk Melissa Long gave to the Board in December 2020, back to the Clerk Finance Department so they can do what they need to do.

Commissioner Hatch asked what money is he talking about.
Commissioner Mills clarified the money that the Interim Clerk gave this money to the Board to hire this Cost Accountant person.

Commissioner Hatch said he agrees with him but asked who is going to do the job.
Commissioner Mills said this is the Clerk's business to hire someone to do the job.
Commissioner Hatch asked if the Board wants their business handled in house.
Commissioner Mills replied he wants this to go back to the Clerk's office because that is where it was, and the new Clerk has a new team who can do this job and keep us informed.
Commissioner Hatch said he hopes so.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to give the money back to the Clerk of Court for the Finance Department. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.

Commissioner Stephenson said he does not want to move forward with that position at this time, but he still wants to be able to look at everything.

Commissioner Storey said the Board needs to get behind the new Clerk and let her staff work on this. He said the Board needs to give them a chance and give them our support. He said we also need to get behind the new Sheriff and support him.

Commissioner Stephenson said he does support the new Clerk, but thinks the Board needs a second set of eyes on our side of the fence.

Commissioner Hatch asked if the Clerk would accept the job duties because they have not been described as to what they are. Fixed Assets, Insurance, Property Numbers, etc.

Clerk Barbie Higginbotham appeared before the Board and stated that she has only been in office for a month, but things are moving forward daily. She said that her staff are dealing with issues every day. She said they have bank statements printed out and need to balance all the accounts since 2019 when CRI left in order to see where we are. She said that Ms. Jacki Johnson is experienced in finance and is doing a great job.

Ms. Jacki Johnson asked the Board to clarify what are the new duties that the Board is wanting the Clerk to handle because there has been very little specific information about this so far. Manager Cannon replied the duties that have been discussed over the past year are the items that have not been handled in the past. For instance, input for payroll, oversee expenses, monthly reports, insurance for equipment and employees.

Commissioner Stephenson said that these things were at one time in the Board office and then put on the Clerk by the Board.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said that the fixed assets for the county is in poor shape and will be a large job to bring it up to current. She said the county has a lot of old stuff and equipment that should have been depreciated and phased out over the years, but everything is still on the books. She said that right now money is the priority. She said they can assign property numbers, pay the bills and get a maintenance system implemented. She said to inventory, and purge items will be the big job after the finances are up to date. She said that recording components on fixed assets and depreciation must be done. She said the Health Insurance bill was previously being paid late.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said that the Finance office is not the Human Resource Department and they do not hire and fire employees or handle open enrollment and that receiving bids will be the Board's duty. She said the Board will give the contract or voucher to the Clerk on time and we will pay the bill. The information is needed on time. She said that payroll is a full-time job and will not have time for extra duties. She said we have someone who does payroll. She said the Clerk's Finance Department is also the Board's Finance Department. She said we work for you and keep records from the information that you provide. She said we are the Clerk and Comptroller for the county per statute requirement.

Attorney Osteen said there was a time, in the Finance office, when the Board could not get their questions answered. He asked if the Board will be able to get answers in the future. He said a system and communication process needs to be established.

Ms. Jacki Johnson and Clerk Higginbotham both said this can be done.

Attorney Osteen clarified that the Board wanted to address this old issue.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said she understands.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board wanted to put someone in place to take the load off the Finance Department.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said that the Finance Department must do this already so the Board would be doubling the work. She said they need to catch up on paying bills and revenue needs to be addressed. She said there is data entry to catch up on and we are all working on this diligently. She said the Clerk wants the Board to have confidence in the Finance Department. She said they are trying to get answers for everyone.

Commissioner Hatch asked who will handle inmate medical.

Manager Cannon said the Sheriff's Department was paying this out of their budget. He said this is a Board responsibility.

Attorney Osteen said the Board needs to meet with the Sheriff about some issues. He said that per statute the money comes out of general fund of the county.

He said that inmates get expensive medical care some are on dialysis and cancer treatment and the taxpayers pay for this. He said the Sheriff wants to discuss this with the Board.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion to set up a Workshop with the Sheriff on February 18, 2021 at 11:00 AM. Commissioner Mills seconded. Board approved.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said she has worked with the Sheriff in Gilchrist County before and knows how to handle inmate medical.

Manager Cannon asked for clarification of the inmate medical question. He said that the Interim Clerk, Melissa Long, had talked about putting inmate medical under the Human Resource Department. He said they will need to talk about all the Human Resource job duties at the workshop and clarify them for everyone. He said it was mentioned when Ms. Melissa Long returned to her previous job as Human Resource Supervisor that she would get a raise for taking on more duties. He said he would like to get clarification about this raise.

Commissioner Stephenson said that he was told that the Board voted, in a meeting, for this raise and for her to take on other duties.

Manager Cannon said we will look back over the minutes.

Commissioner Stephenson said we should not move forward with a raise until we know.

Attorney Osteen said the Sheriff will look over his calendar and let them know if he can attend this workshop.

Commissioner Mills said that Ms. Long's raise was not voted on by the Board.

Commissioner Stephenson said he doesn't know because he hasn't seen the minutes for review.

Manager Cannon said he will review the minutes.

Commissioner Mills said that it was talked about, but they did not vote on the raise.

Commissioner Hatch stated that Ms. Long had a contract to come back from the Interim Clerk position to her regular job position and regular job duties.

Manager Cannon said that an extra person was going to be hired to help with the extra duties.

Human Resource Supervisor Melissa Long stated the Board will need to look over the minutes.

Manager Cannon requested the Board approve Ms. Kay McCallister to sit on the (TDC) Tourist Development Council Board.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve her appointment to the TDC.

Commissioner Mills seconded. Board approved.

Manager Cannon spoke about the letter from Broadband Xtreme Services Cable TV Company in Suwannee.

Manager Cannon spoke about the solid waste assessment and said that all the data has been turned in and they will need to set up a workshop to discuss with the Board. Commissioner Hatch said he would like a spreadsheet of the work and changes and the money that was brought in.

Mr. Jeff Hardison asked for clarification of the vote to give money back to the Clerk Finance Department that Interim Clerk Melissa Long had given to the Board in December of 2020. Attorney Osteen asked the Clerk for verification. It was clarified that Commissioner Mills made the motion to give money back to the Clerk Finance Department that Interim Clerk Melissa Long had given to the Board in December of 2020. Commissioner Storey seconded to give the money back to the Clerk.

Commissioner Hatch had asked if the Clerk would take on the extra duties.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Ms. Gail Carter had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Ms. Holly Houghton was present via telephone. She had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

MELISSA LONG, HUMAN RESOURCE SUPERVISOR

Ms. Melissa Long had nothing to discuss with the Board at this time.

MICHAEL OSTEEN, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Attorney Osteen asked the Board if anyone has an issue with his duties and or his contract to let him know.

Commissioner Hatch said he did not ask to see his contract but has heard there were issues with him moving around the room and not staying seated during the Board meetings.

Attorney Osteen explained that if someone comes to the meetings and wants to speak about issues, he tries to speak with the person prior to the meeting to resolve any conflict. He stated plus I have ADHD and I take medicine for this. He said he wanted to clear the air since everyone was here to address any issue.

Attorney Osteen said he will get with the Clerk about some corrections to the minutes of January 21, 2021.

Commissioner Hatch requested everyone gets their corrections to the minutes back to the Clerk staff as soon as possible in an email.

Commissioner Hatch said that Human Resource Supervisor Melissa Long has sent the Board Organizational Meeting Minutes through the Board Meeting of December 2020 to be reviewed. Commissioner Hatch said they need to look over the subdivision minutes. He asked how the Board would prefer to handle the minutes for review. He asked if they would like to review them monthly or all at once to review.

Attorney Osteen asked how many meeting minutes there are to be reviewed.
Commissioner Hatch replied from June 18, 2020 through December 17, 2020.
Commissioner Storey said he would prefer one month at a time.
Commissioner Hatch recommended they do the Organizational Meeting forward and then the other can be reviewed monthly until caught up.
Asst. to the County Manager and Grant Coordinator Cheyenne Hutchinson reminded the Board that they have Budget Hearings and Work Shops to review and approve as well.
Commissioner Hatch recommended the board review two months at a time.

Attorney Osteen asked if anyone had looked at the property on Chavous Road.
Manager Cannon replied that Mr. Steve Hutchison wants to get a survey done for this.

Commissioner Stephenson asked for clarification that the Board will review Budget Hearing Minutes and Workshop Minutes as well from the prior Interim Clerk.
Commissioner Hatch responded yes.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Clerk Higginbotham appeared before the Board and informed them she had met with Mr. Richard Powell about the upcoming audit. He said that if he can get good records it will be completed by August or September 2021 for the Annual Financial Report.
She said that the Re Employment and Sales Tax hasn't been paid since March of 2020. She said they gave a deadline of February 16, 2021 to meet or the state can revoke the Sales Tax Exemption. She said there was an Insurance billing issue that has been addressed by the Finance department. She said the bill for January had been received by Ms. Long on January 02, 2021 and was due on January 01, 2021. That bill did not get forwarded to the Clerk on time and it was paid late. She said that the February bill is also getting paid now and in the future the insurance bill will be paid on time. She said that the bank accounts have not been balanced since September of 2019. She said the Finance department is working on this as well.
She said that Ms. Della Rhymes has been working with the Department of State regarding Ordinances that were not filed previously. She said the Board has a list in their packet to review.
Commissioner Hatch said this matter is not as bad as it has been portrayed.
Attorney Osteen said he will help with this matter.
Commissioner Hatch asked who gets the insurance bill.
Manager Cannon said that Mr. Brad Hoard sends this information to Human Resources and the County Manager. He said that the March payment will be on time. He said they will talk more about this in the Workshop. He said he will forward the bill to the Finance Department.
Commissioner Stephenson said that we need to get the finances straightened out and get this moving forward. He said you can't get a clear answer if the records are not clear. He said that Munis is an old computer system and suggested they get something newer for record keeping. He said someone will install the program and you will have tech support and training if we get something newer.

Clerk Higginbotham agreed that sounded good, but Ms. Jacki Johnson will explain more. Ms. Jacki Johnson said that changing an accounting system is huge and they would need more staff even if all records were up to date. She said at this time we don't have good records to input into a new computer system. She said she can't tell you the correct balance of revenue for 2020 at this time. She said that everything must be updated before we can get a new system. She said she has done this before in Gilchrist County and it is a time-consuming project. She said that county government is more difficult than running a regular business. She said that many payment years overlap.

Commissioner Hatch said that 2020 must get closed out first then they should be able to find the money. He said that September is not acceptable for the audit.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said that that the CRI consultants contract ended in September of 2019. She said that no one has kept up with the records after they left.

Commissioner Hatch said 2020 needs to be closed. Then start working on 2021. He said the bills are paid, the employees are paid, the loans are paid from the 2020 money.

He said that some things have not been paid because of neglect and everything need to be reconciled.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said the issue is that 2021 records and operations are critical. She has done some research into 2020.

Commissioner Hatch said that Munis will only hold two budget years and must be freed up and we need to be in the right budget year.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said we need more staff to have auditable records for Powell. Commissioner Hatch asked how the Board can help the Finance Department.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said that consultants are needed to help catch this up.

Clerk Higginbotham said that CRI has worked for the Board in the past and they are familiar with the system and the records and have knowledge of the operations.

Commissioner Hatch asked if CRI was helping the Finance Department currently.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said no.

Commissioner Mills said the Board needs to give them permission to get whomever they need to help.

Commissioner Hatch recommended they find someone to help with 2020 records present them to the Board and let's move forward.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said they will try to keep the bill down and get some expert help because the accounting records are all over the place.

Commissioner Stephenson said the Munis computer system is old and only about four counties in Florida still use this. He recommends the Board get a newer computer program.

Commissioner Hatch said the job was not being done and all the functions of Munis was not being used efficiently.

Ms. Jacki Johnson said that Munis will work if it's used properly. She said that staff must input the data so that it is easier to get an accurate report for every department.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Valentine had nothing further to discuss.

Commissioner Storey had nothing further to discuss.

Commissioner Mills directed a question to Commissioner Hatch. He said that a lot of Chairman have come and gone. He asked why do you think that you have the reason or power or authority to go into the Manager's office and yell and rant and rave at the County Manager. He said you are making accusations and Ms. Melissa is making accusations and say that he doesn't need to worry about the other four Commissioners and that you are his boss.

Commissioner Hatch replied I am his boss.

Commissioner Mills said there are four more here and y'all got concerned about us going to talk to him. He said that I can talk to the County Manager anytime I want to and it's not your business or yours Ms. Long. He said that I am a Commissioner too.

Commissioner Hatch said you doing the same to me.

Commissioner Mills said you are out of line and the Board knows you are out of line.

Commissioner Hatch said you are out of line.

Commissioner Stephenson said this should not be discussed now per the attorney.

Commissioner Mills said I'm discussing what I want to.

Commissioner Hatch said that's your problem.

Commissioner Mills said you can rant and rave but the other four of us don't matter.

Commissioner Hatch said he did not say that, but he will fulfill his duty to the citizens.

Commissioner Mills said it is not your duty to bless out employees.

Commissioner Hatch said you have done this a number of times.

Commissioner Mills said I'm calling you out on what you do.

Commissioner Hatch replied that he called the County Manager out on what he done.

Commissioner Mills said that he doesn't scream at the employees and he doesn't curse at employees and he doesn't tell them not to worry about other Commissioners.

Attorney Osteen recommended they stop talking about this.

Commissioner Mills posed the question to Attorney Osteen this may not be the place to talk about this, but where is the place and when does this stop.

Commissioner Mills said to Commissioner Hatch that you are trying to run the County Manager off.

Commissioner Hatch said he was questioning the County Manager's paycheck. He said he started this job with no experience and is getting the same pay as the previous County Manager.

Commissioner Mills said that Mr. Cannon has been working under the prior County Manager Tim Alexander as the Asst. County Manager for years and has currently been doing this same job at the same price as Tim Alexander.

Attorney Osteen requested the Board minutes reflect that he has advised the Commissioners not to discuss this matter now. He said the Board can take his advice or leave it.

Commissioner Mills said he will take the advice of Attorney Osteen.

Commissioner Stephenson had nothing further to discuss.

Commissioner Hatch had nothing further to discuss.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. David Sanders appeared before the Board and asked about the need for cleaning up properties around the county. He asked who decides what needs to be cleaned up. He asked if the public must complain about it first.

Commissioner Hatch said that some people do call to complain.

Mr. Steve Fremen said there are currently 61 active code enforcement cases.

Commissioner Hatch said they are not actively looking for issues.

Mr. Sanders said there are a lot of places and many inside the city limits. He asked how to deal with this. He asked if people should talk to the city about this and let the city govern this.

Attorney Osteen said he pays someone to clean the lot and pick up trash behind his office in town

Mr. Sanders said when a place burns down and is then condemned, when does it get cleaned up.

Commissioner Hatch suggested he complain to code enforcement about the matter. He said this issue is everywhere around the county. He said the Board is talking about placing liens and foreclosures to help deal with the matter.

Mr. Leon Wright said people can call on phone and file a report if they don't want to make a written statement.

Mr. Kevin Duraski said there is a lot of trashy properties and he thinks there should be some effort put forth by county staff as well. Maybe the Sheriff or EMS or County staff can report this when they are moving around the county. He said the tattletell mentality causes neighbors to feud.

Commissioner Hatch said that the workload is an issue for county staff.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Storey made the motion to adjourn at 12:25 PM. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.



ATTEST:


Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA



Mark Hatch, Chairman

PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decided 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.