

WORKSHOP

Board & Sheriff

Dixie County School Board Meeting Room
February 18, 2021 – 11:00 AM

While adhering to the CDC Guidelines and 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 the Dixie County Emergency Declaration 2020-27. The Board will meet and limit access by staff and the public to the meeting room. 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
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
Jacki Johnson, Chief Financial Officer
Della Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The workshop was called to order at 11:00 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.

Commissioner Hatch opened the floor for discussion.

Sheriff Darby Butler appeared before the Board and thanked them for the opportunity to meet with them and speak about some issues and ideas.

County Manager Duane Cannon said the reason for this workshop was to discuss Inmate Medical, Finances and the Jail.

Sheriff Butler said that Inmate Medical has been an issue in the past and he would like to hear the Board's thoughts on this. He said he is here with an open mind and an open heart.

Commissioner Hatch suggested the Board discuss Inmate Medical.

Manager Cannon said the Inmate Medical account was last done in 2018. The Sheriff has said that this is a responsibility of the Board. He said the Board needs to decide who will take on this responsibility between the Human Resource Department or the Clerk Finance.

He said Ms. Lisa Sumrall, who works for EMS, can help with this because she understands how to do this and is certified and has experience with insurance billing. She knows the language and coding needed between the hospital and the county. He said the county has a budget for hospitalization and medical of \$200,000.00. He said \$120,000.00 is for hospital and \$80,000.00 is for doctor.

County Attorney Michael Osteen informed the Board a person in jail with medical issue can be released if they are not high risk. He said the medical bills of inmates in the county jail are paid from the General Fund of the county. He said the Sheriff will work with us and identify the medical needs of inmates so they can find an alternate route instead of housing the inmate.

Manager Cannon said they also have the option of inmate insurance to cover some bills and to reimburse the county.

Asst. to the County Manager/Grant Coordinator Ms. Cheyenne Hutchinson added that this can help cover a hospital bill and doctor bills that may exceed the budget.

Commissioner Hatch said that does not fix the inmate.

Sheriff Butler said he will get the 2017-2018 numbers.

Manager Cannon said the cost for inmate medical was from \$230,000.00 to \$240,000.00.

Sheriff Butler said that the Budget for 2017 was \$577,000.00 and the Inmate Medical in 2018 was \$212,000.00. He said it is hard to budget for this expense because you never know the inmates' medical condition until they arrive at the jail. He said he would like to work within the statutes to find an alternative method to handle this expense. He said he will work with the Judge for recommendations and coordinate with all agencies to move toward early release of the inmate if possible. However, if the Judge says no to early release then the inmate will stay in jail. He said the law must be upheld. He said that people may try to abuse this alternative method to get out of jail early. He said they will move toward a speedy trial to help with less time in jail.

Commissioner Hatch asked about the inmate Insurance to help offset the expenses.

Manager Cannon said the Insurance premium is \$49,000.00.

Commissioner Stephenson reminded the Board that the previous County Manager Tim Alexander had negotiated with Doctor's Memorial Hospital in Perry, Florida to get reduced rates for inmate medical care. He asked if anyone had look into this as well.

Manager Cannon said he had not.

Sheriff Deputy Danny Forehand said he did not know if the Sheriff's office had or not.

Commissioner Hatch said the doctor they use is at North Florida Regional Hospital in Gainesville, Florida.

Commissioner Stephenson said that Dixie County had helped the hospital in Perry, Florida get established and maybe they would return the favor and help with lower rates for inmate medical.

Ms. Cheyenne Hutchinson said that Crime Help Services also helps with reduced medical bills. She said you can reach them through the Sheriff Association link.

Manager Cannon said Hunt's is the name of the Insurance Company.

Sheriff Butler said that there are other vendors available and he is looking into them as well as asking other Sheriff Departments how they handle inmate medical. He said the county could use an outside vendor to help with this if they chose. He said they can hire a nurse to help at the jail. He explained that some inmates are transferred to the county jail by other agencies. For example, if the Florida Highway Patrol works an auto wreck with a DUI and sends the person to the county jail then he feels that FHP should help with the inmate medical bill because it is their inmate. He said that FHP will send a person to North Florida Hospital in Gainesville for care and the hospital will ask, at the time of admission, where the inmate will go after medical is given and their records may reflect Dixie County as the receiving jail. He said that any arresting agency can push the inmate onto your county for medical billing.

Attorney Osteen asked who within the county will receive these medical bills.

Sheriff Butler said he doesn't know the hospital billing procedure and said whoever helps with inmate medical expenses.

Commissioner Stephenson asked who is responsible for paying inmate medical bills the Sheriff Department or the Board of County Commissioners.

Sheriff Butler replied that this is moving from the Sheriff Department over to the Board of County Commissioners. He said he doesn't have staff or the Budget to deal with this expense.

Commissioner Stephenson said he felt this should remain with the Sheriff Department because they know more about the inmates in the jail and their needs.

Sheriff Butler said he is trying to avoid requesting more money for the Sheriff Department Budget. He said that qualified people will need to handle this process. He recommended the Board employ someone to do this in order to save money.

Commissioner Stephenson said inmate medical should be a joint effort.

Sheriff Butler said he will try to do early release when he can. He suggested the Board handle inmate medical by either hiring someone or outsource to a vendor.

Mr. James Ward asked how the jail is dealing with COVID. He asked if the inmates time in jail is limited due to quicker sentencing or are, they are being held longer due to the courts being slower to process cases. He asked if the state or the county would be held responsible for the medical expenses due to the COVID restrictions placed on everyone.

Sheriff Butler replied he didn't know, but the Department of Corrections inmates will be moved and held for short time. He said the Dixie County Jail is overbooked and they are slower to be moved.

Manager Cannon recommended they see Ms. Jacki Johnson regarding the future budget and Ms. Lisa Sumrall to help with billing.

Chief Financial Officer Jacki Johnson said that these inmate medical bills have not been paid since 2018. She said they need to know how many of them to pay. She said that Hunt Insurance has a time limit for claims to be submitted for payment. She said these bills need to be processed on time or the insurance will not cover the bill. She said she had negotiated with Shands Hospital in the past regarding discounted

inmate medical. She said the hospital would give the county the Medicaid rate. She said at this time many bills are past due, and they will need to negotiate on these to clear up the records and accounts. Manager Cannon suggested that Ms. Lisa Sumrall could help with that as well.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board can vote on this issue at the Regular Board Meeting tonight at 6:00 PM.

Commissioner Stephenson asked what Ms. Sumrall does now for a job.

Director of Emergency Service Darian Brown said Ms. Sumrall assists with the EMS billing.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if she is full time will she have extra time to do this.

Director Brown replied that she was hired to help Division Chief Scott Garner with Grant writing and billing. He said she helps Ms. Lola Butler, Ms. Virginia Martin and Mr. Jason Lemmerman. He said she has experience with Pharmaceutical and Insurance billing.

Commissioner Stephenson said the Sheriff Department should have people looking at these billings as well.

Sheriff Butler agreed and said he will keep the Board updated.

Commissioner Hatch asked the Sheriff how he will address the littering problem around the county.

Sheriff Butler said he has talked with the Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) about helping with this problem. He said it will need to be a joint effort by everyone. He said they will be looking into the vacant properties around the county that are being used for dump sites and try to address this issue too. He said he will be using other agencies to help with this and the after-hours activity at the roll off sites. He said they can enforce trespassing after hours once a plan is put in place.

Commissioner Valentine said there has always been a problem with Taylor County dumping their garbage at the Jena roll off site in Dixie County. He said a dump sticker would help with this problem.

Sheriff Butler agreed that a permit or sticker to define residents of the county would help with dumping trash and his staff will enforce the law.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board has talked about this before.

Sheriff Butler said the county will need an Ordinance put in place.

Commissioner Stephenson said if the dump is closed then it is closed.

Road Department Superintendent Steve Hutchison said each roll off site has different hours of operation posted.

Commissioner Hatch thanked Sheriff Butler and Mr. Hutchison for the use of inmates to pressure wash the Dixie County Courthouse.

Sheriff Butler said his staff will help with all they can.

Sheriff Butler requested to discuss some additional topics.

He said that Inmate Bed Funding is a year behind. He said the Sheriff has not received the revenue from the county.

Clerk Higginbotham said she doesn't know at this time, but they are looking into this as well.

Sheriff Butler said normally the funds go to the Board and are then transferred to the Sheriff Department. He said that he would like to recommend that the funds be transferred Monthly or Quarterly to the Sheriff Department for 2021. He feels this would be easier on the Budget.

Commissioner Hatch asked how long it takes to receive the money from inmate bedding, 30 days or what. He said he doesn't want the General Fund to wait for reimbursement.

He asked Ms. Johnson if the budget should be amended monthly or what.

Ms. Johnson replied a written agreement is needed to know the percentages to pay. For example, if you get \$100,000.00 and pay the Sheriff 30 % then that is \$30,000.00 for expenditure to the Sheriff Department.

Commissioner Hatch questioned when will the next budget process begin.

Ms. Johnson replied she will begin preparation for the new budget in April to be ready by June 2021. She hopes to have revenue numbers to help the proposed and do the TRIM.

She said the Board can amend the Budget this year and start the next year with a written agreement.

Sheriff Butler asked the Clerk for information on the following accounts: impact fee; crime prevention; contraband; restitution; education trust fund. He would like to get a current report on the balance in these accounts. He said he needs access to this for the operation of the Sheriff Department.

Clerk Higginbotham replied her staff is working on this daily.

Sheriff Butler said he understands if she needs more time.

Sheriff Butler said another concern is the physical state of the county jail. He requested the Board look at several photos taken. He said the building need several repairs for safety and function. He said the A/C system needs repair for better air circulation. He said the roof leaks and there is mold present. He said the equipment in the 911 operations room is in jeopardy due to the roof leaking when it rains and drips on equipment. He said the fire protection system of the jail is faulty. He said the fans used to evacuate smoke from the jail don't work. He said the jail makes money for the county and gets federal funding. He said if they were to get a code inspection they would fail in several areas. He said this is a liability and can cause the jail to be closed.

Commissioner Hatch asked how much is budgeted for jail repairs.

Manager Cannon replied \$60,000.00.

Commissioner Stephenson asked where has the one cent Penny Sales Tax has been applied.

Commissioner Hatch said it is in the General Fund for the jail.

Sheriff Butler said the jail produces annual revenue from inmate bedding. He said he doesn't want to lose this because of a faulty building. He said Inmate Medical and Jail Maintenance is a priority.

Commissioner Hatch asked if some of the repairs can be done in house.

Commissioner Stephenson said he wants to see the minutes on the vote for the allocation of the money.

He wants to know what the percentage is for jail maintenance and the General Fund.

Sheriff Butler requested the Board also consider the changing seasons. The hot and cold temperatures and the condensation and the sweat on the equipment. He said the jail is a hot box in the Summer. He felt that a \$26,000.00 repair will be of little help overall.

Manager Cannon recommended the Board consider using the Inmate Bed Money for jail repairs. He said they have a quote of \$200,000.00 to fix the roof. He said they have \$80,000.00 to put towards this repair but may not be able to get financing at this point. He recommends the Board fix the chiller even if it last for a short while.

Commissioner Mills thanked the Sheriff for his help.

Commissioner Stephenson said they will help with the A/C system.

Sheriff Butler said the Inmate Bed Funds are used for the operation of the Sheriff Department. He said the one cent tax can be used for the jail repairs.

Commissioner Stephenson said the ATV, Golf Cart and Side by Side driving in the ditches along the highways is also a problem that needs to be addressed.

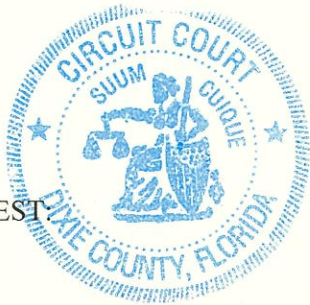
Sheriff Butler agreed it is an issue and they will begin to address it with Highway Safety Education.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

There were no comments or concerns expressed from the public at this time.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Mills made the motion to adjourn the workshop at 12:15 PM. Commissioner Storey seconded. Board approved.



ATTEST

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Mark Hatch, Chairman

Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

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.