

Workshop
The Town of Cross and BOCC
City Hall
99 NE 210th Ave
Cross City, FL 32628
March 06, 2024 – 5:00 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

David Osteen, Commissioner District 5
Jody Stephenson, Commissioner District 1

STAFF

Paul Gainey, Acting Assignment County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Acting Assignment Assistant County Manager
and Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Leon Wright, Building and Zoning Official
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Joannie Morse, Deputy Clerk

TOWN COUNCIL

Kenneth “Tank” Lee, Mayor, and Town Council Member Seat 5
John Driggers Jr., City Manager
Ryan Fulford, Town Council Member Seat 3
Kirk Merhefka, Town Council Member Seat 1

George Edmonds, City Utilities Supervisor
Carol West, Dixie Chamber of Commerce/Dixie County Education Foundation
Karen VanAernam, Cross City Restore and Renew
Kay McCallister, Tourism Council
Ruth Ann Lovelace, Cross City Restore and Renew

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Workshop was called to order at 5:00 PM by Town Mayor, Kenneth “Tank” Lee.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation was led by Town Council Member Kirk Marhefka and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by County Commissioner David Osteen.

Acting Assignment County Manager Paul Gainey started the discussion with making mention of several items the County has ongoing.

These included:

- Several Road Projects are underway.
- The County has opened bids for the new fire station expansion at the EOC (Emergency Operations Center).
- The County purchased a new tanker truck and new ambulances.
- Road paving on the Horseshoe Highway to Davis Island Mainline.
- Chavous Road-adding three (3) ft shoulders, paving markers, and signage.

Acting Assignment Assistant County Manager and Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator Martha MaCaskill did not have anything to bring to the Board tonight.

County Attorney Chana Watson didn't have anything to bring before the Board tonight.

County Commissioner David Osteen stated that he recently reached out to a gentleman that purchases gas stations and mini markets in hopes to see if he wanted to buy the Lilly Creek Store in Horseshoe Beach, but he said he didn't think he would be able to purchase it. Commissioner Osteen said he wasn't giving up though because Horseshoe Beach needs a gas station or something down there.

Mr. Osteen mentioned that he had another item regarding a career opportunity for kids, but he would save it to present tomorrow at the Board meeting.

Mrs. Kay McCallister of the Tourism Development Council stated that they had a productive meeting yesterday for tourism. She said Visit Florida has produced some thirty second videos and conducted a presentation for the local businesses on how to go onto the Visit Florida website. Mrs. McCallister recommended Dixie County getting an online presence.

Mrs. Carol West of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce asked if everyone knew what town has the most online presence. She said it was the Town of Cedar Key. She also stated that they pay for some of their ads, but there are also some free ads out there.

Mrs. McCallister agreed that there are a lot of free ads available and mentioned that there is also a new videographer in town. She stated he is currently building the Dixie Chamber website and the website for Tourism Development, and she said that if we all sponsor together, we could really get something very nice put together for the County.

Mr. Gainey added that the Tourism Development Team has a new office in Cross City in the old EMS storage building on Camp Street. It has been remodeled inside and painted a pretty yellow on the outside. He said the Tourism Council should be occupying the new building soon.

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham mentioned to Mrs. McCallister that if she needs any desks or small filing cabinets to get with Bradley because the Clerk's office has some that she may be able to get.

Mrs. McCallister asked if she had any chairs.

Mrs. Higginbotham responded that she didn't have any chairs.

Building Official Leon Wright stated that he had some chairs that Mrs. MaCallister could have.

County Commissioner Jody Stephenson stated that tourism is going to be the key to growing Dixie County. He recommended having a website that showcases the natural resources of the county. He also mentioned Rambling Woods Subdivision, which was advertised years ago when it first opened in a promo down South presenting the Suwannee River and the whole subdivision sold within 30 days.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that he wants growth for the County but doesn't want to do anything to hurt other local businesses and recommended being careful not to do that.

Mrs. West stated that the current Tourism Development training courses teach how to enhance the current local businesses while at the same time promoting growth.

Commissioner Stephenson reminded of when Wal-Mart came to Chiefland and how that caused many of the local small businesses to close and asked the County to keep that in mind so that this doesn't happen again.

Town Mayor Kenneth "Tank" Lee stated that people seem to be enjoying getting back to nature these days. He said they have been to big places like Disney and are wanting nature access instead.

Commissioner Stephenson mentioned the state of Gronto Springs and how it is not looking very good at this time, but he suggested fixing it up and making some trails with maybe some guided tours out at the park to bring in some income for the County.

Mrs. Karen VanAernam stated that is the purpose for the videos which are being made for the County. She further added that tourism and economic development are the driving force of improving a County and that it takes everyone cooperating to get it done.

Mrs. Cindy Chewning asked if the Shired Island Campground had been fixed.

Commissioner Osteen answered that it has not yet.

Mrs. Chewning mentioned that until the County has a place for camping and facilities or infrastructure to support the people that are coming to visit that the County may not improve. She expressed concern about the people who may come in expecting one thing and then finding something else upon arrival.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that several campgrounds are coming, and several others that were damaged from Hurricane Idalia are being repaired. He also said that the County is having trouble getting grants because of the matches required for the grants. The County can't afford to pay for the match portion of these grants.

Attorney Chana Watson commented on the Shired Island Park and said that the County has applied for Hurricane Idalia Relief Funding for this park, but the process takes time. She added that the County has a contract to repair the bridge but didn't include the road which was washed away. She stated she made the recommendation to the Board to close Shired Island Park for safety concerns until the park was repaired.

Commissioner Stephenson stated his priority is getting the roadways opened back up.

Mr. Gainey stated that the good thing about the build back is that when these places are finished, they will be better than they have ever been.

Mrs. Kay McCallister gave a compliment to Williston City Clerk Latricia Wright regarding the improvements in their County. She also asked if Williston received a grant for this work.

Mrs. Wright said yes, it was a facade grant with the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and this took around five (5) years to complete.

Mrs. VanAernam said this is a testament that Community Growth and Improvement happens in small increments and takes time, but encouraged everyone that loves our County to work hard together and not give up.

Mrs. West encouraged everyone not to give up by telling a story of a Tomato Growing Site in Baker County that took five (5) years to complete, but they have seen an increase of around eight hundred jobs for that County.

Mrs. Wright of Williston thanked City Manager John Driggers Jr. for inviting her to the meeting.

Mayor Kenneth "Tank" Lee complimented Mrs. Wright and the Town of Williston for their beautiful City Park. He also reminded everyone of the Centennial Celebration coming up on April 20th.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that he is planning to have a stunt dirt bike driver come and put on a show for the Centennial Celebration. He said the stunt driver will need 300 feet in length and 100 feet in height with no wires above. He also added that the total cost to have the stunt driver perform will be around \$4,000.00 and he is willing to come up with \$2,000.00 out of pocket and asked if the City can help with the rest, but if not, he would pay the whole thing.

Mayor Lee responded that the City was having a meeting tomorrow and would discuss it then.

City Manager John Driggers Jr. stated the main thing the City has ongoing at this time is they just signed a three (3) year contract for the repaving of the road in front of City Hall. He added that they will probably be getting started next year. He also reminded everyone of the Centennial Celebration coming up on April 20th. He said there will be lots of vendors and the City will have hats, shirts, and commemorative coins to hand out.

Mayor Lee added that there will also be a parade for anyone who would like to participate.

City Manager John Driggers Jr. also mentioned that he had a 92nd homecoming at his local church this past Sunday and the Preacher preached on the church coming to a standstill. He stated that we can relate that message to a lot of things in life today. He said people sometimes get stuck in the past, but we must be going forward. He said that we must push forward and encourage the younger generation to push forward and not get stuck and encouraged the older generation to teach the younger generation.

Mr. Driggers also stated that the repainting of the Train Depot is almost underway, and he is hoping to have it done before the Centennial Celebration.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if we were able to acquire the piece of land in between the Train Depot building and Highway 19.

Mr. Gainey answered that he has spoken with the landowner and the landowner stated that he would entertain a land swap with the City or County if we have a piece of land that was appealing to him.

Mrs. McCallister also mentioned that her newly painted yellow building needs landscaping and she would be happy to facilitate the cost of it but needs someone to help with the vision.

Mrs. West mentioned maybe inquiring about the use of the Ag Program at the local High School.

Mrs. McCallister asked Mr. Driggers if the City could have pictures or a video of how or what the Train Depot may be or look like in the future for the purpose of posting at the Centennial event just in case the building is not ready in time.

Mrs. Cindy Chewning stated this is her first meeting that she has attended, but she is interested in attending the meetings, but is not available on Thursdays. Mrs. Chewning said there are a lot of people who live out in the Shelton area, and she would like to see a Library built out there. She also said that she thought the Jackson Water Hole Park would be a great place for a Library.

Mrs. Chewning also mentioned that she has a vision for our town to have a store where only things made in Dixie County are sold. She suggested that this store be located somewhere on Highway 19. She said she thought about the Train Depot but didn't want to derail Mr. Driggers's ideas that he may have for the Train Depot.

Mr. Driggers mentioned working something out with Mrs. Chewning for the store to be in the Train Depot once a month until they get a building for the store.

Commissioner Stephenson said the key to the success of the store is to post advertisements online.

Mrs. Chewning suggested also having a road sign or a sign out in front of the building to grab a person's attention as they drive through the City.

Mr. Driggers suggested advertising online first as well as having signage on the road.

Mrs. West said that one of the goals she would like to see met is to have a place for the Dixie workers to spend their money in Dixie. She also stated that we must contrast our County with other Counties to look at who is moving to our area. She said that Gilchrist is growing when nobody thought they would, but part of the reason for this is the type of people and buildings that are moving into the County. She added that these are people who invest in the community and are building houses.

Building Official Leon Wright agreed that Dixie County does have a flood of Campers/RV's in the County, and this does hurt the county in taxes and such.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that a lot of the growth in Gilchrist and Levy counties is coming from people moving out of Alachua because of the high property taxes.

Mrs. West agreed, but also stated that our glass is half full and recommended keeping our minds open to possibilities and working hard together with a can-do attitude.

Mrs. Karen VanAernam stated that the Cross City Restore and Renew has lots of projects under way. She said they planted new palm trees at the Post Office, they have put some things up at the Courthouse, are updating the County welcome signs, painting Ms. Holly Houghton's office (County Extension Agent), and working with the City to get the Train Depot painted. She also encouraged everyone not to grow wearing in doing good.

Mayor Lee announced that the next meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2024, at 5:00 PM at City Hall.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS


None presented at this meeting.

4. ADJOURN


Town Mayor Kenneth Lee adjourned the meeting at 6:03 PM.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

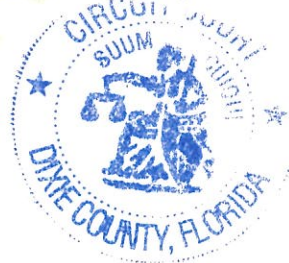
ATTEST:



Jamie Storey, Chairman
Jody Stephenson, Vice 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.