

***Emergency Meeting
Flooding
Dixie County EOC Building
August 03, 2021 – 1:00 PM***

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, District 1
W. C. Mills, District 2, Vice Chairman
Mark Hatch, District 3
Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman
James Valentine, District 5

STAFF

Duane Cannon, County Manager
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Della Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Commissioner Storey.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

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

County Manager Duane Cannon appeared before the Board and requested they approve Local State of Emergency Resolution 2021-112.

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to approve Local State of Emergency Resolution 2021-112. Commissioner Mills seconded. Board approved.

Emergency Management Chief Scott Garner informed the Board that they had spoken with the weather bureau in Tallahassee, Florida and that Dixie County is forecasted to receive three more inches of rain today on top of the six and 1/2 inches already received.

He said another three inches is possible for tomorrow. He said that several roads are currently underwater, and several homes have water in them also.

Manager Cannon asked about the forecast for the river activity.

Chief Garner replied the water level for the Suwannee River will rise and we will be affected due to the weather conditions being similar to those in 2017 when the Hwy 55A area was badly flooded.

Commissioner Stephenson said that we gave five and ½ inches of rain flowing down from the Mayo, Florida area into Dixie County. He said the canals and the river water levels are up.

Director of Emergency Service Darian Brown said that they expect the water level to rise to the eight or nine mark.

Chief Garner said a county yard employee accidentally drove into a washed-out area which was over the headlights of the truck on the road to Purvis. He said they have closed this road off at the end of the pavement from traffic as of lunch time today. He said that residents of that area are parking their vehicles at the pavements end and traveling to their homes by canoe or small boat.

Commissioner Stephenson answered a phone call he had been waiting on from Mr. Tim Alexander from the Suwannee River Water Management District and included him in the meeting via speakerphone. Mr. Tim Alexander said that as far as he knows the gates are open to the culverts from the Mallory Swamp area.

Commissioner Stephenson said that he has been to those culverts and the gates are shut.

Mr. Alexander said he didn't know that.

Commissioner Stephenson said he hasn't checked the North canals yet and he asked for permission to open those gates on the East and West canals.

Mr. Alexander said he will check into that further and get back in touch. (The phone call ended.)

Manager Cannon suggested they speak with the Director of the Suwannee River Water Management District Mr. Hugh Thomas and request that they open all the gates for better water flow in this time of need.

Commissioner Stephenson said the water is flowing over the roads up in that area.

Chief Garner said the purpose of the gates was to slow the water flow down to Dixie.

Commissioner Stephenson said he thinks SRWMD should have done a study on the Mallory Swamp Project prior to construction and he would like to see the documentation on that. He said that SRWMD has said that Dixie County must have a study done on Old Hwy 19 to address and repair the flooding issue in that area. He said he would like to see what was done by SRWMD for the Mallory Swamp Project. He said that Mallory swamp is like a bowl and the gates keep that area from drying up. He said the water table is high and the reservoir is full so the water cannot go anywhere.

Commissioner Mills agreed the Mallory Swamp Project was supposed to help replenish the aquifer. He said there is too much water and it is flowing this way along with the extra rainfall. He said he would also like for all the Commissioners to meet with SRWMD to discuss the Mallory Swamp Project. He said the canals have diverted the water from flowing to the river.

Manager Cannon said he can either request that Mr. Hugh Thomas come to a Board Meeting and discuss or come to the Manager's office to discuss.

Commissioner Hatch asked Manager Cannon about the meeting he had not long ago with SRWMD. Manager Cannon said that was a five-million-dollar project and it combined the Cow Pond Project, the Lower Suwannee Refuge Project and the Beeson Project into one. He said that Locklear and Associates made the presentation to SRWMD in order to get conceptual permits and begin conceptual planning to move forward with the construction phase and look at the culverts that have gates shut.

Commissioner Stephenson said that funding is low, and he wants to know who will be responsible for the repair bills to resolve the flooding issues.

Commissioner Hatch said he believes the county should remain in good standing with the SRWMD because they do help with drainage issues for the county. He said the burden lies on both the county and SRWMD.

Commissioner Stephenson answered another phone call from Mr. Tim Alexander of the SRWMD and included him in the meeting via speakerphone.

Mr. Tim Alexander gave permission to Commissioner Stephenson to open the gates on the canals. He said he thinks there are only two boards holding back the water. He said he may not be able to access the North canal. He said there is no where for the water to flow because the ground water is high. The phone call ended.

Commissioner Stephenson said this is costing the county problems.

Manager Cannon suggested that one Commissioner meet with Mr. Hugh Thomas and look at a map of the canals that are boarded up.

Commissioner Hatch suggested they get an update from Locklear and Associates and a Commissioner be a part of this meeting with Manager Cannon and SRWMD.

Commissioner Mills and Commissioner Storey nominated Commissioner Stephenson to meet with them.

Commissioner Stephenson said that some of these people need to ride around county and look at all the water and the damage it is causing.

Manager Cannon spoke to the Board on another storm related issue.

He asked for clarification on the Board's intent to pay regular and salaried employees time and ½ for hours worked after forty hours. He said that Holiday hours are not included in the forty hours worked. He said they have been revising the policy from 2010. He said that they will make a notation on the timesheets when they are working under state of emergency conditions and the department head will approve the employee timesheet and the County Manager will approve the timesheet so that the Finance Department will know what to do.

Director Brown added that this was done years ago for FEMA reimbursement. He said you must show this as a re-occurring procedure.

Commissioner Mills said he agrees if an employee works after 40 hours, they should get overtime. Commissioner Stephenson asked what about salaried employees. He said that Mr. Leon Wright of the Building Department has been working overtime and through his vacation.

Commissioner Mills said a salaried position is based on a certain number of hours. Manager Cannon clarified a salary position is based on 80 hours.

Chief Garner pointed out that when the Board does revise their policy. The stipulation of overtime hours can't be tied to a specific event like a FEMA declared event. He said it must cover all state of emergencies as has been the past practices.

Manager Cannon said he will need clarity for the Finance Department to handle payroll.

Commissioner Hatch asked what they are doing to help with the flooding in houses other than sandbags. Commissioner Stephenson asked about a shelter.

Manager Cannon said that Emergency Services and the County Road Department are looking at these issues.

Chief Garner said that the Trail Riders Club can be used as a shelter and the old High School Gym has been used in the past because it has showers on site. He said this can be arranged with the assistance of the Red Cross within 45 minutes notice if needed. He said that the Red Cross will provide cots to sleep on.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

There were no comments or concerns expressed at this time.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to adjourn at 2:00 PM. Commissioner Mills seconded. Board approved.



ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA



Jamie Storey, 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.