

***Emergency Meeting
Flooding
Dixie County EOC Building
August 06, 2021 – 11:30 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
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
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 11:42 AM 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 spoke to the Board and recommended they talk more about the decision they made yesterday at the regular meeting to cut the Old Hwy 19 Road. Due to more recent events the Board was re visiting this issue. He said there is now two locations along the road that water is flowing across.

Chief of Emergency Operations Scott Garner informed the Board that there is three to five more inches of rain to fall.

Manager Cannon recommended they speak with the Road Department about the issue.

Road Superintendent Stevie Hutchison said he is hesitant to cut the eight-foot section of road due to a possible blow out and more damages while trying to replace the culvert. He said he has spoken with Mr. Kevin St. Laurent and they have been looking at a map of the area. He said that if they cut the road the water will flow towards the subdivision. He said the water flows towards the Anderson Canal and then to Plum Creek and then to the Philmon Subdivision and Dixie Camp and the Mount Olive Cemetery area.

Manager Cannon reminded everyone that the Board had decided to cut Old Hwy 19 yesterday. However, due to more current events they should revisit this decision. He said the Hines Hwy is flooded with water. He said if they were to cut the road at this time, it is possible that a flash flood event would be created.

Commissioner Stephenson said the water is coming this way from the North and will be rising for the next three to four days. He said the creeks above the Branford area are not flowing properly. He said the water is rising in the neighborhood along Old Hwy 19 and the Punkin Swamp area and headed towards Cross City. He added that the pipes should have already been installed in these problem areas.

Mr. Hutchinson reminded the Board that the properties that are South of the water flow will become a possible liability.

Commissioner Stephenson said cutting the road will only raise the water level a few more inches.

Commissioner Mills said that cutting the road is only a temporary fix to the problem.

Mr. Stephenson said he believes it will lessen some pressure from the Town of Cross City.

Commissioner Mills added, but it will flood Jena.

Commissioner Stephenson said the Suwannee River is rising.

Chief Garner said the Steinhatchee River is at flood stage now and will crest at 24 feet. He said if they cut the Old Hwy 19 road, then the water flow may also affect Taylor County.

Commissioner Stephenson said the water is already in people's homes.

Director of Emergency Services Darian Brown introduced Mr. Brian Bradshaw to the Board to speak about the water levels affecting the county bridges.

Mr. Brian Bradshaw spoke to the Board and told them the water level was nearing the bottom of the bridges at Tennille. He said if it rises and flows across the bridges, then the FDOT will close the South bound lane of Hwy 19.

Chief Garner recommended the Board not cut the road due to possible liability issues.

Director Brown also reminded the Board that Dixie County has four evacuation routes which are US Hwy 19 North through Tennille and South through Chiefland, Hwy 349 and the Hines Hwy.

Commissioner Mills said the Board needs to look at the big picture and it may not be a good idea to cut the road.

Mr. Brian Bradshaw informed the Board that the county is currently over the 100-year flood mark by four foot.

Dixie County Sheriff Darby Butler asked for a possible time frame before the bridges at Tennille may be compromised.

Chief Garner said that FDOT is assessing that now. He said they will decide to shut the road down and re-route traffic if needed.

Sheriff Butler asked about other bridges around the county.

Mr. Bradshaw informed the Board that some other bridges are close to overflowing with water.

Commissioner Stephenson asked where the representatives from the Suwannee River Water Management District are. He said someone needs to call them and get them involved.

Mr. Bradshaw said he will reach out to them.

Commissioner Stephenson said that Mr. Jimmy Futch has some maps of the Old Hwy 19 area which show former bridge locations. He said the county can use these maps to help fix the issue.

Chief Garner cautioned the Board and said they must consider everyone downstream if they cut Old Hwy 19.

Commissioner Hatch asked how the water flow is affecting the St. Laurent Timber property.

Mr. Kevin St. Laurent spoke to the Board and said the water will flow towards Hwy 19 and then towards the canals. He said that it is possible that New Hwy 19 will bank up and run across the road. He agreed it may have a more negative impact if they cut Old Hwy 19. He said that he works for Campbell Global and they manage the timber land. He said the ground is saturated.

Commissioner Stephenson agreed they should not cut the road.

Commissioner Mills said when the Board made this decision yesterday, they did not know about the situation with Hwy 19.

Commissioner Stephenson said they should try to fix things when the area dries up.

Sheriff Butler agrees that the situation can't be controlled; and they should leave the road alone.

Commissioner Mills made the motion to not cut the Old Hwy 19 road. Commissioner Valentine seconded. Board approved.

Commissioner Hatch said they need to notify the residents in the Old Hwy 19 area of the Board's decision.

Manager Cannon was instructed to call Mr. Jimmy Futch and Mr. Ryan Parker and notify them.

Manager Cannon requested Mr. Hutchison speak to the Board about the Airport Canal.

Mr. Hutchison informed the Board that they have cut Road 30 and Hudson 19 and some side roads and put in pipes. He said when the water goes down, they can add more culverts.

Sheriff Butler asked if the flow to the Airport Canal can be increased. He said that Cross City Correctional Facility is evacuating due to flooding. He said the Dixie County Jail is also affected by the water levels. He said the management of the jail waste runs off the prison lift station and if the DOC turns off the lift station it will affect the jail.

Commissioner Stephenson suggested they use pump trucks to keep the jail operational if needed.

Mr. Joseph Henderson of the Town of Cross City informed everyone that the manholes in the city are full. He said the city does not need any more water.

Sheriff Butler asked were can they discard the waste from the jail. He said they house 114 inmates. Commissioner Stephenson asked when the Airport Canal Project was done why was it not done in the opposite direction.

Mr. Henderson said the city is trying to handle the waste and can't deal with more water. He said the sewers are backed up in houses.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board also needs to help the city somehow.

Sheriff Butler suggested they cut off the jail and the prison sewer from flowing to Cross City. He said that Lancaster Correctional Facility has been producing the meals for the Dixie County Jail inmates.

Commissioner Stephenson said he can store one days' worth of sewage in his sewage truck and has storage tanks, too, if needed.

Sheriff Butler said they have four different categories of inmates at the jail and it would be difficult to evacuate and keep them separated for security reasons. He said that other jails are at full capacity as well.

Sheriff Butler asked Commissioner Stephenson to come to the jail and assess the sewage situation.

Director Brown asked about Hwy 357 at Hines.

Mr. Hutchison said water is flowing across this road, too.

Chief Garner said that this is used as an alternate route.

Warden Billy Malloy of the Cross City Correction facility informed everyone that the prison has been evacuated of inmates. He said they do not have any pumps at the prison at this time. He said they had to use pumps a few days ago to keep the water level down. He said it is up three feet inside some areas of the prison. He said they transported 990 inmates by bus to Taylor County last night.

Commissioner Mills asked all the Board members to gather to look over a map of the areas of concern in Jena and Hwy 19.

Commissioner Stephenson said the box culvert at Purvis needs to be dug out.

Commissioner Hatch said they need to look at 592 Street in the Chavous Road area.

Commissioner Stephenson said they need to look at the Philmon subdivision.

Commissioner Mills said that the message from Suwannee River Water Management District was that Monday would be the soonest that anyone could come over and meet with the Board.

Chief Garner said they have 1,500 bags for sand, and they can call Granger or Sun Belt for more pumps, too.

Commissioner Hatch said they need to get more signs for the roads with water issues and closures.

Manager Cannon said that Mr. Mark Hannah would be delivering signs to the County Yard.

Chief Garner spoke to the Board about the shelters. He said they can use the Trail Riders or the old gym at old Dixie County High School.

Human Resource Supervisor Ms. Angie Crowley said she can cancel the rented event at Trail Riders and return the money to the people.

Commissioner Hatch instructed Ms. Angie to do this.

Commissioner Mills said they can use the First District Community Center for a shelter. Ms. Crowley said she will check to see if it's rented or not.

Manager Cannon asked for an update on the water in the Town of Cross City.

Chief Garner said they are using the pumps from the prison to send water to the ditches.

Sheriff Butler said the jail can be self-contained if it's necessary to shut off the prison lift station.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

There were no comments or concerns expressed at this time.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Mills made the motion to adjourn at 12:47 PM. Commissioner Valentine seconded. Board approved.

ATTEST:




Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA


Jamie Storey, 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.