

Workshop
Town of Cross City and BOCC
Location: County Manager's Office
56 NE 210 Ave, Cross City, FL 32628
January 15, 2025 – 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

Jody Stephenson, District 1, Chairman
Daniel Wood, District 2
Mark Hatch, District 3, Vice Chairman
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager
Roy Bass, Assistant County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Victoria Darkow, Deputy Clerk

TOWN COUNCIL

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

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ryan Fulford called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Mayor Fulford led the invocation and Mr. Kenneth "Tank" Lee led the Pledge to the American Flag.

WELCOME

Mayor Fulford began the meeting with introductions and welcomed everyone.

COUNTY MANAGER/CITY MANAGER UPDATES

City Manager John Driggers gave updates on several ongoing projects.

He stated that 118th Street is preparing to be paved and that they are doing a sewer extension northeast 351 to Jack Robert's curve.

He informed the Board that the drainage mitigation plans came in for the Housing project on 146th and 147th that they are working on.

Mr. Driggers stated that they completed a site visit for the affordable housing project that is in the works for the old vocational school. He clarified and stated that it will be called Prince Point and will be a two-story building with 75 units. He stated that they are in the planning stage right now and that the funding has been awarded for it but that there is no projected start date.

Mr. Driggers informed the Board about Crossroads Festival and stated that they have not gotten the sponsorship or vendors that they had with the Centennial Festival and that they will have a meeting tonight to see if they will be moving forward.

Tourism Development Council Director Mrs. Kay McCallister stated that the Tourism Council will give 500 dollars towards the funding and that Mrs. Karen VanAernam with Cross City Restore and Renew has 5000 dollars for the start up.

County Manager John Jenkins gave a few updates on the airport.

He stated that they are working on the airport getting repaved and restriped and that they have T hangar construction going on.

He said that they are going through the leases and those that are not being used or paid for then they will go through the process of retrieving them back.

MINUTES REVIEW FROM 5/7/2024 MEETING

Mayor Fulford reviewed the minutes from May 7, 2024.

The Board made a motion to approve the minutes, but at the end of the meeting it was brought to the attention of the Board that these minutes were already approved, so they rescinded their motion.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Dixie Industrial Park at Cross City Airport**

Mrs. Karen VanAernam spoke about the plans for the Dixie Industrial Park at Cross City Airport and stated that they have plans and rough drawings for the park.

She stated that nothing is official yet, but that the youth in the County really need a new ballpark, and that the County would benefit from expanding the Industrial Park to create more jobs.

The Town and Board discussed sewer expansion and engineering for the park and stated that a lot of upgrades would need to be made due to it being at 50-75 percent capacity. They discussed the possibility of a new sewer plant.

Mrs. McCallister asked if the County had received the grant to improve the road by the airport and Mrs. Martha McCaskill stated that they had not received it yet but that it is submitted.

Mayor Fulford stated that he and Commissioner Hatch had a meeting with Secretary Kelly of the Department of Commerce in Alachua and that they spoke about the Black Gold project and the infrastructure of the Industrial Park. He stated that they can't move forward with any of these projects without a new sewer plant. He mentioned that the airport is an old army base and that it is a legit airport. He stated that it got their attention and that they stated they would look at things and get back with the County on that subject.

Mrs. VanAernam suggested inviting Mrs. Diane Shultz from the North Florida Economic Development Partnership to the next joint meeting.

- **Youth Sports Complex (Hudson Field)**

Mrs. VanAernam and the Town Council spoke about moving the Roy Ward Sports Complex in the future. Mrs. VanAernam brought up the need for a new Library for the County and Attorney Chana Watson stated that it was mentioned at the School Board Meeting that the School Board might allow the County to use the old Highschool Library building.

Attorney Chana Watson brought up that the School Board is looking into reformatting the schools. She stated that Old Town Elementary would be a Pre-K through 3rd grade, Ruth Rains would be 4th through 6th grade and that the middle/high school would be 7th through 12th grade. She stated that would then free up Anderson Elementary and that the School Board has plans for the school.

Commissioner Hatch stated that he wanted to clarify that the County is not shutting down Roy Ward Sports Park until they have something bigger and better to replace it. He stated that the County wants a new and improved park for the children of the community and that it will take everyone to work together to make that happen.

- **Depot Restoration Update**

Mrs. VanAernam stated that Mr. Matt Beckham and the inmate work crew painted the old Train Depot and that it will get finished when the weather warms up. She stated that out of the funds for the Cross City Centennial they had got Mr. Todd Blanchard recalled all of the original windows and restored them to original condition.

Mr. Driggers stated that four (4) of the panes had to be replaced and that it looks very nice.

Mrs. VanAernam stated that she is hoping to utilize the Depot as a History Museum/Welcome Center for tourists and locals. She explained that the Town of Cross City needs a breath of life and that it would be a nice addition to the community.

Mrs. McCallister stated that there is a new project that the Tourism Development Council is working on and that they have partnered with Levy and Gilchrist County. She stated that they are forming the North Florida Trails Program, which will be a multi-day cycling pass program. In addition, she stated that they are working on other ideas as well, like the North Florida Paddling Trail and the North Florida Shopping Trail. She spoke about possibly putting a sign up for raising funds for the depot.

Mr. Driggers stated that Mrs. Cindy Chewning has been working on setting up a group for the depot to try to raise money as well.

- **Desert Storm Monument**

Mrs. VanAernam spoke about the Desert Storm Monument and stated that they are replacing it. She stated that Mr. Ben Barber quoted the replacement at \$4,500 and that it should be done in the next few months. She stated that Mr. Barber is willing to give a 10-20 % discount on the quote as well.

Mayor Fulford stated that they had went to the Rural Economic Development Summit for all of the 33 rural counties and that they met a couple of contacts. He stated that they met a lady at the conference who helps rural communities with economic development and beautification at no additional charge. He said that she will be here in Cross City in the near future and that was a good contact to make.

He stated that they also made a connection with Brown & Brown for better rates for insurance.

Mayor Fulford said that he and the County Manager other people are scheduled to go to Daytona on February 5th and 6th for better benefits for the employees. He stated that it is already sponsored and paid for from Brown & Brown.

Mayor Fulford reminded everybody of Rural County Days in Tallahassee on March 19th through the 21st and stated that everybody is welcome to come show support.

He informed everybody that Dixie County had teamed up with Levy County for the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade will be in Chiefland on January 19th at 11:00 am at the high school.

Other Questions or Concerns:

Commissioner Hatch encouraged everyone to get involved and attend meetings to show the citizens that the County and City are here for them.

Mrs. McCallister congratulated Mrs. Katie Roberts for graduating from Southeastern University and stated that she is getting ready to work on her master's degree.

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham stated that she agrees with Commissioner Hatch and that the County is better together.

Attorney Watson stated that she will keep everybody updated on the library.

Mrs. Michelle Snyder informed the Board of what the Empower to Change Program stands for and brought up her concerns of the allegations against Mayor Fulford.

Mrs. Christy Roberts stated that she enjoyed the meeting and is excited about growth and the future of the County.

Mrs. Higginbotham congratulated Mayor Fulford and stated that the County is here for him.

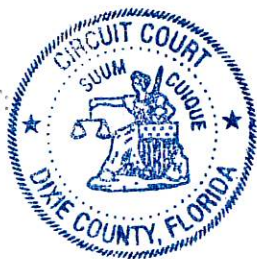
The Board set the date for the next workshop with the Town of Cross City and the Board of County Commissioners on April 16th, 2025, at 5:00 PM at City Hall.

7. ADJOURN

Mayor Fulford adjourned the meeting.

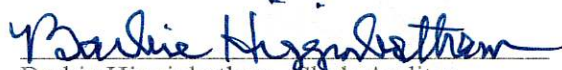
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

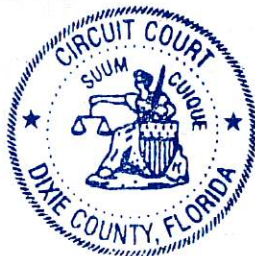
ATTEST





Jody Stephenson, 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.