

Emergency Meeting
To Review and Discuss possibly hiring a consultant regarding the
“Disaster Recovery Reform Act Section 1206”
October 28, 2024 – 4:00 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, Vice Chairman
Mark Hatch, District 3
Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Joannie Morse, Deputy Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Jamie Storey called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation was led by Commissioner Storey and the Pledge was led by Commissioner Storey.

3. DISCUSSION:

Building Official Leon Wright approached the Board to remind everyone that he had previously discussed hiring help with the 1206 Substantial Damage Inspections. He stated that they missed the deadlines for outside help with Hurricane Idalia, but Hurricane Helene has opened the door back up. He said they have advertised for help and have received one bid from the same group working with Horseshoe Beach.

Commissioner Hatch asked for the name of the company which submitted the bid.

Mr. Wright said the name of their company is Savinacious.

***Commissioner Hatch made the motion to hire Savinacious to help with the Disaster Recovery Reform Act Section 1206. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.
(Resented later in meeting)***

Commissioner Storey stated that he went to Horseshoe Beach to see what was being done there and also visited Mr. Wright's office and was shown the thick stacks of paperwork for each property. He said that ***Savinacious*** has been a tremendous help down in Horseshoe Beach.

Attorney Watson stated that all the paperwork must be done within 180 days of a declared disaster, with no extensions. She said she has a list of allowable reimbursement items and that it appears that everything they are asking for is totally reimbursable by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and as long as they stay within that list there is no charge to the County. She also added that we must be in the National Flood Insurance Program and if not, active we can be suspended. She said this appears to be a valuable program.

Commissioner Hatch suggested that *Savinacious* be hired to handle the grant work that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is currently handling.

Jaison Benoit of *Savinacious* stated after a disaster the County can apply for the HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program). He said they opened the Idalia program in March and had forty homes qualify as substantially damaged. He added that this program ties in with the Disaster Recovery Reform Act Section 1206 in implementing FEMA required steps and gives an early start on obtaining data with which to apply for the HMGP.

Mr. Benoit stated that the "1206" program qualifies properties not people. Someone can be in the program and sell their home, and the new owner could still be eligible.

Mr. Benoit stated that the properties on the list of homes with substantial damage from Hurricane Idalia and now have been destroyed by Helene are going to be expedited because of previously being listed as damaged. He also said that the State of Florida previously offered two options for mitigation, which were the elevation program or acquisition to the County or Town. If the County or Town acquires the property it would be considered green space and not insurable or buildable. The State is currently working on a third option for those homes that were on the substantially damaged list and now are completely gone and this option could be released as early as next week.

Mr. Benoit stated that the clock is ticking for items the County can submit for and there would normally be one-hundred eighty days for submission, but their company would try to submit within ninety days.

Mr. Benoit informed the Board that the HMGP formula is based on the disaster declaration of full damage and is normally around eight (8) percent of the full damage of the entity.

Commissioner Hatch asked who would do the damage assessments if the Board hires *Savinacious*. Mr. Benoit said they would do them. Commissioner Hatch said that he doesn't want the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to do these but wants *Savinacious* to handle everything and wants to bring items to the Board.

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham stated that it is heartbreaking to see all the coastal areas in the shape they are in, and she desires for them to be restored, but asked if hiring *Savinacious* could mess up anything already started by the EOC.

Commissioner Hatch said they haven't really started yet.

Mr. Wright said that there are not many that have been done since being confronted with not doing other types of inspections and permits and after that, because of the workload, he stopped doing them.

Mr. Benoit said everything with Horseshoe Parks and Shired Island will fall under Idalia which the EOC completed, and FEMA hasn't been down to our area yet for Hurricane Helene.

Commissioner Osteen asked how close the forty properties on the list for substantial damage from Hurricane Idalia are to receiving funding.

Mr. Benoit answered that originally, they were due to start receiving funding in the first quarter of the next year (2025), but Hurricane Helene changed that. He said there are only sixteen of the forty homes that were listed still standing after Hurricane Helene, but he reiterated that all forty are eligible to receive funding, even the ones that are no longer standing. He said this is why the State is revamping the rules to help these people. Mr. Benoit also stated that his company works with the clients/homeowners to help them know the best options for them and the best ways to proceed with getting help and the quicker they can get out there and share this information the better it will be for the clients.

Commissioner Storey asked if a home was knocked off the foundation and had damage in the first storm and now in the second storm it is damaged again, will this program help them raise the home to elevation and repair the home. Mr. Benoit answered if the home is more than fifty percent damaged it must be elevated.

Commissioner Osteen asked if this is a fully funded program for the client and how much the client is responsible for paying.

Mr. Benoit answered that he had heard that it will be fully funded, but it just depends on the State. It is currently a "Pilot" program for Horseshoe Beach, and he is not sure if it's going to be available for the entire county. He said that at a minimum the county will be eligible for the HMGP for Hurricane Helene but may be available for the Fast track as well.

Commissioner Osteen asked what stipulations are placed on the homeowner if they are in this program.

Mr. Benoit stated there is a stipulation that once the project is complete, it must be elevated, built to code, and at the time the keys are given the home must be insured. He said some states require that the homeowner keep the insurance for a certain amount of time, but he hasn't ever heard of it exceeding more than three (3) years. He also added that if the person dropped the insurance before the allotted time, they would then become ineligible for any future grants.

Emergency Contract:

It was discussed hiring *Savinacious* for an emergency contract, which Mr. Benoit explained would allow his company to come in and handle all the disaster relief grant items for up to ninety days, and while in the emergency ninety-day contract with Savinacious the County would proceed with procurement for when the ninety days is complete, and it is time to hire full-time help.

The motion was made by Commissioner Stephenson to hire Savinacious under the Emergency Contract for grant services for ninety days and to begin procurement for disaster relief grant services once the ninety-day emergency contract is completed. Seconded by Commissioner Hatch. Board approved.

Commissioner Hatch stated he wants to resend his first motion to hire *Savinacious* and wants to implement the **ninety-day emergency contract** with *Savinacious* at this time and start normal procurement as soon as possible.

Administrative Assistant/County Grant Coordinator Martha McCaskill asked if the County could use the previous application submitted by Mr. Benoit for Hurricane Idalia for the Hurricane Helene application.

Mr. Benoit said it would have to be a new application and advertisement because it is a new disaster.

Commissioner Hatch asked how the transition would work from the EOC to Mr. Benoit's company. Mr. Benoit said they will meet with the EOC and work with them to get everything transitioned and communicate with Assistant County Manager John Jenkins.

Commissioner Osteen said he would like no stumbling blocks and the Board to be updated.

JD Nobles of Horseshoe Beach Town Council stated that if the County sees any potential storm-related damage within the County to inform Mr. Benoit and his company and they will take care of it.

Commissioner Hatch suggested that if there is any identified damage to please discuss this with everyone and present ideas on how to resolve it. He also mentioned the road in front of the Condo's as far as putting up a seawall and redoing the road, and said this would be a perfect Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) project.

Mrs. McCaskill spoke regarding the need for a survey on the road near the Condo's before starting with repairs on the road and seawall and asked if the County wants a survey done.

Commissioner Hatch said to have it evaluated first and then survey if needed.

Commissioner Storey asked how does the County get paid using this program?

Mr. Benoit stated the public assistance is five (5) percent of reimbursed storm damage money. He added that FEMA pays this five (5) percent and the county doesn't have to pay anything for *Savinacious* service.

JD Nobles recommended having workshops to educate property owners in the process of applying for these programs.

Commissioner Stephenson recommended having town meetings.

Mr. Wright stated that once people see others getting their houses replaced and repaired, they will find out how to do theirs.

Commissioner Hatch asked how the Request for Public Assistance (RPA) is handled with their company.

Mr. Benoit said they would first find out if it has been submitted.

Mrs. McCaskill asked if the County can use the same application previously submitted by *Savinacious* for the new advertisement application for Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief Consultant.

The motion to begin advertising for disaster relief grant services for after the Emergency Contract with Savinacious is completed made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

Campers:

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Commissioner Storey asked how many campers the County has.

Attorney Watson said she has seventeen on the ground right now and she is in the process of getting them out to those in need.

Commissioner Hatch requested ordering ten (10) more in hopes of giving them to qualifying renters who lost their homes in the storm.

Attorney Watson stated the County can include renters if they so desire, but she recommended placing guidelines. She also requested official directions on eligibility.

The Motion to provide a FEMA camper to a renter applicant if they are a Dixie County resident, were renting in Dixie County prior to Hurricane Helene, have a place to put the camper and also have no home to live in elsewhere was made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Commissioner Stephenson asked how many people are waiting for campers.

Attorney Watson stated there are seven (7) people waiting for campers at this time and they have requested ten (10) more.

Commissioner Hatch recommended ordering ten (10) more campers.

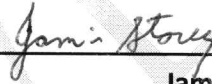
Interviews:

Commissioner Storey asked when the Board would like to conduct County Manager interviews. It was recommended by the Board to schedule them for November 06, 2024, starting at 9:00 AM and going all day as needed.


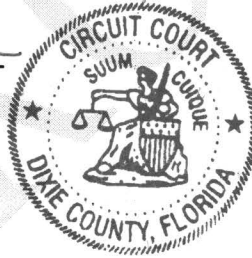
4. ADJOURN

The motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Hatch. Board approved.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA**



Jamie Storey, 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.

