

Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
November 19, 2024 – 6:00 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
Jamie Storey, District 4
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Brenda Royal, Chief Financial Officer
Joannie Morse, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner and newly elected Chairman Jody Stephenson called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation and Pledge to the American Flag was led by newly elected Vice Chairman, Commissioner Mark Hatch.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

10-17-2024 Policies and Procedures Workshop

*Motion to approve 10-17-2024 Policies and Procedures Workshop
Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.*

VOUCHER APPROVAL

Motion to approve vouchers was made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

Sheriff Darby Butler and Animal Control Position:

Sheriff Darby Butler approached the Board regarding the cost of hiring a new animal control officer.

Motion to hire an animal control officer made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

Discussion: Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham stated that the two park attendants that work at the Shired Island and Horseshoe Beach Parks that were destroyed during Hurricane Idalia, are still getting paid even though there is nothing at the parks to manage and this has been going on for about two years.

She said the pay is coming out of the General Fund Account.

There was some discussion among the Commissioners as to why this is happening and Mrs. Higginbotham said it is because no one stopped it.

Attorney Watson stated that the Board may want to discuss how they wish to move forward with this in the future.

It was recommended by Commissioner Stephenson for Sheriff Butler to look into how to carry this position in the Sheriff's Office Budget next year, because the County has lost a lot of tax-based income from the hurricane destruction of the homes and businesses and loss of income from the parks.

Sheriff Butler answered that the Sheriff's Office will tighten their budget and will do their part to make sure they are running as efficiently as they can, but he made it clear that they will not sacrifice public safety to do so.

Sheriff Butler and Hurricane Idalia Funding:

Sheriff Butler also mentioned that the Sheriff's Office has not made an amendment request to the Board, but they are hurting financially because of the last three hurricanes. He said he spoke with Governor Ron DeSantis and the Governor asked him what the State could do to help Dixie County.

Sheriff Butler said he told the Governor that the County could use some funding because we can't wait on FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). He said that Governor DeSantis said he would review this and after contacting Kevin Guthrey they moved forward with awarding the County 1 million dollars for said projects.

Mr. Butler said he later called Kevin Guthrey and found out that the funds were approved on October 15th, sent to the County on October 16th, and the check was cashed on October 25th.

Sheriff Butler stated that Hurricane Idalia cost the Sheriff's Office approximately \$139,000 and he wanted to know what the holdup is with FEMA. He said the Sheriff's Office is scraping the barrels to make ends meet and they are trying to move aggressively to do what is needed in order to put money back into their Operations budget. He asked for an amendment by the Board to help with this.

Commissioner Stephenson stated he wasn't aware that the County received funds.

Director of Emergency Management Darian Brown gave an update on the advancement funds received from the State. He said the funds (1.1 million dollars) from this check were for the parks and covered all the proposed projects except for the Shired Island Highway.

Mr. Brown said this check did not include funds for salaries and overtime. He said it is more complicated to receive funding for that than the other. He also said the check was given to the County Finance Department and they are working on how to use those funds within the gap to cover salaries as needed.

Mrs. Royal told the Board the check has been deposited in the general fund.

Mr. Brown stated that the request has been submitted today by Chief Garner for salary funding for Idalia as well. He said the County should see these funds come in soon.

The Motion was made by Commissioner Hatch for a workshop regarding Hurricane Allocations, on December 05, 2024, at 1:00 PM after the regular BOCC Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.

Sheriff Butler asked for clarification as to the term "Emergency Protective Measures" as presented on the list of funds allocation. Mr. Brown said that portion is referring to the manpower provided by the Sheriff's Office to get prepared for the storms.

Sheriff Butler asked if Chief Garner could keep the Sheriff's Office in the loop regarding funding, items needed, and status moving forward and expressed that in the past there has been an issue of it taking days to get a response from a text or email. Sheriff Butler asked who Director Brown would like to have as a contact with the Sheriff's Office. Director Brown said that his Clerk Tina and the Sheriff's Office Clerk Rhonda have been in contact with each other and if the Sheriff doesn't think he is getting the answers they need to please call him personally.

PUBLIC HEARING: THE PUBLIC HEARING MAY BE CONTINUED TO ONE OR MORE FUTURE DATES. ANY INTERESTED PARTY IS ADVISED THAT THE DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF ANY CONTINUATION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING SHALL BE ANNOUNCED DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING AND THAT NO FURTHER NOTICE CONCERNING THE MATTERS WILL BE PUBLISHED.

There were no items presented for the public hearing section.

KATRINA VANAERNAM AND SHIELA FRIERSON, DIXIE COUNTY ANTI-DRUG COALITION

Not present for this meeting.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Kellan Bailey updated the Board on the following projects which included:

CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) – He stated they received approval to advertise and looking at beginning to advertise on December 05, 2024, and the bid opening to be January 07, 2024. The preconstruction meeting should be around February of 2025.

Two new fire stations; Station 6 in Horseshoe and Station 3 in the 351/349 area.

Station 6: Onsite Geo tech work will be happening tomorrow.

Station 3: They are surveying the site on the first of December.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

A Locklear associate was there for Mr. John Locklear and stated she had nothing to present at this meeting.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Mrs. Cindy Bellot was not present for this meeting.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Mr. Steve Fremmen had nothing to present at this meeting.

STEVE HUTCHISON, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Steve Hutchinson had nothing to present at this meeting.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Solid Waste Director Tim Johnson stated that he has an 89-year-old man working at the dump on the Jack Roberts Curve who has trouble seeing at night and wanted to know if he can reduce his work hours to allow him to get off at 5 PM instead of 6 PM. Commissioner Osteen stated that he didn't want anything bad to happen to him and is ok with changing his hours. Commissioner Hatch told Mr. Johnson to make sure to change the signage at the dumpsite.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

Mr. Leon Wright had to leave for a family emergency and was not present.

County Manager John Jenkins made an announcement for Mr. Wright regarding an Annual RV (Recreation Vehicle) Renewal Report for Special Exceptions within Dixie County.

He stated that the report showed the total number of permits as follows:

For year 2022: 34

Year 2023: 38

Year 2024: 40

He said that the total lost revenue is
\$145,500 (2022)
\$136,800 (2023)
\$131,100 (2024)
Totaling **\$413,400** for all three years.

Mr. Jenkins said they are looking at options on how to cut back on this amount of loss and he feels like the County should look into incorporating it into the landowner's tax bill.

Commissioner Osteen asked who currently sends the RV exception bills out.

Mr. Jenkins stated that Mr. Wright sends these out.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if this list is accurate.

Mr. Jenkins stated that all the special exceptions go through the County Managers Office and if someone has an RV, they are kept on the assessment list until they build a home and once they build a home the County has to inspect and release from the list. He also added that he feels confident about the numbers being correct. He said that the landowner signs an affidavit that if they don't pay the annual fee the power will be disconnected to the RV. He said the County doesn't have the manpower to ride around and assess every property and that is why they are looking into adding it to the individuals tax bill.

The motion was made by Commissioner Storey to coordinate with Attorney Watson regarding having the annual special assessment fees added to the individuals tax bill. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Attorney Watson said it can be added as advalorem but would require a resolution from the Board.

**SCOTT PENDARVIS, 911 COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
& I.T. ADMINISTRATOR**

Mr. Scott Pendarvis had nothing to present at this meeting.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Mrs. Kay McCallister had nothing to present at this meeting.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Director of Emergency Services Darian Brown presented the Board with a copy of the Budget report for last year. He said that EMS (Emergency Medical Services) budgeted 1.2 million dollars, and they made \$167,737.31 above what they budgeted.

He said this includes 6.7 transports per day to Gainesville with three trucks running the transports.

Community Paramedicine Program:

Director Brown said that they are applying for a grant with FDOH (Florida Department of Health) and were awarded approval but have not received funds as of yet because the FDOH had a change in attorney's which has slowed things down a bit. He said the amount awarded is around \$66,666.00 per

year for three (3) years. He added that the FDOH is working with a private contractor the State provided to facilitate a plan to move forward. He also reminded the Board that the approved funds are for the purpose of hiring a second person to help in the Community Paramedicine Program.

Mr. Brown stated that a State Department of Health data team member will be coming to our County on December 3, 2024, to observe Mrs. Allison and her methods within the Community Paramedicine Program. He said that Mrs. Allison sees the most patients in the whole State of Florida for just one employee.

He also said there will be a national meeting for MIH (Mobile Integrated Health) in February of 2025 in Savannah Georgia. He stated the Community Paramedicine Program is moving forward and they are using the Opioid funds and EMS dollars as well as other state grants to keep the program afloat.

Commissioner Stephenson recommended doing something for Mrs. Alison to show recognition for her outstanding work within the program.

Director Brown said the EMS has nominated Mrs. Alison for National and State Community Paramedicine Employee of the year this year and she came in second place. He said they will nominate her again this year as well.

Fire Inspections:

Mr. Brown asked for Board approval for Mr. Jimmy Golden to perform fire inspections at Otter Creek Fire Station. He said that Attorney Watson has reviewed the contract and said it was good if the Board approves.

The motion was made to approve Mr. Jimmy Golden to perform fire inspections for Otter Creek fire station made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.

Director Brown also updated the Board on the Hurricane Relief Funds and Repairs.

He stated that the County previously applied for a three (3) year loan and presented this to the Finance Department. He said the window has closed for applications for the first storm but has come open again and the County is eligible to apply again. He said that the County will have to provide proof of storm loss for approval.

Mr. Brown also recommended the Board look at three (3) year reoccurring appropriations request to help sustain the County. He added that the EOC staff would be happy to help with this if needed.

Director of Emergency Services Mr. Brown stated that he would like to request again this year for the maintenance building and major fire truck company service center in Cross City as well as the Board look into paving the parking lot and adding the loop.

Mr. Brown stated that the County insurance cut a check for the County ambulance wreck in the amount of \$165,000 but said that was nowhere near enough to rebuild or buy a new one. He said they found a used Ford Chassis in Texas with 182,000 miles that cost \$55,000 plus an extra \$15,000 for decaling and stretchers retrofitted. He added that their rechassis is currently in Texas, and they should be getting that back in February of 2025. He said they also have the two new ambulances that should be ready at the end of March or the first of April 2025.

Mr. Brown gave an update on Fire Station 4 and said that all the stud walls are up, plumbing is going in, the A/C company has been there and working on the A/C, floors are finished, the tank and pump system have been installed, they are starting the concrete, and it should be done by mid-February.

He stated that they have come to agreement with both landowners for Fire Stations 3 and 6 and are in the process of getting an appraisal for both properties and are comfortable with the numbers.

Commissioner Stephenson asked Mr. Brown to get with Mr. Hutchison to fill the cracks at the EOC with cold packs. Mr. Brown said they have already done this, and it is still cracking. It was recommended by Commissioner Stephenson to do it again as a temporary fix until the drive was fixed permanently.

Chief Matt Ferguson told the Board that in 2023 a data collection project was performed on our Community Paramedicine Program taking the ten (10) highest utilizer patients and observing how often they called for emergency services without community paramedicine and with the program. He said the patients being observed and utilizing the Community Paramedicine Program went from 48 responses per month on average to 7 resulting in a savings of \$23,042.00 per month.

Mr. Brown reminded everyone of the Christmas in Dixie on Dec 13, 2024; at 6-9 PM at Roy Ward Little League Park in Cross City.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Mrs. Gail Carter presented her October Report and explained it as well as asked if there were any questions. No questions were presented.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Mrs. Holly Houghton was not present at the meeting.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Mrs. Angie Crowley had nothing to present at this meeting.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

Action Items:

1. Request Board approval to renew the AIG Fuel Tank Insurance with Florida League of Cities. *The motion to approve to renew the AIG Fuel Tank Insurance with Florida League of Cities was made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.*
2. Request Board execute the Contract Addendum with Liberty Partners, LLC to include Legislative Appropriations services ending on May 15, 2025, at no extra cost.

The motion to approve to execute the Contract Addendum with Liberty Partners, LLC to include Legislative Appropriations services ending on May 15, 2025, at no extra cost was made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Mr. Jenkins stated that the County has a loader at the Rock Mine that they are leasing and need guidance on whether to continue leasing or purchase a new one. He said the lease costs \$5,000 monthly and he has received a quote for a new one of \$172,378.00. He explained that the monthly payment would be around \$3,000 a month.

Mr. Jenkins stated that he is currently in negotiations with Capital City Bank and should know the loan details by midday tomorrow.

Commissioner Storey stated that purchasing a loader verses leasing one would be saving the County around \$2,000 a month.

Finance Director Brenda Royal stated that the \$5,000 they are spending currently to lease the loader wasn't in the budget for this year to begin with. She said she understands that they need one, but the money wasn't in the budget from the start.

County Road Superintendent Steve Hutchison said that the County began renting one after the storms and had to have it.

Mrs. Royal said that if the County does choose to purchase a loader, she recommends an annual payment loan rather than a monthly payment, this being because the County is not prepared to make a monthly payment at this time. She said they would have to work it into next year's budget as an annual payment.

Commissioner Stephenson suggested going ahead and purchasing the loader.

Commissioner Storey recommended talking to Capital City Bank and getting back with the Board regarding loan details.

Information Items:

Reminder County Offices will be closed on Nov 28-29, 2024, in observance of Thanksgiving.

It was brought to the attention of the Board that Governor Ron DeSantis has approved for all State employees to have an additional day off for Thanksgiving Holidays on Wednesday, November 27, 2024. Mr. Jenkins asked if the County wants to give the County employees the extra day off as well.

The Motion for the County to work Wednesday, November 27, 2024, was made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Hatch. Board approved.

The Motion for the County Manager John Jenkins salary to begin at \$84,000 with a six month evaluation for increase made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

The Motion for the County Manager John Jenkins' salary of \$84,000 to retro back to the position hire date made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Chana Watson stated that she brought some information on the valorem taxes in case anyone had any questions.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Mrs. Barbie Higginbotham had nothing to present at this meeting.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Wood asked about the cut off date for a landowner to have their debris out by the roadside for pickup.

Mr. Hutchison said that he was told that the Department of Transportation (DOT) hasn't finished their first round, and the property owner will have until around the first of February.

Commissioner Hatch stated that in the town of Suwannee, a group of neighborhood people are requesting millings to raise their roads up. He asked if the County could provide the millings, and the landowners would pay the contractor to put it on the roads.

County Grant Coordinator Martha McCaskill recommended reading the contract with Anderson Columbia to see if it says that the County gets the millings.

Mr. Hutchison said he spoke with Hunter Anderson with Anderson Columbia, and he said the County gets half and Anderson Columbia gets half. Attorney Watson stated that she has not seen this in the contract.

Commissioner Jamie Storey congratulated Commissioner Stephenson on his election as the Chairman of the Board.

Commissioner Osteen stated that he will not be at the next meeting, but gave his number for those who might need to contact him while he is away.

Attorney Watson stated that the County doesn't have any Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers at this time. She said she has ordered ten (10) more, but they have not arrived yet.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that someone in his district requested a FEMA trailer and was currently living in an RV, but wasn't a permanent resident and he said he explained to him that he didn't qualify if he wasn't a permanent resident.

Commissioner Storey wished everyone a good Thanksgiving and for everyone to be safe.

Mrs. Barbie Higginbotham invited everyone to join them for the Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving morning.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. J.D. Nobles stated he was told that the canal cleanup in Horseshoe Beach should be done this week.

He also said that at the last Board of County Commissioner's meeting Mr. John Locklear wanted to contact the town mayor or himself for logistics regarding the dredging and said to have Mr. Locklear contact him.

Mr. Nobles also wanted an update on the status of the BP (Restore Act Grant-BP Oil spill) Funding money. Commissioner Hatch stated he also wanted an update and has scheduled Mr. Greg Bailey to give an update at the next Board of County Commissioner's Meeting.

Mr. Nobles also mentioned that the lime rock the County laid in the roads was great but has since started eroding and he recommended maybe adding a seawall as part of that project to keep the roads from eroding.

Attorney Watson stated that she has drafted a Hold Harmless Agreement for the encroachment of the North side property owner of the property next to the North side of the park for signing by the Board if they approve.

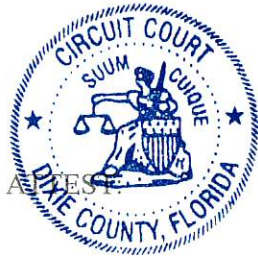
The Motion made to approve the signing of the Hold Harmless Agreement for the Property Owner by the Park made by Commissioner Hatch. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that he would like to see a tax break down for the Town of Horseshoe. Mr. J.D. Nobles said the breakdown is as follows; 2 mil goes to Horseshoe and the County gets 19.125.

ADJOURN


Commissioner Storey made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Wood seconded. Board approved.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA





Jody Stephenson, Chairman
Mark Hatch, 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.