

Workshop

BOCC and Town of Cross City Council

Cross City Public Library

16328 SE Hwy 19, Cross City, FL 32628

April 12, 2023 – 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

Daniel Wood, District 2

Mark Hatch, District 3

Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman

David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

Duane Cannon, County Manager

Paul Gainey, Asst. County Manager

Chana Watson, County Attorney

Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court

Della Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk

Kay McCallister, Tourist Development Council

Michael Latson, Solid Waste Director

Cindy Bellot, Library Director

TOWN OF CROSS CITY COUNCIL

Kenneth “Tank” Lee, Cross City Mayor

Jerry “Ryan” Fulford, Cross City Vice Mayor

Kirk Marhefka, Council Member

TOWN OF CROSS CITY STAFF

John Driggers, City Manager

Joseph Henderson, City Superintendent

Lindsey Lander, City Attorney

Mike Cassidy

Carol West, Economic Development

Karen Van Aernam, Cross City Restore and Renew

CALL TO ORDER

The Workshop was called to order at 4:00 PM by Commissioner Storey.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation was led by Cross City Mayor “Tank” Lee and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by Commissioner Hatch.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND OTHER COORDINATED EFFORTS

Commissioner Storey started the conversation by saying the county and city are here to discuss working together on several projects. He then opened the floor for anyone to speak.

City Manager John Driggers informed everyone that Council Member Angela Carter apologizes for her absence.

Cross City Vice Mayor Ryan Fulford suggested they start with discussing economic development.

Commissioner Hatch informed everyone about the Next Level Economic Development event that he and Carol West had attended in Perry, FL. He said the meeting was hosted by Duke Energy and he would like to have a joint meeting for the county and the city to attend. He said they discussed retail sales and vacant building taxes. He said there are a lot of vacant buildings within the city and the county, some of which are owned by the city or the county, most are privately owned.

Vice Mayor Fulford informed everyone about a meeting he and Ms. Carol West and Ms. Karen Van Aernam attended in Live Oak, FL. He said it was very informative on how to obtain funding for different projects. He said he had presented this information to his council.

Commissioner Hatch said there are several programs that can help the city and the county, and they should work together and share information to help each other accomplish their goals. He said he would like to schedule more meetings together.

Vice Mayor Fulford said communication between the two governing bodies is important.

Ms. Carol West informed everyone that Duke Energy brought in Ms. Sarah Beth Stewart and her team from Alabama for the meeting and she suggested they assess their strengths and weaknesses and inventory the potential properties for economic development.

Commissioner Hatch informed everyone that he and Ms. Carol West, and County Manager Duane Cannon attended an economic development meeting in Alabama. He said the town’s Mayor gave them a tour and informed them of all the improvements they have made through the years. He said this town was very similar to our own.

County Manager Duane Cannon said his eyes were opened to the administration side of projects. He said you have to pick a project and start. He said there are grants and opportunities available, but the progress is slow. He gave an example of the Ruth Rains Middle School Drainage Project which started in 2015-2016 and is finishing construction in 2023. He suggested they collaborate and move forward with a project.

Ms. Carol West stated the town of 3,400 people in Alabama was able to get a Hotel, a Kidney Dialysis Center, a Heart Cath Lab and a car dealership opened in their town.

Ms. West said the Cross City Airport is the best asset in the county, and it needs a publicity plan and management.

Vice Mayor Fulford said the city has seven (7) usable acres near airport.

County Manager Duane Cannon said the county has three (3) Box Hangers and eight (8) T-Hangers that are rented at the Cross City Airport.

Ms. Kay McCallister with the Tourist Development Council asked about the status of the Cross City Train Depot Project. She said the DEP contract expired as of 2020. She said the TDC would like to partner with the city and renew this contract. She said the TDC needs an office and would like to have one at the Train Depot.

County Manager Duane Cannon said he and City Manager John Driggers had spoken about the city's interest in acquiring this property.

City Manager John Driggers said they are in the process of getting a MOU with DEP.

County Manager Duane Cannon asked if this would be an opportunity to partner with the TDC for funding.

City Manager John Driggers said they must remove the lead based paint and the Train Depot will also need some structural repairs.

Ms. Kay McCallister said there is \$10,000.00 in the TDC budget for the Train Depot and it qualifies as a historic project.

City Manager John Driggers informed everyone that he, Ed and Bev Pivacek, and Ruth Anne Lovelace traveled to Homerville, Georgia to see a Train Depot that had been revitalized. He said the building is now used for meetings and events. He said this would be a good idea for the Cross City Train Depot. He said there are people willing to make donations to this project.

County Manager Duane Cannon said the Board would partner with the TDC and the city to help with this project.

Mr. Mike Cassidy asked about the annual average budget for the TDC.

Ms. McCallister replied \$120,000.00 per year. She said they must follow the statutes for spending tourism funds.

City Manager John Driggers said the Main Street Program requires funds be paid out of a budget. He said the city cannot afford that right now.

Cross City Council Member Kirk Marhefka said they are getting quotes for the lead paint removal from the Depot.

Ms. Karen Van Aernam asked if the DEP will pay for the lead paint removal.

Council Member Marhefka replied yes.

City Manager John Driggers said there is no access to the front of the building because that piece of property is privately owned by Steve Felty

Ms. Karen Van Aernam said Mr. Felty wants to sell this property for \$60,000.00. She said they should look into possibly purchasing this property.

Commissioner Hatch asked if they could do a land swap with Mr. Felty.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if Mr. Felty could donate the property to the city.

The town Council and the Board also discussed parking issues with the Depot.

Ms. Carol West informed everyone about the Historical Preservation Committee that came from Tallahassee a few years ago and did an analysis and recommended the Depot and the Old High School Gym as candidates for historical sites. She said \$25,000.00 was available for the project back then.

City Manager John Driggers said they have received a grant for the Historical Assessment and Declaration of 127 sites within the city by June.

Commissioner Hatch asked what is involved with the process.

City Manager John Driggers said you can do whatever you want to bring things up to code. However, you can't change things without their approval. He said if you have a shingle roof it must stay a shingle roof, etc.

Commissioner Hatch said there is a place in Lake City like this.

City Manager John Driggers said a Historical Designation is different than a Historical District.

Commissioner Hatch asked what's the plan for moving forward. He said residents are limited on choices for spending their money withing the county.

City Manager John Driggers said it may be possible to run the water and sewer lines from the High School over to the Industrial Park to help improve the infrastructure.

Commissioner Hatch said that Broadband will help too.

City Manager John Driggers said 1/3 of the Town of Cross City Water customers have sewer. He said he has applied for three (3) grants for the sewer expansion throughout the city. He said they have been awarded one (1) of the three (3) grants already.

Ms. Carol West said statistically Dixie County is prone to attract a Tractor Supply, a Popeyes, a Zaxbys, and or a CVS. She said the company of Walmart is creating a walk-in clinic which allows a \$35.00 co pay and with no insurance needed.

Cross City Mayor "Tank" Lee asked what's the unemployment rate for the Dixie County. He said having a workforce is also an issue for economic development.

Commissioner Hatch said there are some training programs through the state for employers and employees that can also help.

Ms. Carol West said the existing businesses need to know they are first priority.

Ms. West said there is a three (3) day program with the College of Central Florida where people can make \$18.00 per hour, once completed, to repair internet.

Commissioner Stephenson said there is a huge concern with illegal migrant workers impacting the workforce. He said there are 600,000 in Florida of which 200,000 are applying for green cards.

Commissioner Stephenson informed everyone that Low Income Housing is another concern. He said if 30 percent of the population is considered low income, they can lease government or private land for this use and the county or city has no say so on the density and none on height requirements either. He said these homes do not pay ad valorem taxes either.

Commissioner Hatch said he is concerned about term limits for City Council and Commissioners and School Board Members. He said other people who are not native to the area may not have the same vision for the county.

Cross City Mayor "Tank" Lee said none of the members on the High Springs Council are native people.

Vice Mayor Fulford asked about the Depot.

Ms. Kay McCallister asked if anyone had a plan or vision on how to make the Depot look.

City Manager John Driggers replied he does have some ideas.

Cross City Mayor "Tank" Lee suggested it be a museum.

Commissioner Hatch recommended they schedule another meeting at the Cross City Library on June 14, 2023 at 4:00 PM.

County Manager Duane Cannon informed everyone about the current CDBG projects happening around the county. He said the resurfacing of 95 and 97 is going on. He said the Drainage Projects and cleaning the Airport Canal will help the Cross City Correctional Facility and relieve pressure off the Town of Cross City. He said the evacuation of the prison costs the city some revenue. He said they are also working on more preventative measures. He said within six (6) to eight (8) months the canal systems throughout the city should be cleaned up.

City Manager John Driggers said they are acquiring administrative and engineering services for their mitigation project.

County Manager Duane Cannon asked if the city had a completed survey for the Old Jail Project.

City Manager John Driggers replied yes.

County Attorney Chana Watson requested a copy of the survey for the legal description.

County Manager Duane Cannon said the county will be selling their portion of this property.

City Manager John Driggers said they have a grant for funding the retention pond on the other side of this property. He said phase two (2) will take the drainage out to the Nature Trail Canal.

He said another drainage project will move water through the Old Vocational School canals and out to Belly Deep.

Commissioner Hatch asked who owns the Housing Units behind the Old Jail and can they get some funding to update these units.

City Manager John Driggers said these are Federally funded. He said the private road that accesses the property is damaged and the owners won't repair it.

City Manager John Driggers said the city is currently working on sewer expansion through the city and have asked for appropriations money for a fire truck.

Vice Mayor Fulford asked about the tourist tax money going to Taylor County.

Ms. Kay McCallister said they are working on a program requiring a license for overnight rentals. She said the Airbnb and VRBO owners must update each property to send taxes to the proper county. She said they are working on a legal letter informing the owners of their responsibility to update their records so that Dixie receives the taxes.

City Manager John Driggers informed everyone that the city was awarded SCOP for the road from 351 A down by City Hall.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

There were no comments or concerns expressed at this time.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Hatch made the motion to adjourn at 5:25 PM. Commissioner Osteen seconded. Board approved.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:

Jamie Storey

Jamie Storey, Chairman

Barbie Higginbotham

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.