

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2020

NOTE: If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record for the proceedings and may need to insure that a verbatim record is made.

PRESIDING: Karen Cossey, Chair

RECORDING: Kellie Hendricks Connell, Clerk of Courts & Comptroller

ATTENDING: Commissioner Lacey Cannon; Commissioner Willie Croft; Commissioner Channing Dobbs; Commissioner Jimmy Tallman; James Williams, County Coordinator; Dianne Hannon, Board Secretary; Russ Wade, County Attorney

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chair Cossey called the hearing to order. Commissioner Tallman offered the invocation and led Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Cossey welcomed the public and called for public comments.

Lindsey Hughes approached the Board and asked the she be able to deliver public comments after EMS Director Wayne Clemons presents information to the Board, and Chair Cossey granted her request.

Kristi McAllister, 4-H Program Director, approached the Board and stated the Union County Livestock Association needs two roll-off containers for waste disposal at the upcoming livestock show in March. Chair Cossey suggested for the Solid Waste Department to provide two containers, and remove them after the show at no cost, if the livestock association paid the tipping fees. **Commissioner Cannon moved, and Commissioner Croft seconded, to provide two roll-off containers, and UCLA be billed for only the tipping fees. The motion passed unanimously.**

Tommy Holmes approached the Board, and asked that the two speed bumps by his home on 146th Lane that were removed be reinstalled. Shelton Arnold, Road Superintendent, indicated that he would follow the pleasure of the Board regarding the matter, and the Board agreed by general consensus.

Billy Townsend, Union County Sheriff's Office, told the Board about a recent animal cruelty case identified by the Animal Control Department. The Sheriff's Office identified multiple concerns and has served search warrants. The case will be a large case, and wanted the Board to know that the Sheriff's Office and the Animal Control Department have a good working relationship.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Cossey welcomed the public to the meeting and called for Board action regarding the Consent Agenda, which included minutes from the January 21, 2020 Planning & Zoning Board Meeting, January 21, 2020 Public Hearing and January 21, 2020 Regular Meeting. **Commissioner Tallman moved to approve the consent agenda, and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

Chair Cossey brought to the Board's attention that \$4,640 will be needed for operating expenses and utilities for the new Agriculture Education Building. **Commissioner Tallman moved and Commissioner Dobbs seconded that the expense be funded, and all commissioners voted for the motion.** Clerk Connell reminded the Board that the funding would require moving the money from somewhere, and was asked to present a Budget Amendment in February.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Chair Cossey called EMS Director Wayne Clemons to recognize an employee. Mr. Clemons called forward Patricia Burkell to be recognized as Employee of the Month. He told the Board she is a great asset to the EMS Department, and even with her husband being deployed, she is still on the job and does her job well.

FRIENDS OF THE NRA ARCHERY GRANT

Commissioner Cannon reported that he has worked with Mike Weeks, Chair of the local Chapter of Friends of the NRA, to help write this grant from the Friends of the NRA to Union County's 4-H Archery Club, the Bullseye Brigade. They were able to give bows suitable for ages 8 to adult, compound bows, and targets. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Weeks and the Friends of the NRA for \$14,200 worth of equipment. Mike Weeks recognized Eric Wilson, the instructor and 4-H Leader for his volunteer work with the kids, and Kristi McCallister for her help in running the 4-H program. Mr. Weeks added that the Friends of the NRA holds a banquet each year to raise money, and Chairs for each Chapter throughout the state meet to decide how to spend the money, and that he is one of the senior members of the Board, and able to carry a voice for Union County. Commissioner Cannon noted how many more kids can be accommodated in this program because of Mr. Weeks, and thanked Mr. Wilson for all that he does for the club. Mr. Wilson added that they take a lot of kids to competition, and about 95% place.

CLAY ELECTRIC OPERATION ROUND-UP GRANT FOR UNION COUNTY RECREATION BOARD

Chair Cossey recognized Jordan Wade and John Henry Whitehead from Clay Electric, and Lori Burke, Lynda Pettit and Kevin Orton from the Rec Board. Mr. Wade and Mr. Whitehead presented a check for \$14,909 to the Rec Board. The Rec Board members thanked Jimmy Williams for his assistance in obtaining the grant, and stated that this helps them serve their kids better.

Jordan Wade informed the Board and the public that Operation Round-Up started in 2017, and rounds bills up to the nearest dollar, and yields about \$70,000 a month. He stated they have given over \$2 million, and that grants can be applied for annually. He also noted that Volunteer Fire Departments are eligible as well.

RED CROSS, MS. KIM ANNE LINTHICUM

Chair Cossey recognized Ms. Kim Anne Linthicum. Ms. Linthicum told the Board about their program to install free smoke alarms. She stated that when a fire starts, people have just a little over two minutes to get out safely. She thanked the Board for allowing them to come in and help. She expressed appreciation to Chief Hughes, Lori Ashe and Mickey Rooney, and added that they were able to install 103 smoke alarms in 63 homes.

Tim Allen thanked Ms. Linthicum for the Red Cross's assistance in repairing two homes that were damaged by a recent wind storm. He was able to make a connection between he and the two families, and the Red Cross was able to help make the repairs.

FLORIDA CROWN WORK FORCE

Eugene Dukes reported to the Board that he has been working with Jimmy Williams to get a staff person working for the County paid by Florida Crown, funded by federal and state sources. Commissioner Cannon asked Mr. Dukes to elaborate, and he responded that Florida Crown is supplying the County with an employee, paid entirely by Florida Crown for 36 hours per week for one year. Mr. Williams recommended that this employee's first responsibility be to work at the Rec Department maintaining the facilities, and also at the Road Department to build a skill set for the employee. He noted that he is trying to get a second employee, and if successful, should be put in courthouse maintenance to assist Ms. Cushman.

Chair Cossey called for Board action regarding the agreement. **Commissioner Cannon moved to approve the agreement with Florida Crown. Commissioner Croft seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.**

PROPOSED UNION COUNTY-FIRE RESCUE

Wayne Clemons, EMS Director, gave a presentation to the Board in response to Commissioner Cannon's request for information at the last meeting. He recommended that one fire fighter be employed 24/7, and this would

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require three full-time staff, and three part-time staff, and would cost approximately an additional \$270,000. Mr. Clemons stated that a paid fire fighter would work with the volunteer fire fighters, and made it clear the volunteers would still be needed. He recognized Clerk Connell to present information for a possible funding source. Clerk Connell reported that there was an additional 1-cent sales tax that was available. She stated that based on conversations with multiple citizens, they believed a sales tax was the most fair tax because everyone pays it. She added that it also would be bringing money into the County from purchases made by non-County residents, and that the voters would be able to make the decision.

A member of the public asked if the station would be placed in District 4, and Commissioner Cannon answered that the Board was looking at property near Harmony Baptist Church which would serve both Districts 3 & 4. Commissioner Cannon asked to verify that the Sales Tax Revenue would be limited to Fire-Rescue, and Clerk Connell and Attorney Wade confirmed that it would. He also asked about funds to municipalities, and Attorney Wade answered that they don't have a Fire or Rescue Department, and would therefore not be allowed to lawfully spend, and that we could enter into an Interlocal Agreement with the municipalities to keep the funds in exchange for providing the service. Mary Brown, Library Director, asked about a sunset provision, and Russ Wade answered that he doesn't know anything about it sunseting.

Eugene Dukes asked if this would change the Special Assessment, and discussion ensued regarding the statutory requirement to lower other taxes and charges if enacted. Commissioner Cannon noted that having a Fire-Rescue Department greatly widens the opportunities for grants over having only an Emergency Medical Service, and specifically stated it would be very likely that we would get the SAFER Grant.

Lindsey Hughes approached the Board with multiple concerns. She stated that throughout the US, 53% of fire departments are paid, and 47% are volunteer, and she is concerned with the change. She agrees with Mr. Clemons that the ISO rating would significantly improve, and there would be a quicker response. Ms. Hughes asked the Board to consider how the changes would affect the volunteers, and that there be clear guidelines on the roles of volunteers and paid staff. Ms. Hughes expressed some concern regarding a comment from Mr. Williams that the County could not hire staff from within. She agreed that this change would result in more highly trained first responders, but stated that the Volunteer Fire Department is already providing safety training for the community. Commissioner Cannon stated that Mr. Clemons made it very clear in his presentation that volunteers are not going away, and will still be needed. He also addressed some concerns made by Ms. Hughes that the EMS budget increased because of a step plan put in place years ago, and Clerk Connell added that it is because of a drop in revenue from payments from services. Commissioner Cannon encouraged her to not listen to rumors, and to attend Board meetings to get good information. He also addressed her concern about not being able to hire from within, and stated that as long as an employee meets the qualifications, they could be hired from within the County. Mr. Williams also clarified that he had made some statements that were misunderstood, and there are not restrictions on hiring from within the County as long as policy is followed. He further clarified statements made prior to the meeting that there is no preferential treatment given to County employees, as we are an equal opportunity employer. Commissioner Cannon also stated the he believed that some of the equipment requests were lavish and unnecessary, which is why he cut some of the budget requests; communication with Bradford County is currently taking place regarding purchasing some of their unneeded equipment.

Chair Cossey asked for the pleasure of the Board. **Commissioner Tallman moved for Attorney Wade to draft an ordinance to place the 1-cent sales tax on the ballot. Commissioner Croft seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

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Mr. Williams asked about a deadline for timing, and Attorney Wade answered that he would need to talk with the Supervisor of Elections. Mrs. Brown provided some information regarding the timeline that she follows for the Library Referendum to be placed on the ballot every two years. Chair Cossey asked Mrs. Brown when she presents the ordinances to the Board, and Ms. Brown answered that May is good, and June is possible.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COORDINATOR AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

Mr. Williams provided an update on upcoming road projects, specifically noting that 8th Avenue was about to begin construction, and that he is communicating with the hospital and school bus garage to minimize their inconvenience. He added that he has spoken with Mr. Whidden about possibly applying for a CDBG Grant.

Mr. Williams told the Board that a grant had been received from Suwannee Valley for \$9,730 for equipment at the ag building. Clerk Connell stated that a budget amendment was needed to recognize the revenue and approve the expenditure. **Commissioner Tallman moved to amend the budget for \$9,730 in grant revenue for equipment at the ag building. Commissioner Dobbs seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Mr. Williams also addressed the mobile home that is on the property purchased next to Harmony Baptist Church, adding that it could be moved and setup as a home. **Commissioner Tallman moved to sell the mobile home, and Commissioner Cannon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

Mr. Williams also reported that he's been contacted by the Governor's office regarding the County's appropriations request for courthouse security funding, which is positive news. He added that the ag building grant has been closed out and that Windstream needs to hook up phones, and IFAS needed to move Internet services to move in.

Kim Hayes reported that the Toxic Round-up is coming up, and that she has applied for three grants, and has received two. She found out earlier in the day that one is for \$20,000 for mosquito control, and recommends it be used to get a new sprayer. She stated that the City of Jacksonville may be giving the County a truck, and this would allow her to spray with two trucks this season.

Tim Allen, Emergency Management Director, said he is waiting on the State to review the emergency operations plan. He added that he is putting out bids for debris removal just in case of a major storm.

Luke Harlow reported that there is an upcoming training program regarding conservation easements on February 20, at the new ag building. He also thanked Commissioner Cannon and Mr. Weeks for their assistance in getting the Friends of the NRA grant.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Cannon echoed appreciation to Mr. Weeks and added that the Friends of the NRA banquet is in June in Starke.

With no further business, Chair Cossey adjourned the meeting at 7:47 pm.

Adopted by vote of the Board of County Commissioners on March 16, 2020.