

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 15, 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 ensure that a verbatim record is made.

PRESIDING: Karen Cossey, Chair

RECORDING: Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk of Courts & Comptroller; F/N/A Kellie Hendrick Connell

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 meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Commissioner Dobbs offered the invocation and led Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Pastor Patrick Maxwell, Victory Christian Church Pastor approached the Board to inform them that he will be hosting a March & Empowerment Day on June 27, 2020 at 9:00 am to 11:00 am. This is a not a protest or rally, it is an event to unite against social ills and injustices. Chair Cossey thought our county was already well unified and asked if we were expecting any out-of-towners that may possibly cause any problems. Mr. Patrick Maxwell stated that while we don't have any problems in Lake Butler, he believes we have a duty to stand up for other communities that have problems. Mr. Maxwell estimated that 75% of the Union County High School graduates will leave our community. Chair Cossey asked about the virus and how would that affect the event. Mr. Maxwell has asked and will inform everyone that they are to wear masks and will ask everyone to maintain social distancing. Commissioner Cannon asked about road closures and his plans for closing State Road 100, which will have to be done through Florida Department of Transportation, and if this is not granted, what is his alternate plan? Mr. Maxwell stated that they didn't have one. Chair Cossey suggested to have the event at Lakeside Park as opposed to the courthouse.

Sara Owen, Deputy City Manager, requested from the Board that the County exercise the reversion clause in the deed granting land to build RMC West Unit to the State of Florida, and then lease that land to the City on a long-term lease for one dollar per year, and provided a copy of an Email from the Division of State Lands. She stated that the City is planning to build a new Waste Water Treatment Facility, for which they have been awarded a grant through an alternate water supply program through DEP. The Department of Corrections has agreed to use reclaimed water in the future. The current challenge is land to place the new facility on. The Department of Corrections asked the City of Lake Butler to work with the Division of State Lands, which has brought them to the current request. Ms. Owen offered many options, and she favors Option 1, where Union County can exercise right of reversion under deed restrictions. Commissioner Tallman wanted to know how much land is needed? Ms. Owen answered that she, Mr. Williams, and the Division of State Lands and the Department of Corrections met virtually last week; they need approximately 24 acres, which will include a solar field to power the plant. There are two phases. The first phase will add 1 million gallons of capacity from the current facility. The second phase has provisions for another 1 million gallons, for a total of 2 million gallon capacity. Chair Cossey asked about trading property between the City and the County. Commissioner Dobbs said the County could expand facilities in the future, and he sees no reason to give the entire 80 acres. Ms. Owen added that the entire plan is affected by Department of Corrections and Division of State Lands. Commissioner Tallman expressed that he was concerned about the proximity to the Ag Building, but sees that it would be a good distance away. Ms. Owen reiterated that she is asking for permission to move forward with the proposal, and allow the City of Lake Butler

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and Union County to work directly together. Commissioner Tallman asked if she was thinking about longer-term plans. Ms. Owen was open and encouraged that the infrastructure is necessary for growth. Commissioner Cannon asked about the possibility of the City of Lake Butler to deed the Fire Station to the County. Ms. Owner did not provide an answer. She said the next step is to survey the land, and for legal counsel to draft a letter to Division of State Lands from Union County to express the desire to exercise the right of reversion. Chair Cossey asked the pleasure of the Board. Commissioner Dobbs said he would like to table the matter. Commissioner Cannon believes it would be beneficial, but needs more information. The Board reached a consensus to revisit the matter next month. Mr. Williams said that the Department of Corrections has given the City of Lake Butler site access, for the study and soil testing. Commissioner Cannon said he needs more information from the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Tallman asked about the land base for increase and need for spray fields. The City's engineer has answered that capacity wouldn't rely on spraying fields alone, that there will be manmade wetlands, which is encouraged by DEP and Suwanee River Water Management District encourage this. **Commissioner Dobbs motioned to table the matter and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Tallman moved to approve the consent agenda, and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Included in the consent agenda were minutes from the May 18, 2020 Public Hearing, May 18, 2020 Planning & Zoning Board Public Hearing, May 18, 2020 Regular Meeting, May 26, 2020 Special Meeting and Budget Amendment 2020-02.

CONSIDERATION FOR RESIDENTIAL IMPACT FEE

John "JR" Davis addressed the Board, stating there is a need for new Residential Building Fees. He thanked Clerk & Comptroller, Kellie Hendricks Connell and Mr. Williams for sharing information. Baker County has one of the highest fees in the area. He presented three proposals, each with a \$100 fee for the first 1,000 square feet, and \$20, \$25 and \$30 for every additional hundred feet, and used 2019 actual building permits to demonstrate potential revenue ranging from \$22,000 to \$29,000 with the proposal he used. He expressed that our permitting fees are extremely old, and should be enough to cover the cost of operating the building department; and this would be a minimal amount of money for average homes compared to the price of construction. The Board expressed general agreement. Mr. Whidden is a low cost for his services. Clerk Connell informed the Board that Mr. Whidden will need to be reclassified from a contract employee to a regular employee, which she has discussed with him. This change will be made next budget year, and will add the cost of payroll taxes and retirement. Mr. Davis clarified that this should not apply to mobile homes moved within the county.

EMS MATCHING GRANT

Wayne Clemons, EMS Director, said there are 40 AED's in the County which were awarded last week, and he discussed with Mr. Williams and Clerk Connell disseminating those, and there are at least 45 are registered churches in the county according to the Ministerial Alliance. He reminded the Board that the grant was written for churches outside of the city with longer response time. Chair Cossey offered to meet with the Ministry Association. Clerk Connell said she needs Board action to declare a public purpose for the machines to be given to private organizations, and recommended that churches serve as sub-grantees and apply to County. The grant was written for four community centers, four government buildings, two sports complexes, and 30 churches and public gathering places. Mr. Clemons stated that earlier CPR and AED availability will save lives. Commissioner Tallman asked about the maintenance. Mr. Clemons said it was included for two years, after that it there will be a cost, and that institution where it is placed will be required to keep the machine maintained and inspected. Mr. Clemons suggested a committee be formed for this. Chair Cossey said she would be happy to serve. Commissioner Dobbs asked for a list of the churches that includes distance from the EMS stations, and number of

members, and the average age. Clerk Connell suggested to let the churches know to send that information to the County, and that some churches may already have an AED machine. Mr. Clemons emailed the Department of Health to find out if the buildings they are placed in can be changed. Commissioner Cannon and Commissioner Dobbs stated that churches and public gathering places should receive priority after county buildings, and instructed him to work through Mr. Williams to determine locations. **Commissioner Cannon moved to take into consider placing AED's in the churches and other public gathering places a public purpose, and for priority to be given to County buildings. Commissioner Dobbs seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

MERIDIAN BUDGET REQUEST

Deborah Gordon, Board of Directors Chair for Meridian, and Don Savoy, CEO of Meridian gave a report on the services they provide. These services include child psychiatry on a weekly basis, as well as mobile response, and spoke of the importance of 60-minute window to avoid crisis stabilization. They have staff on board 24/7. Due to COVID-19, Meridian closed the Union County office for one month, but were able to continue to provide services. In 2020, volume increased 35%. The penetration rate has improved, meaning Meridian is getting to the residents. Mr. Savoy gave additional information regarding the services provided to Union County citizens. Commissioner Dobbs suggested reaching out to the City of Lake Butler to take some financial burden off the County. Mr. Savoy let the Board know that the local match is for the purpose of responding to Baker Acts, which costs \$410 per day. Chair Cossey informed them that the Board will consider during budget.

ACORN DENTAL CLINIC BUDGET REQUEST

Chair Cossey stated that the Acorn Clinic is requesting \$10,000, and are currently budgeted for \$5,000. Currently, the clinic is closed due to COVID-19. Commissioner Tallman stated this should be considered during budget.

COMMISSIONER CANNON CITIZENSHIP AWARD

Commissioner Cannon made a promise to give back to the community if elected, and gives two citizenship awards every year as part of this promise. For outstanding students in the community, not academically. From Mr. Ripplinger and teachers, has folks from Jacksonville to review without names. 1 male and 1 female. Award and \$1,00 award. Anastasia, John.

2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

Zach Chalifour, James Moore & Co., thanked Clerk Connell, Pam Woodington, and the finance team in the Clerk's office for having records available quickly and efficiently, and that the report was ready months ago, but was waiting on an actuarial report. He informed the Board that Clerk Connell and staff have prepared a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the first time. This report includes heightened standards by the Governmental Finance Officers Association, and provides more information to users. This report includes a ten-year trend, and was a very large undertaking to prepare for the first time. Clerk Connell added that she had received encouragement to prepare the report and assistance from the Nassau County Clerk and his staff. Mr. Chalifour presented the CAFR, including general information, financial information and detailed 10 year trends for certain statistics. He stated that a CAFR is eligible to receive a Certificate of Achievement from GFOA, and expects that Union County's report will meet the qualifications. He directed members attention to page 9, which is the audit report, stating Union County is receiving the best report available, an unmodified opinion, which was not given because management had previously decided to not get actuarial study. He discussed the Single Audit Report performed for State grants, which had no findings. He added that internal control and compliance testing shows good processes and are they followed. He also discussed the management letter. Mr. Chalifour relayed to the Board that there was a notation that spending exceeded the approved budget in the SHIP fund, but added that it was due to a timing difference in unspent funds from the previous year expended in the current year. All audits for constitutional officers included no findings.

Mr. Chalifour then discussed the fund balance of the general fund over the past three years. There has been a decrease from the prior year, and this analysis excludes unspendable funds, restricted funds and assigned (ear marked). There has been a dip in fund balance, resulting from legal fees and the bat infestation of the courthouse. He told the Board that the GFOA, recommends a bare minimum of two months of operation carried in reserves. Union County at approximately 25%, or three months, which above minimum, but in his opinion is necessary. Carrying this balance will allow the county to meet challenging budget cycles, such as the Coronavirus. **Commissioner Cannon motioned to accept the CAFR and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

Clerk Connell presented the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR), and told the Board she was very excited about this report, which is the first annual report that is meant to relay information to the general population of the county and includes demographics, county officials and structure, financial information, history, economics and other information. She said that this is quite an accomplishment for a small county, as the next smallest county in the State that prepares one is Nassau County. Clerk Connell walked the commissioners through the report, highlighting various information throughout the report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cindy North asked to speak to the Board, and Chair Cossey granted her request. She expressed concern about a site on County Road 796 where there is a dump on private property under a grant from the Department of Environmental Protection. He was cited for a violation in the 90's. Ms. North added that someone opened a nurse on the corner, and expressed the opinion that these activities should be regulated, and required to obtain an occupational license. She told the Board that she has talked with Mr. Williams about the issues.

Commissioner Dobbs asked if the EPA has been contacted. She answered that John Trowell is being paid for the dump site. Commissioner Cannon offered to go take a look at it. Commissioner Tallman instructed Mr. Williams to contact DEP regarding the dump.

UNION COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES POSITION DISCUSSION

Chair Cossey said that Human Resources is a very important position. Commissioner Dobbs said that the board secretary and Mr. Williams have been handling the duties, and FAC is providing guidance. Commissioner Tallman asked Attorney Wade if the county is required to have Human Resource Department. Attorney Wade answered that the county has home-rule authority, and can structure how the county wants and the County Coordinator could do those duties if desired by the Board. Commissioner Tallman would like to absorb the position. He added that a few years ago there was an issue with a workers' comp claim and realizes the importance of the duties, and wants to make sure we can handle the issues without an HR position. Commissioner Tallman inquired of Clerk Connell of resources available, and she spoke of the Just Call program, which is provided at no cost through liability insurance, and is very responsive and reliable. **Commissioner Dobbs motioned to split duties between the Clerk and County Coordinator, and not hire an HR Coordinator at this time. Commissioner Cannon seconded the motion. The motion passed, and Chair Cossey voted against it.** Chair Cossey expressed concerns and doesn't think other Board members understand the seriousness of the position.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COORDINATOR

Chair Cossey said she was a tiebreaker vote, and her vote to hire Mr. Williams was based on her thinking that he is CEI certified and he is not. Mr. Williams gave a report on the accomplishments during his tenure, adding that he hasn't done it all alone, and credited many others in the county. He thanked the Board, and attributed the Enterprise Florida grant to Commissioner Cannon, who told him about the opportunity, and said it can be used for marketing and economic development. He said the Clay Electric Round-Up grant to Lynda Pettit who gave input, and he simply filled out the application. He found out the grant couldn't be given to government entities,

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arranged to give it directly to the Recreation Department. Mr. Williams discussed turn lanes on County Road 231, where the county has been working with DOT for 20-plus years, and he had resources to get data to get the project funded, in addition to SCRAP/SCOP funds. He mentioned the FDRP grant, on which he worked with Kimley-Horne to add a new ballfield and lighting. \$165,000 was awarded on a very tight application deadline. He relayed that \$400,000 appropriations from the State for courthouse security was obtained, and this was the first year a request was submitted through legislative request processes. He discussed the tire amnesty program, and has learned it takes a team to accomplish goals, and credits Union County as a whole. Commissioner Dobbs asked Mr. Williams to continue to discuss the improvements he has helped make. He discussed accomplishments including the county creating a new road construction fund, is working with state agencies and Clerk Connell to build funds to be able to make the match to apply for new grant opportunities, the savings in the Road Department that were used to buy new mulching head, worked with Wilson Whidden, Pam Woodinton and Luke Harlow to meet deadlines on the new Ag Education Building, obtaining an agreement with FWC for boat ramp maintenance, working with citizens to accomplish managed growth in the right way, the Board passed a resolution creating the Union County Economic Development Committee, instituted fleet management, which identifies and tracks equipment and analyzes if it is cheaper to replace than maintain, introducing and adopting a new logo and mission, vision and core value statements, developing and improving department websites, all paid by the Enterprise Florida Grant. Mr. Williams added that Commissioner Tallman tasked him to work with Florida Crown, and he has negotiated an employee at no cost, and a second for courthouse maintenance, but COVID-19 has put these on hold. He said the county needed additional CEI's, under Florida law, a single firms can't do design and inspection. He also discussed accomplishments regarding Human Resources, including service awards and birthday recognition, and annual evaluation program. He saw a need for policy changes, and reached out to FACT and the Krizner Group and found same problems as years ago. He has instituted a monthly directors meeting to discuss Board agenda items and find ways to work together to eliminate waste and costs. New Disaster Policies have been recommended and adopted, which will a better pay policy for FEMA reimbursement. He has made improvements to the travel policy and established and improved relationships with associations and other agencies, and attended the Washington, DC Fed Fly-in with Chair Cossey, which was the first time Union County attended. Mr. Williams also talked about Union County's improved participation in Rural County Days and the Florida Economic Development Council. The REDI annual meeting was held in Union County, and opportunities came from that meeting, including the FRDP grant for \$165,000 and EMS Hardening Grant for improvements to the EMS station. Union County is now a member of NACO; a resource helping the county learn how to deal with COVID, and keeping us informed directly. Mr. Williams asked for questions. Commissioner Cannon appreciates the review, but stated he didn't need it, as he has seen the improvements Mr. Williams has made, and added that he and Mrs. Dianne Hannon do a good job running the office. **Commissioner Cannon motioned to continue with plan when hired and give budgeted salary increase. Commissioner Dobbs seconded the motion. The motion passed, and Chair Cossey voted against it.**

Commissioner Tallman thanked Junior Arnold, Road Superintendent, for his department's quick response for storm cleaning on Sunday.

Tim Allen, Emergency Management Director, told the Board the 911 Department will receive \$12,000 to \$24,000 to help deal with COVID-19. Pam Woodington, Finance Director, reported that it was received today.

Mary Brown, Library Director, said Pastor Patrick Maxwell approached her for library to be involved in the gathering he discussed earlier. Mr. Williams spoke with Attorney Wade, and from administration perspective, there's no reason employees should not be allowed participate on their personal time. Commissioner Tallman said that the library shouldn't be involved directly, but staff could participate personally.

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Mr. Williams gave an update on road projects, stating they are all on schedule, and an update on current grants: Technical Assistant, courthouse security, and EMS hardening. He also addressed letters sent to the State regarding inmates work crews, stating the letters have been paid off, and we got two crews today. They are supervised directly by DOC only, and will remain until Phase III.

Mr. Williams also recommended the Board nominate a CARES Act Team to deal with the allocation received from the State to respond to the Coronavirus. He recommended Clerk Connell, Pamela Woodington, Mr. Williams, Tim Allen and a representative for the City of Lake Butler. **Commissioner Cannon moved to appoint the CARES Act Team members as recommended, and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

REPORT FROM KELLIE HENDRICKS CONNELL, CLERK OF COURTS

Clerk Connell told the Board there was an amount due on an ambulance loan, due to be paid off next year, and funds were available from savings in the fuel line item, which would save approximately \$2,500 in interest, and make the county entirely debt free, as this is the last remaining loan outstanding. **Commissioner Tallman moved to pay off the ambulance early, with the budget amendment from fuel expense, and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

REPORT FROM RUSSELL WADE, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Commissioner Tallman inquired about the public records request outstanding, and Attorney Wade answered that there has been no response from the requester.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Channing Dobbs, appreciated the report from JR Davis, and asked Mr. Williams and Clerk Connell build new fee structure to present to the Board. Commissioner Tallman said to lean on the higher side based on Mr. Davis's proposals. **Commissioner Tallman moved, and Commissioner Cannon seconded, for Mr. Williams and Clerk Connell to build a new fee structure for building permits. It passed unanimously.**

Commissioner Tallman reported that the Union County Livestock Association's Heifer and Goat show will be July 18th at the Ag Building.

Commissioner Cannon thanked Dianne Hannon for her work for the last few months running the office with only her and Mr. Williams. JR Davis thanked everyone for the work, and also entertained a cents per square foot option as other counties. He thanked Mr. Clemons for his work on the AED grant, staff screening people for Board meetings.

With no further business, Chair Cossey adjourned the meeting.

Adopted by vote of the Board of County Commissioners on October 19, 2020.