

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 17, 2022

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: James A. Tallman, Chair

RECORDING: Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk of Courts & Comptroller

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

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Tallman welcomed the public and called for public comments. There were none.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

**Commissioner Cannon moved to approve the consent agenda presented by Clerk Rhoades, which the Finance Report. Commissioner Dobbs seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

**CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH MERIDIAN HEALTHCARE**

Chair Tallman asked the pleasure of the Board regarding the proposed agreement. Clerk Rhoades mentioned to the Board that the Mental Health Coordinator from the School District had contacted her regarding the funding, and that she had put him in touch with Commissioner Perez to gain a better understanding of their needs. It was also noted that the amount of the agreement was much more than what was budgeted for, which was \$15,000. **Commissioner Dobbs moved, and Commissioner Cannon seconded, to approve the agreement with the amendment made to correct the amount of annual funding to \$15,000. The motion passed unanimously.**

**AMERICAN PHARMACISTS' MONTH PROCLAMATION**

William Garst, from Lake Butler Hospital, informed the Board of the importance of pharmacists in the healthcare system, and asked the Board adopt a Proclamation regarding such recognition for the month of October. **Commissioner Dobbs moved, and Commissioner Cannon seconded, to adopt the proclamation. The motion passed unanimously.**

**FAMILY COURT AWARENESS MONTH PROCLAMATION**

Attorney Wade read a proclamation regarding the importance of the family court system, emphasizing that the system prioritized child safety and acts in the best interest of children. **Commissioner Croft moved, and Commissioner Perez seconded, to adopt the proclamation. The motion passed unanimously.**

**FLSA SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**

Mr. Williams indicated to the Board that he has signed the settlement agreement that was approved in the shade session, but it is subject to ratification in a public meeting. The agreement was for \$60,000: \$28,000 in unpaid wages, \$28,000 in liquidated damages and \$14,000 in attorney fees. Commissioner Cannon requested the floor, and asked that the record reflect that once he and Mr. Williams were notified of the issue that Mrs. Burkel was working over 40 hours a week, but was only being paid for 40, they tried to talk to her and agreed that the County owed her some overtime wages. Mr. Williams met with her, but she refused to agree with anything that the County offered, and the County was forced through this lawsuit, where significant legal fees were incurred. He emphasized that the County tried to rectify the situation, and that it is very unfortunate that the employee wouldn't work with the County to come to an agreement of the amount of wages that were owed, and put a significant burden on the County. He said that in the shade session, the Board agreed to this agreement, but that they did not like it. It was

accepted because continuing to fight the issue would only put additional financial burden on the County, as the County would have to pay her attorney fees plus liquidated damages. He expressed that it is very unfortunate that an employee chose this route. Commissioner Cannon confirmed with Attorney Wade that a judge can reject this agreement. The attorney answered that, while it is possible, it is unlikely that a judge will reject it. He noted that the judge will need minutes from this meeting showing ratification of the acceptance of the agreement. **Commissioner Cannon moved to accept the agreement, and Commissioner Perez seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

Chair Tallman expressed that the County needs protection from this happening again, and that the new timekeeping system be made top priority. Clerk Rhoades added that a system is only as good as the people that operate it, and stated that manager training should be provided to all directors. Mr. Williams indicated that such training has been provided and recently reviewed.

#### **ESTIMATED SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS FROM PROPERTY APPRAISER**

JR Davis approached the Board, asking about the rectification of the problem with commercial garbage. Mr. Williams indicated that he has had conversations about the issue with Property Appraiser Bruce Dukes. Mr. Davis further inclined about the RV Park in Worthington Springs. Mr. Williams said that they have inquired about a dumpster, but have not gotten one from the County. There was discussion regarding amending the LDR's for mobile home parks, which would allow the county to charge an amount per lot, and also to give each lot a 911 address. Attorney Wade indicated that this may require changing the Comprehensive Land Use Code. Chair Tallman questioned whether most of these residents are truly transient or if they are semi-permanent, and noted that he believes semi-permanent should have to pay the same as a home, as they are generated the same costs for EMS and garbage. He asked Mr. Williams to contact Gilchrist County to see how they treat RV parks.

#### **INSURANCE COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Perez said that he has made many connections that may prove to be a good option for County insurance, both Property, Casualty & Liability and Health Insurance. **Commissioner Perez moved to create a committee consisting of himself, Mr. Williams, Michaela Clemons, Pam Woodington, Lisa Johnson and a representative from the Sheriff's Office to gather more information and pursue any potential options. Commissioner Dobbs seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

#### **DOC LOCAL AGREEMENT**

**Commissioner Dobbs moved to accept the proposed agreement with DOC. Commissioner Croft seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

#### **CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

EMS Director Toby Witt approached the Board, and explained that the County has to issue itself a COPCN. He said one year is common, but it does not have to have an expiration date. He noted that the EMS license renews every two years. **Commissioner Dobbs moved, and Commissioner Croft seconded, to approve the COPCN for Union County EMS for five years. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **REPORT FROM COUNTY COORDINATOR**

Mr. Williams provided an update regarding ongoing road and grant projects. He stated that FPL has given the county a \$2,000 grant to be used for economic development, which would include a branded tent for Rural County Days or hotel stays for Commissioners. He said that FPL is planning an additional solar field, to be expanded off of the existing one, which will more than double the size and will be completed by 2025.

He also directed the Commissioners' attention to an addendum agenda, with one item regarding an organizational chart for EMS. Mr. Witt stated the county needs a permanent solution for the Fire Department. Mr. Witt has room in salaries for a Director and Fire Chief, and recommends that the Admin Assistant be EMS certified, which will allow the operation of an additional truck, when necessary, without additional expense, because the Director and

the Admin Assistant would be capable of operating a truck and are already on the clock. Under the new structure, the Captain would provide training during the day while on shift. He recommends the Board hire someone that can do both Fire and EMS, and that the Board change the name back to Union County Emergency Medical Services. Commissioner Cannon asked how long it should be to allow the Admin Assistant to get her EMT license. Mr. Witt answered that a two-year window would be sufficient, and that the County has scholarships to pay for it. Commissioner Cannon asked about the certifications for the Fire position, and Mr. Witt answered that he may need to be flexible depending on the applicants. **Commissioner Dobbs moved, and Commissioner Perez seconded, to approve the proposed structure putting Fire back under EMS operations, and changing the name to Union County Emergency Medical Services.**

Mr. Williams asked the Board to consider a mid-sized SUV to be used as a QR for EMS. Commissioner Cannon added that it does not need to be an SUV, a small truck with a topper would work. Commissioner Dobbs asked how much, and Mr. Williams answered approximately \$80,000. Mr. Witt will bring options back to the Board.

Commissioner Cannon indicated that he would like to get a few things done with ARPA money, including the vehicle for EMS, and also playground equipment for multiple county parks. There was discussion about the funding requirements, and no one was sure how much the needed equipment would be. Chairman Tallman and Commissioner Dobbs confirmed to Commissioner Cannon that they would vote to fund playground equipment when the needed information was presented at the November meeting. Commissioners Perez and Croft also agreed.

Commissioner Cannon also expressed concern about the current ARPA Budget, stating that he has been told that the money can not be in "Reserves", and that the Federal Government is pushing for it to be spent. Additionally, since Union County received less than \$10 million, the entire amount has been reported as lost revenue, and there should not be a budget. Clerk Rhoades explained that she discussed the issue with Commissioner Cannon, and recommended a Budget Amendment to move the balance from the ARPA Budget to the General Fund, and then also from the General Fund to a fund called General Fund Special Account 2. **Commissioner Cannon moved to adopt the Budget Amendment described by Clerk Rhoades.** Attorney Wade questioned why not leave the money in the General Fund, and Commissioner Cannon answered that by leaving it there, it would be difficult to track and would be spent on normal operations, which is not the Board's intention. Attorney Wade expressed that he did not have a full understanding of the ARPA regulations, and had concern about the proposed Budget Amendment. After much discussion, **Commissioner Cannon withdrew his motion.**

Mr. Williams said that Mary Brown needs a storage building now that the Library Cooperative is moving. Mrs. Brown also invited all to the fall festival on October 18 from 5:30-7:30. Mr. Williams suggested moving the November meeting to Tuesday, November 11 so that the new commissioner would participate, as he will be sworn in that day.

Mr. Williams also recommended a committee of himself, Kim Hayes, Mary Brown, Michaela Clemons, Pam Woodington and Toby Witt to plan an Employee Appreciation Lunch on December 14 or 15. The Commissioners agreed, and Commissioner Perez indicated he would only be available on the 15<sup>th</sup>. They all agreed to host an Employee Appreciation Lunch on December 15<sup>th</sup> at noon. He asked that the Board agree to purchasing a \$150 gift card for a drawing. **Commissioner Perez moved to declare the purchase of \$150 gift card a public purpose to improve employee morale. Commissioner Dobbs seconded the motion, and all voted for it.**

**Commissioner Dobbs moved to purchase a shed for the library, and Commissioner Cannon seconded the motion.** The exact purchase amount was not known, but all agreed it was necessary. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Arnold approached the Board, and stated that the employee responsible for Parks and Rec Maintenance reports to him for supervision purposes, and asked if the Board wanted him to also oversee the equipment purchases. **Commissioner Croft voted, and Commissioner Dobbs seconded, for Parks and Recreation equipment to be approved by Mr. Arnold.**

Commissioner Dobbs asked Mr. Arnold and Mrs. Hayes how hard they are finding it to hire CDL Drivers. They expressed that it is difficult with the current pay rate. There was a lengthy discussion regarding pay rates. Chair Tallman said it sounds good to give everyone a raise, but would cost the County hundreds of thousands, and we can't afford it. Chair Tallman also asked Mr. Arnold about the status of the two mowing tractors. He responded that there is a hydraulic problem with one that is being worked on, and that the other has been vandalized, and the exhaust was broken, so it's not usable and is being repaired.

Mary Brown approached the Board and indicated that it's important to let new hires and current employees know how much the County pays on their behalf for health insurance.

Mr. Williams indicated that he met with IFAS, and they are proposing a 30-hour per week position, with 35% time spent on 4-H, 35% on agriculture and 10% on administrative tasks. He suggested an advisory committee to see what citizens need.

#### **REPORT FROM KELLIE HENDRICKS RHOADES, CLERK & COMPTROLLER**

Clerk Rhoades asked that the Board fund a major cleaning of the courthouse, as it still smells of bat guano. The Board agreed a professional cleaning was needed. Other discussion arose about the handicap entrance, with Chair Tallman relaying that he received a call from Tax Collector Lisa Johnson, and the doors do not lock at all, and she told him someone recently came into the courthouse after hours. Chair Tallman instructed Mr. Williams to have the doors replaced.

#### **REPORT FROM RUSSELL A WADE, III, COUNTY ATTORNEY**

Attorney Wade read a Proclamation supporting Operation Greenlight for Veterans, which had been proposed earlier by Commissioner Perez, which encourages citizens to display green lights in support of veterans from November 7-November 11. **Commissioner Perez moved to adopt the Proclamation, Commissioner Dobbs seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Perez thanked the other commissioners for their support of Operation Greenlight. Commissioner Perez also addressed Commissioner Cannon, stating that a lot goes on behind the scenes and that Commissioner Cannon has done a lot as a commissioner that others have not seen, including 45 hours of course work to become a certified county commissioner. He, along with the other commissioners, presented Commissioner Cannon with a golf bag as a token of appreciation for his service as a commissioner.

Commissioner Dobbs echoed appreciation for Commissioner Cannon, stating that he is the reason that Mr. Witt is here, which has been instrumental in turning the finances of EMS around, and thus the County. He noted that Commissioner Cannon has mowed parks and went above and beyond his duties as a commissioner. Commissioner Dobbs said he will miss him.

Chair Tallman also praised Commissioner Cannon, and said it's been an honor and privilege to serve with him. Chair Tallman noted that he was instrumental in getting a Fire Station for District 4. He expressed that many people will see how much he has done when he is gone.

Commissioner Croft said it has been a pleasure working with Commissioner Cannon.

October 17, 2022

Regular Meeting

Commissioner Cannon praised department directors, and said that they have built good working relationships. He expressed to Commissioner Perez that he has a lot of great ideas, and to keep pushing forward. He told Chair Tallman that he was right when he told him being a commissioner was the most unappreciated job when he was campaigning four years ago, and that he had looked up to Chair Tallman as a role model. He expressed that he would miss working with everyone, and that he felt like his biggest accomplishment in four years was establishing the County Coordinator position, and bringing in Mr. Williams. He said he has loved his term as a commissioner.

The meeting adjourned by general consent at 8:30 pm.

*Adopted by vote of the Board of County Commissioners on November 22, 2022.*