

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Location: Commission Board Room

1331 South Blvd., Chipley, FL 32428

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT
Alan T Bush	David Pettis, Jr.	Tray Hawkins	Wesley Griffin	David Corbin

1. PROCLAMATION

- 1.1 Call to Order – Chairman Pettis
- 1.2 Invocation – Johnny Evans
- 1.3 Pledge

Present – Commissioners Bush, Pettis, Hawkins, Griffin, and Corbin. Also attending – Deputy Clerk Brantley, Clerk of Court, Lora Bell, County Administrator, Jeff Massey, and Fuqua & Milton, P.A.

Agenda Addition

- 8.2 – Update to Classification Pay Plan – County Administrator
- 2.7 – Event Ordinance Removal – Commissioner Hawkins – County Attorney will bring this before the board later.
- DRC Contract – County Attorney

2. AGENDA ITEMS

- 2.1 Benecon Insurance Rate Approval for 2024 – 2025 – Tray Hawkins, Commissioner and Aaron Dudley, Human Resources Specialist

Commissioner Hawkins –

- The current renewal rate includes a 9.3% increase.
- It has been requested of the company to work to lower the increase to 7%, which the county could absorb for around \$192,000.00.

Aaron Dudley –

- Open enrollment is August 7.
- Some of the copays have been lowered for specialists, and ER services.
- Option 1 – No employee increase with the county absorbing the increase of \$221,000.00.
- Option 2 – 80/20 – County would cover around \$186,000.00 with \$34,000.00 spread out amount the employees.
- Other options can be looked at.
- Insurance fund balance can be used to offset the increase.

- Total premium is \$2.8 - \$3 Million.

Commissioner Hawkins added that the insurance fund balance should be kept to at least 10% of the coverage of the insurance consortium. The board is urged not to deplete the insurance fund balance below 10% of the total premium.

Aaron Dudley added that they are self-funded with the consortium. With a fully insured fund, those entities are receiving 25 – 50% increases this year. A good claim year for them means they keep all the claim funds and do not return them to the entity. They are working with the team on ways to enhance employee communication about insurance and the use of Teledoc. This information is given at open enrollment, and they are working on a reminder system. There are rate increases for dental, vision, and life. \$189,000.00 is currently expected in return surplus.

Commissioner Hawkins suggested approving up to \$200,000.00 from the insurance surplus fund. The consensus of the board was to select to continue with the 80/20 split. This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

- 2.2 Tourism Lodging Tax Increase Ballot Language – Heather Lopez, TDC Director requested approval of the official ballot language, which was written by County Attorney Fuqua. Approval is requested currently to ensure the language is provided to Deidra Pettis, Washington County Supervisor of Elections to meet deadlines.

County Attorney Fuqua told the board the language provided to the board today has been pulled from the ordinance that will likely be presented before the board, likely at the next meeting.

Commissioner Corbin clarified that the tax will be applied to overnight rentals.

This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

- 2.3 2024 Mud Hill Landfill Professional Engineering Services – Candace Thames, Grants/Procurement Specialist presented a proposal from Dewberry for \$11,528.75 to perform the services identified as item 2.3.

County Administrator added that this is part of the required maintenance by the state on the monitoring wells. The well issue has been corrected and they are currently in the semi-annual reporting phase.

This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

- 2.4 SHIP Annual Report Certification Washington County 2021 – 2022 – Candace Thames, Grants/Procurement Specialist addressed the board. Approval of the annual SHIP report is needed for submission to Florida Housing Finance to close out years 2021 and interim year 2023. The newly constructed housing per unit and rehabilitation was \$0.00.

This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

- 2.5 Fiscal Year 2024 – 2025 Emergency Preparedness and Assistance Grant (EMPA) – Lynne Abel, Public Safety Director addressed the board. Board approval is requested for the annual state grant listed as Item 2.5 that helps with the local emergency management program. This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

- 2.6 Child Custody Safe Exchange and Merchandise Exchange Zone Discussion – Tray Hawkins, Commissioner addressed the board. Stacy Cole, Vernon Middle School teacher brought to his attention that the bill has passed, and Washington County needs to implement it. Sheriff Crews has everything prepared except the purple light which depicts the area that is under surveillance. Using county maintenance staff to install the light and county staff to order the signage is an option before the board.

Tracey Andrews, City of Chipley Mayor has been contacted and is going through the chief to have one installed. The City of Vernon's attorney is also okay with it and is working through the counsel Monday night. It is a state statute. The sheriff is willing to use his facility for the safe exchange.

Commissioner Bush added that this is an initiative that is being done by sheriffs statewide.

The consensus of the board is for the sheriff's location to be used as the safe exchange, use county maintenance staff to install the required lights, and use of county staff to order signs. This item does not require any action.

- 2.7 This item was removed.

- 2.8 Vernon Recreation Field Discussion – Tray Hawkins addressed the board. Mayor Owens has requested he proceed with speaking on this agenda item, being that he is unable to attend the meeting. An earlier board approved a land exchange to the City of Vernon, which was described as the squiggly lines on a document that was

provided to the board. It is unknown whether the deed has been recorded. The part that is highlighted in the blue area, (the line that runs north and south), is the property line that goes through the middle of the parking lot that is owned by Mr. Harris. Mr. Harris and his family entered a lease with the City of Vernon 25 – 28 years ago, which has expired. He would like to exchange the .661 acres for the .25 acres the county owns. The property that the county gave the City of Vernon is south of the entrance to the EMS location, which Mr. Truette said they would never use because everything they use is to the north. For the exchange Mr. Harris would like to be paid \$3,000.00 to clear the property and put a driveway in to access his property line. He currently has a driveway to enter his property with a mitered end, paved top culvert, and ingress and egress to his property. If this is not done, his next option is to fence off the property, which would remove half the parking lot for the recreation center. Ms. Jordan has the information and is willing to work with Attorney Fuqua.

Commissioner Bush and Hawkins agreed to split the \$3,000.00 payment to Mr. Harris.

Consent Agenda Item – Land exchange for Vernon Sportsplex.

- 2.9 Request for Approval for Chairman to Sign Letter of Agreement for Crime Stoppers Trust Fund Grant – David Pettis, Jr., Chairman read a letter for which his signature of authorization is requested to Panhandle Crime Stoppers of Bay County to act as Washington County’s agent for the purpose of applying for and receiving monies from the Crime Stopper Trust Fund.

Commissioner Hawkins clarified that this does not change funds, only the recipient.

Approval for Chairman Pettis to sign the letter will be listed on the consent agenda.

- 2.10 Request to Appoint Danny Exum to Tri-County Airport Authority Seat 8 – David Pettis., Chairman informed the board that George Williams resigned from the Tri-County Airport Authority, which left an open seat. The Tri-County Airport Authority has sent a letter of recommendation requesting the board approve Mr. Exum’s appointment post interview and acceptance.

This item will be listed on the consent agenda.

3. FEMA COORDINATOR – Kevan Parker addressed the board.

3.1 FEMA Update

- Hurricane Sally – Around \$4.4 million for road funds are in step 6, which is

finance review. Public works has a plan in place, which they will begin working on this weekend, with the goal being to complete them by the end of the year.

- Williams Road Bridge – The bridge is in place and the work is progressing well. The first funding advance request has been satisfied. The second one has been submitted for the balance of \$777,000.00.
- Worley Road – The work has been ongoing for 10 – 14 days. The advance for \$913,000.00 for Worley Road has also been submitted.
- Buyout Funding – Everything has been submitted to DEO. DOC owes around \$778,000.00, which is the cost share. DEM is still holding around \$1.2 million, which they do not want to pay until DEO pays.
- Hurricane Sally – FEMA has requested a Recovery Transition Meeting. This typically occurs when everything is encumbered FEMA will turn it over to the state to go through close out.
- Ag Center – There is a change order for the drainage project at the ag center. With the additions it is still less than the second-place bidder's base bid. The project would still be under budget. Brent Melvin will provide an update on this item.

Commissioner Griffin said that Coach Carmichael had contacted him expressing concern that he thought the contractors had come over too far on his property. He said that he has not signed an easement.

Chairman Pettis responded that to his knowledge and his discussion with John and those involved they were not encroaching on Mr. Carmichael's property, which meant they did not need an easement.

Commissioner Griffin said that he told him to get in touch with John and went on to tell Kevan Parker to go out and talk to him.

Commissioner Hawkins said there is an internal meeting with DEM today about trying to get the \$8 million to Washington County so the debt can be paid off.

Chairman Pettis said they have began having discussion with the Florida Association of Counties, the senator's office, and the representative's office.

Commissioner Hawkins thanked Chairman Pettis and Commissioner Corbin for their work on the FEMA funding.

4. MSBU ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE – None

5. PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR – Johnny Evans, Public Works Supervisor addressed the board. Approval is requested for the public works department to buy four regular pick-up trucks from Chipola Ford for \$173,836.08. The state bid is around \$3,000.00 more than Chipola Ford.

Truckworx has a 2022 Kenworth T 880 semi with 132,000 miles for \$140,053.94, which has a three-year warranty remaining on the vehicle from the previous owner.

The purchase of the four trucks from Chipola Ford for \$173,836.08 and the Kenworth T 880 for \$140,053.94 will be listed on the consent agenda. The surplus of a MAC Truck will also be listed on the consent agenda.

6. PARKS UPDATE – George Swauger updated the board.
- Blue Lake – The sidewalk is close to completion. It is 242-feet with two ADA accessible ramps and drainage control.
 - St. Joseph Park – The outdoor exercise equipment is still moving forward; however, it needs to slow down so that some of the salvage playground equipment from Wilder Park can be utilized if Playmore would certify some of it, especially the curbing that is around the existing playground. The curbing could be used around the outdoor exercise equipment to keep the rubber mulch in place.
 - Ebro – Contact was made with Linda Meryl of Ebro. There is a lot of work there. It would be best to complete it in a day's work. An added mower and equipment may be requested to be stored there.

Commissioner Hawkins said that if it is needed District 3 funds can be used for that.

- Five Year Plan – This would be to identify goals and particularly hazards with the parks and boat landings. Also, ADA compliances will be identified.
- Signs continue to be updated at the parks.
- Docks – Additional help may be needed at the docks.

Commissioner Griffin said that he has two more contractors that may be of aid.

Commissioner Griffin questioned the concrete at Gap Pond/Griffin Landing.

George Swauger responded that he did not find a hazard there.

Commissioner Griffin said that he believes that it is the sand/the way the ditch was cut. The water runs in there and covers it up.

George Swauger said there was a need to fabricate a concrete slab in place or

prefab to get it covered up.

Commissioner Griffin questioned if there were any stipulations preventing him from donating labor from his concrete company to the county.

County Attorney Fuqua told him that he could do that.

7. ENGINEERING PROJECTS UPDATE

- Donald Stanely updated the board. The last time extension that was done on the FEMA contracts has expired. A couple of the contractors have expressed the desire to terminate the contract due to price increases over the last year. He asked them to provide a cost increase that could be provided to the board in the event the board continues the jobs. The update is for informational purposes.
- Paul Donofro updated the board. They are acting as a consultant to Al-Day Howell Engineering on the small entrance portico project at the ag center. The project is complete. Some of the contingency dollars were used for temporary drainage to help with the flooding issues until the permanent drainage project was done. The request before the board is to close the project out.

Closeout of the ag center portico will be added to the consent agenda.

- Brent Melvin updated the board. There is a change order for the drainage project at the ag center. The first item of the change order includes the downspout connectors and the PVC pipe from the front of the building. That should have been in the original bid, but it was not a specific line item. They will be upsized to eight inches to make sure they can handle the roof runoff. The second is about the yard drains. They would like to add a six-inch slot on each side with a concrete apron. The change order is for \$26,540.00, which would bring the contract total to \$192,494.00. The total contract budget that was awarded was right under \$250,000.00. The rear of the building drainage continues to be worked on.

The change order for \$26,540.00 will be listed on the consent agenda.

- Resilient Florida Program – The grant applications opened at the beginning of July and run through September. Keenkutter was applied for last year and it would be optional to apply for or to have a recommendation from the consultant that is doing the vulnerability study.

Commissioner Hawkins said they were four out last year on Keenkutter and he would like to reenter it and Sylvania that was brought to their attention by Johnny Evans last month. They are both drainage basins that run directly into Holmes

Creek.

County Administrator Massey said they are both environmental projects, however, Keenkutter is now the Fanning Branch Environmental Project, which they are pursuing. Fanning Branch was applied for through appropriations, however, it was not accepted. Water Management said they would help with the grant.

Keenkutter/Fanning Branch Environmental Project and Sylvania Road will be added to the consent agenda for submission to the Resilient Florida Program for funding.

8. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

8.1 Building Department Fee Discussion

Motion Correction – At the last meeting, they approved moving from \$25.00/10% whichever is greater to \$35.00/15% for plan submittal fees. For clarification 15% should be removed.

- Plan Review Fee for Residential – The current charge is \$25.00/10% of the permit fee, whichever is greater. The recommendation is to change that to \$35.00/15%, whichever is greater.

Commissioner Bush questioned what they are paying out.

It was confirmed that the building official receives 75% of the plan review revenue if that was the lesser.

Recess 10:11 – 10:22

- Building without Permits – When a person builds without a permit and comes into the office for electrical, a double permit will be issued.
- 2018 International Building Code – The code assigns a value to a structure. 2018 is what is currently being used. 2024 is the updated building code.

Mike Gerald, Contractual Building Official addressed the board. The cost per square foot is updated every six months. The board can vote for the fees to automatically be updated as the International Building Code is updated, which is written by the Florida Building Code. It is a nationally recognized standard. Per the 2024 guide, for residential is \$165.00 per square foot. A house cannot hardly be built for that.

Commissioner Hawkins and Commissioner Griffin questioned where the \$80.00

came from.

Commissioner Hawkins said it is nothing that he remembers since he was on the board. It was likely something that has been carried forward for years.

Mike Geraldts said the chart that is currently being used has been reduced by 30%. It is already low and 30% was taken right off the top and that is what the fees are based on. Last year \$170,000.00 was carried forward in the building department last year. The department is one car wreck from bankruptcy. The county is looking for a building official and the pay rate is not competitive. With potential water and sewer being run and the four lanes being completed another building official and added office staff will be needed. Permit fees are the only thing that pays for the building department. It is a separate enterprise fund and must be self-sustained. There is no room to keep up with the projected development. Increasing the fees now would mean getting ahead of the growth curve.

Commissioner Bush said that it should be whatever the current rate is. They should not be addressing this each time it changes. The up to date per square foot rate is what should be used.

There was a discussion on the International Building Code.

Mike Geraldts said per statute, the building department can carry forward four years' worth of money. If the building department begins to make too much money, the statute says it must be refunded. If it is too much the fees can be reduced. The building department should have a year's worth of revenue. There is normally a lead in time when building department fees are increased. The building department has already been advertising increases for over a month.

Commissioner Corbin questioned the refund comment. What amount would be too much.

Mike Geraldts said that is one way to handle it. There is a four-year fiscal window. If the board sees money piling up in the bank, the board could reduce the fees and live off that. It depends on what the board wants. His recommendation is to have a year's worth of operating capital.

Commissioner Hawkins said you would never adjust the cost per square foot. The revenue should be evaluated in six months and if needed the cost per permit could be adjusted.

Chairman Pettis clarified what the board would like to see at the next meeting as follows.

- Recommendation for the plan review.
- Proposed Increases.
- Update the fee schedule.
- Language that the square footage fees would be based on the most current from the International Code Council.

Mike Geraldts said they have been advertising the rate increases for thirty days.

The consensus of the board is for the updated fees to be effective September 1.

This will be a regular agenda item.

- 8.2 Classification Pay Plan – The building official position has been advertised; however, it does not seem like the pay is competitive. The request before the board today is to reclassify the building official from pay grade 113 to 114. This item will be listed on the consent agenda.
9. CLERK – Lora C. Bell told the board that each of them has been provided with an audit report for the 2023 fiscal year, which reflects no findings. The auditor will come before the board in the next couple of months to provide the board with a review.

10. COUNTY ATTORNEY

- 10.1 DRC Contract – Attorney Fuqua said that when they went out for proposals for debris management companies, DRC was ranked in the top three, however, a contract was never entered into with them. This was done several years ago and was procured the correct way. The request is to put their contract on the consent agenda to make this clean.

County Administrator Massey said that Crowder Gulf was the main debris company that was used after Hurricane Michael.

Commissioner Corbin said that he spoke with DRC, and they offer many things, with one being food services.

Commissioner Griffin clarified the other companies as Crowder Gulf and Panhandle Excavating.

County Administrator Massey added DRC, however, he is going to pull the minutes and verify. The company has agreed to keep their costs the same as the initial proposals.

Commissioner Griffin questioned the renewal period.

Wendy White said the last time was 2019. It was for a five-year term.

County Attorney Fuqua said they need to make sure its sunset is the same as the others.

This item will be listed on the regular agenda.

11. ADJOURN