

REGULAR SESSION

The Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County, Florida, met in regular session on Tuesday, December 17, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room, 207 Northeast First Street, Jasper, Florida. Present were Commissioners Robert Brown, Josh Smith, Randy Ogburn, William Mitchell and Beth Burnam, a full Board being present. Also present was County Coordinator Louie Goodin and County Attorney Cliff Adams.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Brown and led in prayer by Commissioner Smith with the Pledge of Allegiance being led by Chairman Brown.

Chairman Brown announced that the Lowndes County Sewer Spill would be discussed during the Board meeting.

PRESENTATION OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR EMS – TOBY WITT – EMS DIRECTOR

EMS Director Toby Witt provided the Board with a presentation on a new Medical Transportation program. Mr. Witt explained that the program would provide a reimbursement other than the standard Medicare and Medicaid programs. Mr. Witt stated that the county portion of the program would be approximately \$45,000 with the Federal portion to be \$78,000 and if the Board is interested the deadline for submittal of the application is December 31st.

Motion by Commissioner Ogburn to approve for the County to make application for the grant program as recommended by EMS Director Toby Witt. Second was made by Commissioner Burnam, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

The Board requested County Attorney Cliff Adams to also review the grant application.

SHIP / CDBG PROGRAM – STATUS REPORT

Ship Administrator Spencer Nabors gave the Board a status report of the current Ship and CDBG grants. Mr. Nabors advised the Board that the Environmental Review for phase 2 will be submitted in December. Mr. Nabors also advised the Board of the bids received; however, they will not be approved by the Board until the Environmental Review for phase 2 is completed.

Mr. Nabors also stated that the round 1 Ship projects are in the construction phase.

PUBLIC HEARING – SPES 19-01 PETITION BY DUKE ENERGY FLORIDA LLC AS AGENT FOR EVERAL ALLEN REQUESTIONG SPECIAL PERMIT FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES BE GRANTED AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 14.11 OF THE LAND DEVEOLOPMENT REGULATIONS TO ALLOW FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW ELECTRICAL SUB-STATION IN AGRICULTURAL (AG-4) AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA (ESA-2) ZONING

Chairman Brown recessed the regular Board meeting and called the public hearing (SPES 19-01) to order at 6:15 p.m.

Land Use Administrator Megan Carter explained the action before the Board as an application to permit for Essential Services as provided for in 14.11 of the Land Development Regulations to allow for construction of a new electrical sub-station in an AG-4 zoning district. Ms. Carter stated that the Planning and Zoning Board voted unanimously to recommend approval. Danny Collins, representing Duke Energy, was present to answer any questions of the Board or public. Ms. Carter also stated that there would be no construction in the Environmentally Sensitive area. Deanna Mericle questioned Mr. Collins as to how many acres would actually be cleared. Mr. Collins stated approximately twenty (20) acres would be utilized.

There being no further comments from the Board or public, Chairman Brown closed the public hearing and reconvened the Board meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Smith to approve SPES 19-01. Second was made by Commissioner Ogburn, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC HEARING – SPSF 19-03 A PETITION BY DUKE ENERGY FLORIDA LLC AS AGENT FOR PARTRIDGE PEA FARMS LLC REQUESTIONG SPECIAL PERMIT FOR SOLAR FACILITY BE GRANTED AS PROVIDED FOR THE LAND DEVEOLOPMENT REGULATIONS TO ALLOW FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SOLAR POWER GENERATING FACILITY IN AN AGRICULTURE ZONING DISTRICT

Chairman Brown recessed the regular Board meeting and called the public hearing (SPSF 19-03) to order at 6:25 p.m.

Land Use Administrator Megan Carter explained the action before the Board as a petition for a special permit allowing a Solar Generating Facility to be constructed in an Agriculture zoning district. Ms. Carter stated that the Planning and Zoning Board voted unanimously to recommend approval; however, an individual was present and discussed the need for Duke Energy to better handle the debris and garbage. Danny Collins, representing Duke Energy, was present and stated that the issue has been taken care of. Mr. Collins also explained the construction of the new proposed Solar project. Mr. Collins then stated that they would employ approximately 150 – 200 employees during the construction phase and that the Public Service Commission has approved for 700 mw of Solar power and with the two (2) fully operational in Hamilton County they would be producing approximately 150

mw. Chris Mericle addressed the Board and stated that he supports the solar power and encouraged both entities to better prepare the areas that are only accessed by dirt road during rain events. Commissioner Ogburn encouraged Mr. Collins to consider in the future the reclaimed property at Nutrien for future Solar Facilities.

There being no further comments from the Board or public, Chairman Brown closed the public hearing and reconvened the Board meeting at 6:38 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Smith to approve SPSF 19-03. Second was made by Commissioner Burnam, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

COURTHOUSE SECURITY ISSUES – LT. CHIP BELOTE – HAMILTON COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Lt. Chip Belote, with the Sheriff’s Department, addressed the Board with issues as to the set-up and operation of the new security for the Courthouse. Mr. Belote stated that the Sheriff Department’s suggestion would be to move the security equipment to the South Entrance of the Courthouse. After a lengthy discussion of the issues, the Board agreed to allow the security to remain as is and if the issues can’t be resolved to discuss at a later date.

ROAD PAVING PROJECTS – STATUS REPORT

County Coordinator Louie Goodin gave the Board a status report on the current road projects in the absence of Engineer Greg Bailey.

OAK STREET – Mr. Goodin advised the Board that the materials estimate for the Road Department to pave the remaining portion of Oak Street would be \$121,000. Mr. Goodin also stated that staff has made contact with the landowners concerning the right-of-way and will continue to work on the project.

SW 69TH BLVD. – County Attorney Cliff Adams advised the Board that the counter offer for the needed right-of-way was rejected and that the owner now is requesting \$10,000. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to allow staff to review the other options for the intersection.

The Board also briefly discussed the CR-751 intersection at SR-6 and agreed to have FDOT check the line of sight.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Smith to approve the Consent Agenda with the addition of invoice for Plumb Level Construction for the renovations at the Doctor’s Office building in the amount of \$8,478.75. Second was made by Commissioner Mitchell, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

HANDICAP AREA AT ARENA

County Coordinator Louie Goodin had previously provided the Board with a site plan for the proposed handicap area at the Arena and also stated that the estimated cost is approximately \$2,300.

Motion by Commissioner Mitchell to construct the handicap area at the Arena as presented by staff and to construct a sidewalk from the gate to the area. Second was made by Commissioner Smith, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

DISCUSSION OF USING STATE BID FOR TRUCK AND MOWER PURCHASES – ROAD DEPARTMENT

County Coordinator Louie Gooding discussed the quotes for a Dump Truck and Mower and requested that the Board allow the purchases to be made using the State Bid list. The Board agreed by unanimous consent to allow staff to purchase the equipment using the State Bid list.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

The Board stated that the Development Agreement with Green Point Research LLC is being discussed with the group and that staff is negotiating with the company as well as discussing the property issues with Nutrien. After a lengthy discussion, the Board agreed for staff to resend the agreement to Green Point Research LLC.

LOWNDES SEWER SPILL

The Board discussed the recent sewer spill from the City of Valdosta into the Withlacoochee River. Deanna Mericle addressed the issue with the Board and suggested that legal action should be taken against the City of Valdosta for the numerous spills and the effects upon the river and residents. Ms. Mericle also advised the Board that she has spoken to Bill Jenkins, an Environmental Consultant for Suwannee County as to the testing process of the river. Tom Moffses, director of the Health Department, explained the local testing procedures as well as the results. Mr. Moffses stated that the Department of Health was notified quicker than usual as to the spill and that he is in the process of purchasing equipment that will allow the Health Department to assist with the river and groundwater testing. Commissioner Burnam stated that she was very disappointed in the River Task Force with the effort put forth regarding the recent spill. County Attorney Cliff Adams discussed his research and discussion with the Task Force regarding the Florida Clean Water Act. Mr. Moffses stated that the Federal Government has approved for an additional 10 million gallon retention basin to be constructed to help alleviate future spills. Mr. Moffses also stated that he would continue to work closely with staff and provide additional information as it is available. The Board requested legal counsel to provide legal options at the next meeting. Chris Mericle addressed the Board and echoed the previous discussion that something has to be done. Mr. Mericle suggested formalizing a class action lawsuit and also suggested that the county utilize the reverse 911 call system for notification of the affected

residents. The Board also stated that the updated information should be on the county website and Emergency Managements website. After a lengthy discussion, the Board directed staff to have a representative from FDEP present at the next meeting to discuss what State action is being taken. Commissioner Ogburn discussed with the Board the situation with then PCS Phosphate and the sinkhole that formed in their Gyp Stack. Mr. Moffses did agree to test the affected wells continuously to ensure clean water for the residents.

Motion by Commissioner Smith to declare an emergency and approve \$4,000 for the Health Department to utilize in their well testing and an additional \$1,000 for concerned citizens to have their wells tested. Second was made by Commissioner Ogburn, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

APPROVE BILLS

Motion by Commissioner Smith to approve the bills. Second was made by Commissioner Mitchell, motion carried with a unanimous vote.

CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

County Coordinator Louie Goodin announced that the Road Department Christmas luncheon will be held on Thursday, December 19th and the Courthouse luncheon on Monday, December 23rd.

Commissioner Mitchell stated that the Sweets–N–Streets event was a success and also shared thankful comments from Martha Ard as to EMS.

Commissioner Ogburn discussed briefly with the Board as to hiring practices at Nutrien.

Commissioner Smith requested staff to perform an audit of the small tools for the county departments.

Commissioner Smith also discussed with the Board the need to provide county cell phones for the Board.

The Board discussed the possible need for a full time IT position.

Commissioner Smith announced that he would be unable to attend the next Board meeting due to a work issue.

Commissioner Burnam discussed with staff the need to have information in the packets. Commissioner Burnam also stated that he parades and Crossroads Christmas events were well attended and a success.

Commissioner Burnam also gave the Board a brief overview of the NFEDP meeting that was held at the Annex.

The Board requested staff to have someone present from the Nursing Home for an update on the current construction project.

The Board also discussed the Bienville Plantation property and the future plans for the Plantation.

County Attorney Cliff Adams advised the Board that he is negotiating with AT&T to lease space on the county tower. Mr. Adams also stated that the Town of Jennings has denied the owners of the old Holiday Inn an occupational license and encouraged the Board to support the Town with cleaning up the exit.

Mr. Adams shared with the Board that staff is working through Code Enforcement to address the migrant labor issue at the SR-6 / I-75 Interchange.

The Board discussed with staff the possibility of looking at space at the Annex for a new Board room.

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

ROBERT BROWN, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

GREG GODWIN, EX-OFFICIO CLERK

