

JUNE 6, 2017 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Public Workshop on June 6, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. at the Walton County Courthouse Annex in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Cecilia Jones, Chairwoman; Commissioner W. N. (Bill) Chapman, Vice-Chairman; Commissioner Tony Anderson; Commissioner Sara Comander; and Commissioner Melanie Nipper. Mr. Larry Jones, County Administrator; and Attorney Sidney Noyes, Interim County Attorney; were also present.

Chairwoman Jones called to order the Workshop to discuss infrastructure planning, U.S. Treasury and Triumph Board updates.

Mr. Billy Williams, RESTORE Act Coordinator, briefly discussed the five RESTORE Act funding pots. He reported 17 projects were funded through pot one funding. He said a meeting was held with the U.S Treasury team, the University of West Florida, Senator Doug Broxson, Representative Brad Drake, and staff. Mr. Williams stated discussion was held to move 17 projects through the multi-year implementation plan. Final approval is still pending on the conceptual plan.

Ms. Melinda Gates, Coastal Resource Liaison, discussed the May 17, 2017 meeting with the Department of Treasury. She said a report will be submitted to the Treasury addressing the issues raised during the meeting. Discussion followed on the Treasury's concerns.

Mr. Williams discussed the percentage breakdown and dollar amounts of the eight disproportionate counties. He announced site visits have been made to potential projects based on the county's legislative priorities list. Staff will return with recommendations and ideas.

Commissioner Chapman asked if any of the pot 1 funds were earmarked for the U.S. 331 Corridor. Mr. Williams replied not in phase one, but would be considered in the second phase. The

Treasury thought the U.S. 331 Corridor project was a good project and all the dollars could be applied to it.

Commissioner Nipper asked if working with Rural Area of Economic Opportunity (RAEO) would be beneficial. Mr. Williams replied that it would and discussed the possibility of matches and grants.

Mr. Williams discussed the Triumph funding and reported that the concerns raised regarding the funding being placed into the State's General Fund have been addressed. He said the trust monies would not require projects to go through appropriations, but would have to be approved by the Triumph Board.

Chairwoman Jones questioned when a new representative would be appointed from this area. Mr. Williams discussed the structure of the Triumph Board and replied that Walton County is eligible to have a representative because of being one of the least populated areas.

Mr. Williams reviewed the 2017 Legislative Session Summary regarding House Bill (HB) 7077, 7079 and CS/CS/SB 364. The main change to the bill was to the economic incentives.

Commissioner Nipper asked if the funding would be lost if it is not used. Mr. Williams said he did not believe it would be a use or lose scenario being that the money is in a trust fund.

Mr. Williams discussed the allowable uses under HB 7077 which include Ad valorem tax rate reduction, infrastructure, and grants for disaster response, education, workforce, and tourism. He said the county's main focal point is infrastructure.

Chairwoman Jones questioned if the county is working with other counties on regional projects. Mr. Williams said work has been done with the Regional Planning Council to determine what directions the school boards are going. He discussed the actions taken in Okaloosa County. Discussion ensued on the similarities of priorities of Walton and Okaloosa Counties.

Chairwoman Jones recommended a project vetting system be developed for the second round projects. Mr. Williams stated he would come back with recommendations.

Commissioner Anderson said he understood the priority list could change, but a specific process must be followed. Mr. Williams discussed the openness of Triumph Board to fund projects with leveraged dollars.

Mr. Williams reviewed each of the pots and the funding available.

Commissioner Chapman questioned when discussions could begin on the U.S. 331 Corridor specifically water/sewer from the bay to DeFuniak Springs. Mr. Williams replied that conceptual drawings were done by the Cities of Freeport and DeFuniak Springs. The estimated cost is \$30 million with a three year out lay. He said structural issues would need to be addressed. Commissioner Chapman voiced concern that the board could not make a decision without the data from the cities regarding on what they have available, their plans to move forward, and maintenance of the system. Mr. Williams said county staff will need to be given the first draft to obtain permits and determine costs. Mr. Williams will work with County Administration to determine what would be needed for the board to make sound decisions. Commissioner Chapman expressed concern that if the cities do not submit the needed data, then the county would be forced to form a utility authority. Mr. Williams agreed that a utility structure would be needed and he would gather the needed information.

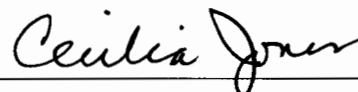
Chairwoman Jones talked about bringing the communities and county together and said she would be willing to meet with key stakeholders in the county to obtain ideas. She wants input from the business and education spectrums. Mr. Williams discussed One Walton which would be led by the community leaders. Public involvement is also desired.

Commissioner Nipper discussed the need for workforce housing and asked where the county was in the RAEO designation process. Mr. Williams said that Freeport was the only area with that designation and that the Governor has the authority to expand the area. He said it was discussed to expand the area up U.S. Highway 331 and spreading out onto U.S. Highway 90 (east to the former poultry plant and west toward Mossy Head). He discussed the possibility of fast tracked permitting for businesses throughout that area. Mr. Jones said he would meet with Mr. Williams to determine what the next step will be to get that designation expanded. Discussion continued on partnering with adjacent counties with this designation.

Mr. Jones said that traditional funding sources can still be used to get these projects done. Mr. Williams expressed the need to utilize the federal lobbyist more and to maintain our vision.

Commissioner Comander suggested Mr. Williams work with Mr. Louis Svehla, Public Information Officer, to help the public understand that this process and receiving the monies will not happen quickly. There being no further items to present, the meeting was adjourned at 2.47 p.m.

Approved: _____



Cecilia Jones, Chairwoman

Attest: _____



Alex Alford, Clerk of Courts and County Comptroller