REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKSHOP OF THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

AUGUST 12, 2021

Present: Commissioner Robert D. Bender, Chairman, District 4
Commissioner Jeffrey W. Bergosh, Vice Chairman, District 1
Commissioner Steven L. Barry, District 5
Commissioner Lumon J. May, District 3
Commissioner Douglas B. Underhill, District 2
Wesley J. Moreno, Interim County Administrator
Alison Rogers, County Attorney
DeLana Allen-Busbee, Administrative Specialist, Clerk and Comptroller's Office
Anthony Bowens, Administrative Assistant, County Administrator's Office
Heather Mahoney, Official Records Manager, Clerk and Comptroller's Office

Location: Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building, Board Chambers, First Floor
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, Florida

Report prepared by: DeLana Allen-Busbee

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

   Chairman Bender called the Committee of the Whole (C/W) Workshop to order at 9:03 a.m.

2. Was the Meeting Properly Advertised?

   The C/W was advised by DeLana Allen-Busbee, Administrative Specialist, Clerk and Comptroller's Office, that the meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on August 7, 2021, in the Board's weekly meeting schedule.

3. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

   Commissioner May led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and the Board held a brief Commissioners' Forum.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

FOR INFORMATION: The Board:

- Viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, titled *Escambia BOCC Update*, presented by Marie Mott, Administrator and Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County, regarding COVID-19 and vaccines.
- Heard updates regarding information available on the County's COVID-19 dashboard, including new information separating out pediatric hospitalization numbers from adults, and the percent of vaccinated citizens.
- Discussed water safety and the potential need for watercraft for flood rescues in the County.

4. Board Items

I. Major Transit Development Plan

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, titled *Your Service, Your Say, ECAT 10-Year Transit Planning,* presented by Tonya Ellis, Mass Transit Director, and Brian Waterman, Senior Transit Planner, HDR Engineering, and the C/W:

(1) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that under Florida Administrative Code 14.73, all transit systems are required to provide a Transit Development Plan (TDP) with future forecasting of five to ten years; this plan is also a requirement for the Florida Block Grant funding;

(2) Was advised by Mr. Waterman that:

- The purpose of the discussion is to present the Transit Development Plan for adoption and answer any questions the BCC has, as the plan is due to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) by September 1st.
- There are many benefits to public transportation for both the community and its citizens, such as cost-savings and reducing environmental impact.
- A TDP is a ten-year planning document that serves as a roadmap to the community; the TDP is not a binding document and focuses on growth and feedback from the community.
- Baseline conditions, such as network coverage, accessibility, population, and employment, were reviewed to help create the TDP.
- Staff also completed a demand assessment and situational appraisal, as well as reviewed related planning documents for the County and community.
- The public was involved in the process by engagement through various media; community stakeholders were also involved in the planning process.

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

I. Continued…

A. Continued…

(2) Continued…

- Based on the feedback, proposed service projects were identified and ranked using criteria categories such as community support, transit markets, productivity and efficiency, and goals and objectives.
- Capital projects include expanding and improving bus stop infrastructure, renovating/reconstructing the Rosa L. Parks Complex, and transitioning the fleet to electric vehicles.
- The implementation plan outlines projects and the years in which they will be implemented, as provided in the backup.
- The plans outlined have the potential to qualify for funding to complete the project through means such as grant applications.
- The next steps include plan adoption and submittal to FDOT.

(3) Upon inquiry from Commissioner Bergosh regarding service to Beulah and the Navy Federal campus, was advised by Mr. Waterman and Ms. Ellis that multiple meetings have occurred with Navy Federal about potential services and this project would fall during the second five years of the ten-year plan, possibly in 2027; Commissioner Bergosh expressed his opinion that less than five years would be better;

(4) Upon inquiry from Commissioner Underhill, was advised by Ms. Ellis that hard data on route efficiencies should be available in October and that staff is looking at particular routes to determine whether modifications are needed to increase efficiency;

(5) Heard comments from Commissioner Underhill regarding the need for transit and better service inside the core of the city and that resources would be better spent there rather than on unneeded routes;

(6) Heard comments from Commissioner May regarding the possibility of seasonal routes and finding efficiencies, including modifying or canceling routes if they are not efficient;

(Continued on Page 4)

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

I. Continued…

A. Continued…

(7) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that staff is aware that plenty of work is still needed to realign current routes and to find efficiencies by methods including utilizing smaller shuttles and diversifying the fleet, where applicable;

(8) Heard comments from Commissioner May regarding the positive impact public transit can have on the quality of life for many citizens as it provides more than solely a means to get to and from work; heard further comments from Commissioner Underhill and May requesting that staff bring recommendations on efficiencies to the Board;

(9) Heard comments from Commissioner Bender regarding the hope that the new technology being implemented in Mass Transit will lead staff to recognize greater need or lack thereof in certain areas and identify inefficient routes; heard further comments concerning his support for a route to Beulah to not stifle citizens wishing to be employed in that area;

(10) Discussed regional transportation, such as service to Santa Rosa County, the daunting task of implementation, and the Board's desire to focus primarily on the needs of Escambia County for now;

(11) Discussed creative ways to generate revenues, the importance of the Baptist Hospital route realignment, and working with stakeholders throughout the planning process; and

(12) Was advised by Ms. Ellis that the TDP will come back to the Board for a final vote before submitting to FDOT in September; and

B. Board Direction – None.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

II. Escambia County Legislative Wish List

A. Board Discussion – The C/W:

(1) Was advised by Commissioner Bender that he wanted to get some input and make sure the County is prepared due to the earlier legislative session; Commissioner Bender briefly mentioned expansion of rural broadband access, the infrastructure bill, FDOT's five-year plan, and the Beulah Interchange;

(2) Was advised by Commissioner Barry that he believes there will be a tremendous push to get the Beulah Interchange moved up and funded as quickly as possible as it is District leadership's number one priority if and when funding is available;

(3) Heard comments from Commissioner Bergosh concerning other longstanding issues in each district, such as Pine Forest Road between Nine Mile and the interstate; heard further comments of support for putting funding into infrastructure and the request for staff to identify a critical list of infrastructure, traffic, and drainage projects for which there is not an identified funding source and where there is matching money available;

(4) Heard comments from Commissioner Barry regarding the structure put in place by the legislature for a grant program for rural broadband and the current lack of an application to access funds; Commissioner Barry would like to ask the delegation to firm up the allotment of funding for the grant program and to put the parameters in place for the application;

(5) Discussed the Resilient Florida DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) program deadline of September 1st and the anticipation of having an item or two on the agenda for approval at the August 19th BCC meeting;

(6) Discussed searching for a candidate for a grant writer position and the lack of success in prior searches;

(7) Heard comments from Commissioner Underhill regarding stormwater projects coming to the BCC for approval from Local Option Sales Tax discretionary funds for District 2's portion, and his support of the legislative asks capturing resources already out there for projects that are already known to be needed;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

II. Continued…

A. Continued…

(8) Discussed the need to be in sync with the Transportation Planning Organization's priorities list, and the importance of articulating core infrastructure needs that will benefit the County as a whole;

(9) Heard comments from Commissioner Bender regarding other asks, such as the opposition to unfunded mandates and estuary programs, as well as projects in Ferry Pass to alleviate flooding;

(10) Heard comments from Chips Kirschenfeld, Natural Resources Management Director, regarding various other projects, such as Universal Access, and speeding up the derelict vessel program by asking the legislature to work on getting Code Enforcement Officers authorized to implement the process of derelict vessel removal;

(11) Heard the request from Commissioner Bender to submit the derelict vessel language update to the Florida Association of Counties for a policy and was advised by Mr. Kirschenfeld that staff has that item ready to go;

(12) Heard additional comments from Mr. Kirschenfeld regarding other RESTORE Pot 1 funded projects which still need funding identified for construction including Eleven Mile Creek, Hollis T. Williams, Carpenter Creek; the Estuary Mini Grant program was also discussed;

(13) Discussed water access and the Board's history of support for those projects as they affect the quality of life for all County citizens; and

(14) Heard comments from Interim County Administrator Moreno regarding the Quintette Road bridge project and briefly discussed the fishing pier in District 4; and

B. Board Direction – None.

(COMMISSIONER MAY WAS ABSENT DURING THE DISCUSSION OF THIS ITEM)

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

III. Overview of Health Benefits

A. Board Discussion – The C/W discussed a handout, which was also provided in the backup, outlining employee insurance costs and options, and the C/W:

(1) Heard an overview of historic insurance data for the County from 2017 through 2021, and was advised that the most concerning issue is the net cost per employee per year (PEPY), which is projected to be $16,104 in 2021;

(2) Discussed retiree costs, the impact on the overall benefits budget, and the impact on the PEPY cost;

(3) Was advised by Mr. Scroggins that:

- The projected PEPY cost for 2021 is about 15% higher than the national average and is also higher than other municipalities in the area.
- Escambia County has had larger claims that are significantly higher than the benchmark.
- The County's Covid-19 impact has also been more impactful, and this, along with chemo costs and cancer claims, among other costs, has driven the PEPY figure up.
- The insurance plans offered for County employees are considerably better than other municipalities.

(4) Discussed incentivizing employees to not be on the County's insurance plan and was advised by Mr. Scroggins that the current incentive is already generous;

(5) Was advised by Commissioner Barry that he pulled information from other counties and found that many budgeted less than $8,000 PEPY and discussed what that would look like for Escambia County;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

III. Continued…

A. Continued…

(6) Discussed:

- Cost saving options as provided in the backup to get down to approximately $12,000 PEPY, as well as how those changes could impact collective bargaining and labor negotiations.
- The potential impact of reducing insurance benefits on filling vacant positions and attracting and retaining employees.
- Ideas to incentivize employees for preventative health screenings to benefit employee health as well as reduce costs by finding minor health problems before they turn into major ones.

(7) Agreed to discuss ideas and scenarios with staff offline and bring any changes back to a Regular BCC meeting for approval; and

(8) Was advised by Crystal Dadura, Interim HR Director, that staff would also like to discuss life insurance options and the possibility of prorating the Health Savings Account instead of frontloading it offline as well; and

B. Board Direction – None.

IV. County Administrator Search

A. Board Discussion – The C/W:

(1) Discussed the search for a new County Administrator, as well as the potential search for other key vacancies in the County;

(2) Agreed to put out a Request for Proposals for a firm to perform a nationwide search for the position; and

(3) Discussed asking staff to work with each Commissioner’s office to discuss whether there are any changes wanted in the search/job criteria; and

B. Board Direction – None.

FOR INFORMATION: County Attorney Rogers advised the Board that she would release the first memo related to the retirement plan issue; the second memo was released at a prior date at the Board's direction.

5. Adjourn

   Chairman Bender declared the C/W Workshop adjourned at 11:48 a.m.