

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA

July 18, 2024

6:30 P.M.

Bradford County Courthouse

945 North Temple Avenue

Starke, Florida 32091

MEETING MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Commissioner District 1 – Chair Carolyn Spooner
Commissioner District 4 – Vice-Chair Danny Riddick
Commissioner District 2 – Kenny Thompson
Commissioner District 3 – Joseph C. Dougherty
Commissioner District 5 – Diane Andrews

PRESS PRESENT: none

STAFF MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: County Manager Scott Kornegay; Executive Assistant Amanda Brown; County Attorney Rich Komando; Clerk of Court Denny Thompson; Chief Deputy Clerk Rachel Rhoden; Finance Director Dana LaFollette; Fire Rescue Chief Ben Carter; Col. Brad Smith; Sheriff Gordon Smith, and Tax Collector Teresa Phillips.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Spooner called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

Chair Spooner acknowledged County Manager Scott Kornegay who stated that he will pull items 5 and 6 from the agenda to review updated information and present to the board at a later meeting.

Chair Spooner introduced Sheriff Smith who recognized the following staff promotions:

- Andy Johnson was given a promotion to lieutenant and jail inspector.
- Brad Witt, the director of emergency management, was given a promotion to captain. Sheriff Smith presented Mr. Witt with a badge, insignia, and a marine sword.

2. PUBLIC HEARING – SECOND READING OF ORDINANCE

- A. AN ORDINANCE (Ordinance 2024-07) OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA RELATING TO THE PROVISION AND FUNDING OF FIRE RESCUE SERVICES, AND FACILITIES; AUTHORIZING THE IMPOSITION AND COLLECTION OF NON-AD VALOREM SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS AGAINST REAL PROPERTY SPECIALLY BENEFITTED BY THE PROVISION OF SUCH SERVICES AND FACILITIES ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNTY HEREUNDER; PROVIDING CERTAIN DEFINITIONS; ESTABLISHING THE PROCEDURES FOR IMPOSING, COLLECTING AND ADMINISTERING FIRE RESCUE ASSESSMENTS; PROVIDING THAT FIRE RESCUE ASSESSMENTS CONSTITUTE A LIEN ON ASSESSED PROPERTY EQUAL IN RANK AND DIGNITY WITH THE LIENS OF ALL STATE, COUNTY, DISTRICT, OR MUNICIPAL TAXES AND ASSESSMENTS AND SUPERIOR IN DIGNITY TO ALL OTHER PRIOR LIENS, MORTGAGES, TITLES, AND CLAIMS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Chair Spooner opened the public hearing for comments

Public Comments:

- Anita Baker
- Lloyd Donley
- Paul Still
- Tommy Tatum
- Kate Ellison
- Vyunda Strong

After public comments, Chair Spooner recognized Fire Rescue Chief Carter and Jeff Rackley, consultant with Stantec, to address general questions about fire operations and the fire assessment.

Discussion:

- Data from the property appraiser's software was used to help calculate the fire assessment.
- Three key pieces to determine how to legally assess a fire rate: 1) examine the budget to determine what portion can be legally funded by the assessment; 2) use call for service data to all properties within the assessment area and use those proportions of calls to split the budget amongst the property categories (residential, non-residential, and vacant land); 3) take the dollar amounts and divide amongst the categories based on the units within the categories to make up the full budget needed to fund fire. After the assessment study is completed, the board makes the decision on what percentage/rate it wants to fund the budget needed for fire operations.
- If the property appraiser's data identifies a primary structure on a parcel, regardless of value, a charge will be assessed.
- Residential - taxpayer will be assessed on a dwelling unit. Generally, you will not pay on residential properties for any type of out-buildings, backyard sheds, lean-to structures, screened porches, and the like.
- Non-residential – taxpayer will be assessed on the square footage of non-residential structure.
- Vacant lands – taxpayer will be assessed a flat rate per parcel regardless of acreage.
- There exist several techniques for ascertaining assessment rates. Stantec employed a common, widely accepted methodology that has been in use for more than 30 years, has been tested, and has gone through the legal system.
- There are issues with using a residential square footage methodology because the square footage data is not always accurate.
- Only residential dwelling units will be assessed on agriculture exempt properties.
- Exceptions/exemptions from paying the fire assessment will need to be determined by the board prior to final decision of imposing the fire assessment.
- A process could be implemented by the board where the fire marshal evaluates requests for exception/exemption to determine whether the property should or should not be assessed.
- Timeline steps for implementing the fire assessment: 7/18/24 – adopt an ordinance that establishes procedures; 8/6/24 (or thereabout) adopt a resolution setting the initial rate and exemption – after adoption the county will mail out first-class notices to all property owners and publish notice in the newspaper stating the rates. The mailed notices will list each unit to be assessed, the total amount to be paid, who to contact with questions, and the date, time and location of the scheduled public hearing. In early September, the board will set the final exemptions and rate for the fire assessment to be collected in fiscal-year 2024-2025.

- Concerns expressed with the ordinance stating that the board will take foreclosure action if the assessment is not paid. In response, Mr. Rackley advised that the board could come up with hardship programs. Commissioner Andrews asked Mr. Rackley to explore and share where counties may have hardship programs in place.
- Potential exceptions/exemptions can be fully addressed after the board issues notice. At that point the individual can request an exception/exemption and the property can be evaluated to determine if it should or should not be assessed.
- Mobile home parks - a mobile home is equal to a dwelling unit and would be assessed.
- RV parks – RV's by statute must be treated the same as hotel/motel properties – a non-residential property assessed by square footage.
- If an RV park is on agricultural land with a special exception and the spaces are not residential, the RV units would not be assessed.
- Call assessment methodology only included fire response calls to residential, non-residential, and vacant properties.
- Tax collector needs all information concerning the fire assessment by September 15.

It was MOVED by Vice Chair Riddick and SECONDED by Commissioner Dougherty to approve the ordinance.

Motion Carries 3-2 (Chair Spooner and Commissioner Thompson dissenting votes)

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Marie Gaskins
- Paul Still
- Vyunda Strong

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- A. RATIFICATION OF PAYMENT REGISTER(S) FROM 04-04-24 THRU 07-09-24.**
- B. CAREERSOURCE NORTH CENTRAL FL 2023-24 BRADFORD COUNTY SERVICES AND STATISTICS REPORT.**
- C. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH NORTHEAST FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION FOR GRANT MANAGEMENT FOR THE COMPETITIVE FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP GRANT (CPTA) AND ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN. COST - \$75.00 PER HOUR FOR SERVICES RENDERED.**
- D. AMENDED APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST (AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO AGREEMENT FM580) FOR STATION 90 – SAMPSON AND STATION 20 – THERESA. (AMENDMENT AGREEMENT INCLUDES COMPLETED DESIGN COST FOR STATION 40 – HEILBRONN).**
- E. REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR TAX COLLECTOR.**
- F. PLANET BIDS SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENT. TOTAL SETUP AND YEAR ONE COST - \$2,500 (5% INCREASE EACH UPON EACH RENEWAL YEAR).**

- G. AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO GRANT AGREEMENT NO. 23PLN03 WITH FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT,**
- H. SHIP REHABILITATION LOAN APPROVAL: FILE 2020-3, 2020-4, 2020-5.**
- I. SHIP REHABILITATION CHANGE ORDER NO.1 ON FILE 2019-7-S.**
- J. A RESOLUTION (Resolution 2024-08) OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA ADOPTING THE STATEWIDE MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**
- K. A RESOLUTION (Resolution 2024-09) OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE 2020 FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION ADJUSTED URBAN AREA BOUNDARY FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, AND FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, PREPARED BY THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.**

Discussion:

- 4(C) - concerns expressed about working with an outside agency for the CPTA grant. Mr. Kornegay advised that Amber Sheperd, strategic alliances business partner with Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation, has the expertise and experience to apply for the CPTA grant and to develop a regional strategic plan specific to economic development.

It was MOVED by Vice Chair Riddick and SECONDED by Commissioner Dougherty to approve the consent agenda.

Motion Carries 4-1 (Commissioner Andrews dissenting vote)

- 5. CONTRACT AGREEMENT WITH ROADWAY MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES – ANNUAL COST \$50,000 – Item postponed**
- 6. LOADER LEASE EXPIRED - Item postponed**
- 7. CLERK REPORTS – DENNY THOMPSON**
 - A. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON DECEMBER SPENDING (APRIL – JUNE 2024).**

Finance Director Dana LaFollette reported on spending and use/saving of fund balance through quarter 3 in the following departments, as of June 30, 2024.

- 001-General Fund
Expenditures exceeded revenue by \$1,061,638.10 necessitating the use of fund balance. The current fund balance is \$16,259,071.64.
- 111 – Fire Rescue
Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$378,677.34 causing a savings to fund balance. The current fund balance is \$1,184,878.93.

- 105 – Road

Expenditures exceeded revenue by \$431,443.10 necessitating the use of fund balance. The current fund balance is \$1,228,907.65.

Discussion:

- Use of state and LSF opioid abatement funding.

B. BOARD SET PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2024-2025.

With respect to setting the proposed millage rate, Clerk Thompson read from a letter highlighting the following points:

- Cautioned that it would not be advisable for the board to lower its existing millage rate of 10.0000 mills unless it is willing to cut its budget/spending by the reduced revenue.
- Budget cuts should not be made from reserves but from actual spending such as positions, operational sites, hours of operation, benefits.
- For the first time in years, the county is growing its reserve fund and that is a direct result of setting the millage rate at 10.0000 mills to handle expenses.
- Adoption of any additional revenue sources such as a fire assessment would not come online immediately in FY 24-25; therefore, it would be fair to consider lowering the millage rate next FY once funds are available.
- Advised that the board should keep its capital improvement plan (CIP) in mind while determining the millage rate for this year and in future years.

Clerk Thompson recognized Finance Director Dana LaFollette to present the board with the following options to set the millage rate for FY 24-25.

Proposed Millage Rate for FY 24-25	Expected Revenue for FY 24-25	Increase from FY 23-24
10.000	\$14,045,335	\$1,134,314
9.7500	\$13,694,201	\$783,180
9.5178 (rolled back rate)	\$13,368,069	\$457,048
9.5000	\$13,343,068	\$432,047
9.1104	\$12,795,862	Decrease of \$115,159
9.0000	\$12,640,801	Decrease of \$270,220

Ms. LaFollette shared that the millage rate set tonight will go on the TRIM notices that the property appraiser will mail out to all taxpayers on August 15th. On September 3rd, the board will hold its first public hearing to adopt a tentative millage rate. Furthermore, Ms. LaFollette advised that it is not advisable to increase the proposed millage rate set tonight – an increase would have an impact to the TRIM timetable, and it would require the property appraiser to mail out new TRIM notices.

Discussion - none

It was MOVED by Vice Chair Riddick and SECONDED by Commissioner Andrews to set the millage rate at 10 mills until we get other revenue sources in place.

Motion Carries 5-0

8. SHERIFF REPORTS – GORDON SMITH – none

9. COUNTY MANAGER REPORTS – SCOTT KORNEGAY

A. FUNDING REQUESTS FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR FY 2024-2025.

Mr. Kornegay recommended that the board fund outside organizations at the same funding level in FY 24-25 and fund the new requests. The following funding request table was in the board packet.

Organization	2023-2024 Budget	2024-2025 Amount Requested
Acorn Clinic	\$26,250	\$40,000
The ARC of Bradford County	\$15,000	\$15,000
Bradford Fair Association	\$3,750	\$3,750
Bradford Soil and Water Conservation	\$5,000	\$5,000
Communities In Schools	\$3,750	\$5,000
Concerned Citizens of Bradford County	\$7,500	\$7,500
Episcopal Children’s Services	\$3,750	\$3,750
Meridian Behavioral Healthcare	\$83,019	\$83,018
North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce	\$9,375	\$9,375
Suwannee River Economic Council	\$6,463	\$6,463
The Original Florida Tourism Task Force	\$3,000	\$2,000
Bradford Cowboys Athletic Association	\$7,500	\$15,000
Bradford Tornadoes Pop Warner	New	\$10,000
UF IFAS 4H Program	New	\$2,500
NEFEDC – Amber Sheperd	New	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$174,357	\$218,356

It was MOVED by Vice-Chair Riddick and SECONDED by Commissioner Dougherty to fund everything at the same level, except for The Original Florida Tourism Task Force which should be funded at \$2,000 and Bradford Tornado Popwarner which should be funded at \$7,500, and to fund the two remaining new agencies at the requested level.

Motion Carries 5-0

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE.

Mr. Kornegay recognized Amber Sheperd, strategic alliance business partner with Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation. Ms. Sheperd reported highlights from her recent trip to Washinton, D.C. where she met with federal representatives to establish relationships for potential grant opportunities. After coming back from Washington, D.C., Bradford County leaders organized a workshop to identify key objectives in the community. The objectives discussed will be included in a strategic plan to guide economic activity. Potential business opportunities pertaining to Bradford County were mentioned by Ms. Sheperd.

Discussion - none

10. COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORTS – RICH KOMANDO - no reports

11. COMMISSIONER’S COMMENTS

Commissioner Dougherty

- In the upcoming year, Cox Communications intends to expand broadband services throughout Bradford County.

12. CHAIR’S COMMENTS

ADJOURN: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA**


CAROLYN SPOONER, CHAIR

ATTEST:


DENNY THOMPSON, CLERK TO THE BOARD

MINUTES PREPARED BY:


RACHEL RHODEN, CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK

Minutes approved by the BOCC during a scheduled meeting on: October 1, 2024