

April 11, 2017  
Special Called Board Meeting  
Judicial Annex Building  
Live Oak, Florida

9:00 a.m.

The Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners met on the above date and time for a special-called session and the following were present: Chairman Ricky Gamble; Commissioner Don Hale; Commissioner Clyde Fleming; Commissioner Larry Sessions; and Commissioner Ronnie Richardson. Clerk of Court Barry A. Baker; Ken Williams, Chief Deputy Clerk of Finance; Eric Musgrove and Logan Woods, Deputy Clerks; and Randy Harris, County Administrator, were also present. James W. Prevatt, Jr., County Attorney, was not present.

Chairman Gamble called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and led the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, with possible Board action, the Capital Improvement Loan.

County Administrator Harris discussed the history of the Capital Improvement Plan and the loan taken out to pay for such construction work as the State Attorney's Office. He noted that the original plan had been to move out of the downtown area for construction, but it had been deemed more beneficial from an economic and political standpoint to remain within the downtown area. County Administrator Harris then handed out information regarding the lease history of the State Attorney's Office.

Brief discussion ensued on the annual increase in leasing for the State Attorney's Office, and it was noted that the annual increase was \$0.50 per square foot for the 13,000 square foot building.

County Administrator Harris next discussed the annual expenses and depreciation for the new State Attorney's Office Building in great detail.

Commissioner Fleming asked the advantage to increasing the current loan from 15 to 20 years. County Administrator Harris replied that if the County did nothing, the taxpayers would be responsible for another \$300,000 in expenses over the term of the lease, unless the other counties in the district assisted.

Commissioner Richardson asked for feedback from the County's financial experts before making a decision.

Chairman Gamble stated that he was not really interested in expanding the term of the loan, and after discussions with First Federal Bank (who held the loan), it had been determined that the County could save money with a down payment to lower the balance of the loan.

County Administrator Harris discussed his hope to lower the annual debt service payments by making a down payment, which would allow money to be escrowed for future repairs and maintenance. He then discussed various loan options, but noted that if Chairman Gamble was successful in negotiations with First Federal, that would be the better fiscal route.

Chairman Gamble discussed his negotiations with First Federal in some detail, noting that if successful, there would be a savings of some \$43,000 per year on the loan.

Discussion ensued on the First Federal negotiations.

County Administrator Harris next discussed the possibility of a 20-year loan, although he hoped that it would not be necessary. He noted that with a 20-year loan, a large down payment of around \$500,000 or \$600,000 would not be necessary, and there should be escrowed money left at the end of the loan to pay off the excess interest.

Commissioner Sessions asked if the County had hired a custodian for the State Attorney's Office yet. County Administrator Harris replied that an employee had already been hired.

Commissioner Sessions discussed the possibility of a part-time worker instead, with the State Attorney's Office employees taking out their own garbage; this would have saved the County enough money to provide escrowed funds to future repairs. However, since the County had already hired an employee, it was a moot point.

Chairman Gamble stated that the County's portion of the State Attorney's Office was 47%, and making a large down payment would go a long way to pay down the County's portion of that cost. He added that setting up an escrow account was a good idea. Chairman Gamble asked how much the County had in reserves. County Administrator Harris replied that there was about \$6.7 million in reserves.

Discussion ensued on the County's reserves and the interest rate from them.

Commissioner Richardson discussed repairs for the State Attorney's Office, asking if the other counties in the district were responsible for a portion of those expenses. It was determined that the County would be responsible for the extra expenses, hence the need for the escrowed accounts.

Commissioner Richardson believed that paying down the loan would be the best option.

Chairman Gamble also believed that paying down the loan was the best option, but wanted the County's Finance Department and Clerk's Office to review the finances to make sure sufficient funding was available.

County Administrator Harris stated that the Sheriff was interested in a new building for his staff that would need to be addressed in the next few years. He also discussed several other minor capital improvement expenses, including work on the Mizell's Building and work on the Courthouse.

Discussion ensued on warranties for the State Attorney's Office as well as the Sheriff's needs.

Clerk Baker noted his concerns with extending the loan to 20 years.

The Board discussed paying down the current loan and creating a new payment schedule based upon the reduced principal.

Clerk Baker stated that he was not in favor of extending debt in general, and would be glad to have his staff look at the proposals being negotiated between the Chairman and First Federal.

Commissioner Fleming suggested that the Clerk's Finance Department and County Administrator Harris sit down and address the County's needs with First Federal. He added that he was not in favor of refinancing and extending the loan.

Clerk Baker stated that there were many scenarios that could be addressed, and submitted handouts related to refinancing.

Chief Deputy Williams briefly discussed the Clerk's handout, noting several options for the County.

Chairman Gamble stated that the Mizell's and Nettie Baisden Buildings were part of the State Attorney's Office construction.

Commissioner Richardson asked why the County could not pay off the entire loan. Chairman Gamble replied that it would leave insufficient reserves to fund the County in case of emergencies.

Discussion ensued on options for paying down the State Attorney's Office loan while simultaneously helping out the counties in the circuit throughout the length of the loan.

Chairman Gamble hoped that good planning by the current Board would help later Boards.

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**The Board by consensus authorized County Administrator Harris and the Clerk's Office to enter into negotiations with First Federal Bank to make a down payment on the Capital Improvement Loan to reduce the principal of the loan over the remainder of its term.**

Commissioner Richardson thanked County Administrator Harris for bringing the issue to the Board, but was concerned that the State Attorney's Office Building had cost more than originally forecasted.

Discussion ensued on the reasons for the increase in price, which was due to changes made on property acquisition and other related issues.

Clerk Baker clarified that some of the counties in the district had a reduced amount of funding to the State Attorney because they had their own satellite offices.

County Administrator Harris briefly discussed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Attorney's Office and then discussed prior plans to construct the State Attorney's Office where the Nettie Baisden School had been located.

Clerk Baker asked about the retention credit for the former Nettie Baisden School Building, and it was determined that any new building would require its own water retention.

County Administrator Harris stated that there had been discussions with local sports clubs about using the old Nettie Baisden property for paid parking for sporting events at Paul Langford Stadium.

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**The Board by consensus authorized County Administrator Harris to enter into negotiations to create parking for sporting events at Paul Langford Stadium.**

**Commissioner Richardson moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Sessions seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_, DC  
BARRY A. BAKER  
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

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RICKY GAMBLE, CHAIRMAN  
SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF  
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS