

**CALHOUN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MARCH 23, 2017**

PRESENT AND ACTING:

**DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN
GENE BAILEY, VICE-CHAIRMAN
DARRELL MCDUGALD**

SARAH WILLIAMS, CLERK ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The workshop was called to order by Chairman Wise at 9:00 a.m., CT and turned the meeting over to Mr. Richard Williams of Career Source Chipola and Opportunity Florida.

Mr. Williams explained this workshop would serve as a representation of how a first meeting regarding potentially bringing a new business into the County would run. These meetings are usually small, with five (5) or six (6) people, who come together to discuss the project.

Mr. Williams presented the attendees of the workshop with a handout outlining Calhoun County's unemployment rate and labor force size. Mr. Williams pointed out that Calhoun County's labor force has been declining, along with the number of residents employed in the County. Mr. Williams stated these numbers are available online through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and the Bureau of Labor Market Information, and are what business owners are looking at when trying to decide if they want to do business here in Calhoun County. Mr. Williams stated based on the statistics, the labor force in Calhoun County has been declining over the last six (6) years and is projected to continue to decline, which hurts the County's odds of bringing in new businesses.

Mr. Williams stated there are many workforce programs available Career Source Chipola can help with if there is a company who is looking at this area, or who is already here, and having labor issues. Mr. Williams stated there are programs that will help train a workforce for a particular job.

Mr. Roy Baker with Opportunity Florida discussed economic development. There was discussion of the definition of economic development. Mr. Baker stated economic development seeks to improve the social, political, and economic wellbeing in a community. Mr. Baker stated job decline in an area affects many aspects of the County, including school populations, funding from the state for the schools, taxable values, and real estate. Mr. Baker stated it is important to bring jobs into the County, but also to build jobs from within the County through business retention and expansion. Mr. Baker further explained the impacts economic development could have on a County.

Mr. Williams provided the attendees with a handout of a hypothetical project and a handout of steps from start to finish of an economic development project. Mr. Williams stated the project was a real project, but names and figures have been changed to give an idea of what really happens in the application process of bringing a business into the County. Mr. Williams stated a lot of research goes

into finding potential businesses to bring into counties in the area. Mr. Williams and Mr. Baker went through the application process using the hypothetical project, and explained the things a county needs to have in order to appeal to a company. Mr. Baker stated the goal is to get a company to come for a site visit so they can see what the county has to offer. Mr. Williams stated it is important for a county to have multiple land options recorded and available for development to offer companies looking for properties. Mr. Baker stated it is important also to know additional options available to a parcel of land, such as additional acreage, the possibility of railway access, and the possibility of a natural gas line, even if a company is not looking for these things in the application packet. Mr. Williams stated the County might want to think of some incentives to offer to companies, such as waiving electric hookup fees or free water and sewer for a year. Mr. Williams suggested the Board of County Commissioners set a policy for an ad valorem tax option for companies creating jobs in the County over a certain amount of time.

Ms. Kristy Terry stated land use also needs to be discussed; every lead she gets asks how the land is zoned. This has proved to be an obstacle when looking at sites in the western part of the County, as most are zoned agricultural. Mr. Bruce Ballister of the Apalachee Regional Planning Council suggested a simple text change to the Comprehensive Plan that would allow light industrial as an allowable use in agriculture zoned areas.

Mr. Williams asked if the School Board has thought about putting a policy in place that states if a company brings a certain amount of jobs for a certain wage, the school will promise to create a training program for those jobs. Mr. Williams stated there is no other school system in the state of Florida with this policy in place, but he has spoken with one superintendent who is working on putting one in place.

Mr. Williams stated Opportunity Florida is working toward site certification for all the counties in the area, at no charge to the counties, and more information will be available at a further date.

Mr. Williams briefly discussed the mega-site in Jackson County near the state line that north Florida and southern Alabama are working on together. Mr. Williams stated they are searching for a major employer for the mega site to bring many jobs into our area, and have had a lead recently. A site visit and presentation has been conducted, and a visit has been made to the company's headquarters. Mr. Williams stated Opportunity Florida has been told they have support from the House and the Senate if the company decides to locate here. Mr. Williams stated if a large company locates at the mega-site, surrounding counties would be where suppliers for the company may want to locate.

Mr. Williams stated once Calhoun County has some sites under option, Opportunity Florida would be able to help market those sites. Mr. Williams stated Calhoun County has some disadvantages, but they will work to help the County overcome these disadvantages and bring in companies to create jobs. Mr. Williams stated Opportunity Florida will help the County find grants for rural infrastructure, and stated there are scholarships available for County Officials and Commissioners wanting to learn more about economic development.

Mr. Williams stated Calhoun County's top priority should be getting some parcels of land under option. Mr. Williams stated if the County would like to have another workshop when they are ready to get land under option, Opportunity Florida would be happy to come back, provide input, and help with the

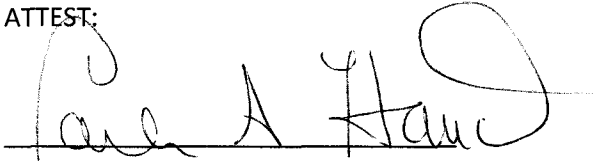
process. Mr. Baker stated Mr. Victor Leotta, who is with an economic development site selection company, would be visiting our region to assess and evaluate any potential economic development sites. The effort is funded through a grant to Opportunity Florida from Enterprise Florida. Mr. Baker stated Mr. Leotta would like to see County Officials, school board members, and at least one (1) County Commissioner at this workshop to provide input. Mr. Baker stated as soon as more information on a date was available he would let everyone know.

Mr. Williams stated he hopes this workshop has provided helpful information and insight into Economic Development and bringing businesses into the County.

There being no further business, the workshop adjourned at 11:25 a.m., CT.


DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


CARLA A. HAND, CLERK