

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
EMERGENCY MEETING
FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX
JANUARY 29, 2010
9:00 AM**

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Joseph Parrish – Chairman, Noah Lockley Jr – Vice Chairman, Pinki Jackel, Cheryl Sanders, Bevin Putnal

Others Present: Alan Pierce – Director of Administrative Services, Michael Shuler – County Attorney, Michael Morón – Board Secretary

Call to Order (9:06 AM)

Chairman Parrish called the meeting to order and explained that the reason this meeting was called is to discuss the economic situation of the oyster harvester and dealers because of the frequent Bay closures over the last month.

Mr. Pierce stated that Mrs. Pam Brownell, the Emergency Management Director, will give an update regarding a conference call she and Commissioner Jackel were involved in.

Mrs. Brownell, of Emergency Management, stated that she received a call from Taunya James of the Seafood Workers Association who explained the economic condition of the seafood workers. She also stated some of the different agencies she has contacted to assist the seafood workers, and that State workers will be in the County on Wednesday February 3 to assist County residents with food stamps and cash disbursement programs. Mrs. Brownell then discussed the assistance that will be provided by the Salvation Army and stated that Second Harvest will be providing food as the Food Pantry reserves are quickly being depleted.

Commissioner Jackel discussed in further detail the services offered by the Food Pantry program in Eastpoint and the possibility of additional assistance for the County.

Commissioner Lockley explained that one of the main problems is that the area that is opened for oyster harvesting has been overworked so the harvesters are not making any money. He stated that additional financial assistance besides food, such as utilities and rent, is also needed.

Commissioner Jackel stated that the conference call included USDA and the representatives from different State agencies who are working on a \$100 million disaster application to the federal government which would cover the economic impact caused by the freezing weather condition that occurred in December and January. In order for Franklin County to benefit from these funds, Commissioner Jackel is asking Mr. Pierce and Mrs. Brownell to gather the necessary information needed and submit it to USDA by 12 noon today, which is the deadline,

as pointed out on the conference call. Commissioner Jackel also discussed the possibility of submitting a disaster relief application, using the same data, because of pollution incursion to the Bay.

Mr. Pierce provided additional information on these disaster relief applications.

Commissioner Jackel suggested that the County seek Senator Nelson's support on these disaster applications.

Commissioner Lockley suggested that the County ask the Governor to declare a state of emergency which would help with receiving funding.

Mr. Pierce stated that a local state of emergency would have to be declared by the Board before making that request to the Governor.

Commissioner Lockley asked Mr. Pierce to send the local state of emergency to both the Governor and the County's Legislative Delegation.

Commissioner Putnal stated that a lot of the seafood workers are so far behind in utility and mortgage payments even if the Bay opens up the workers will not catch up so some kind of assistance is needed as soon as possible.

Commissioner Jackel stated that Progress Energy has provided the following number (800-700-8744) for residents who are unable to pay their bills at this time.

Mr. Pierce, based on a request from Commissioner Sanders, explained that he has asked Congressman Boyd's office to reinstate rules that were used after Tropical Storm Alberta in 1995 which provided funding for an expanded re-shelling program and the Revolving Loan program. Mr. Pierce stated that the Governor recently declared the panhandle counties a rural area of economic concern.

Motion by Sanders, seconded by Lockley, declaring an economic state of emergency for Franklin County and to request additional assistance from the Governor as he has declared this area as a rural area of economic concern; Motion carried 5-0 (9:21 AM)

Motion by Lockley, seconded by Sanders, authorizing a Resolution of support to reinstitute the rules from 1995 Tropical Storm for the re-shelling program and Revolving Loan reinstated; Motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Lockley stated the areas would be best for the re-shelling program.

Commissioner Putnal suggested that some of the Commissioners should personally meet with the Governor and his staff to help with securing financial assistance for the seafood workers.

Mr. Pierce explained that most of this funding is from the Federal Government so the State wouldn't have that much influence.

Chairman Parrish suggested that a letter is sent to Mark Berrigan at the Department of Agriculture seeking additional funding for the re-shelling program.

Motion by Putnal, seconded by Sanders, directing Mr. Pierce to send a letter to Mr. Berrigan requesting additional funding for the re-shelling program and request seeds along with the shells; Motion carried 5-0.

Mrs. Brownell discussed other programs that could assist the seafood workers and encouraged everyone to take advantage of these programs that are being offered.

Taunya James, President of the Seafood Workers Association, provided a contact phone number (850-387-5982) and stated where the forms would be available.

Mrs. Brownell and Ms. James discussed a program in Port St. Joe that would assist with food. Chairman Parrish stated the need to circulate information to the public regarding all of these programs. Mrs. Brownell explained that the information regarding these programs will be communicated to the public thru the news media including our public access channel 3. Commissioner Putnal suggested informing Ms. James once the information becomes available. Commissioner Lockley suggested that we contact OTTED for financial assistance. The Board discussed this matter further.

Mr. Pierce stated that the CAP office needs to explain if and how they will be able to assist the County.

Board members discussed best way possible to get answers and responses for financial assistance from the different agencies. The Board also discussed some of the conference calls regarding this matter.

Commissioner Lockley recommended that the County contact the news media so that they are involved in all of the meetings and conference calls.

Motion by Lockley, seconded by Putnal, to contact all of the news media and inform them of these conference calls and meetings; Motion carried 5-0

Ms. James discussed problems with some of the oyster bars that they are exposed and the need to inform the State of these problems.

Chairman Parrish explained that the Board is doing all that it can to assist the seafood workers, and is very aware of the economic situation that the seafood workers are going through.

There was additional comments from the floor regarding the exposure of the oyster bars, the CAP office only helping renters not those with mortgages, additional funding, mismanagement of the oyster bars and the need to change the management plan, the shortage of oysters in the Bay, the State's process of replanting oysters, the need for a long term solutions, what other States do regarding seafood and re-shelling, and changes that has occurred to the re-shelling program over the years.

Chairman Parrish discussed the relay program, the reduction of funding over the years for this program and the importance of having the Department of Agriculture to visit the County and listen to the problems of the seafood workers regarding the Bay.

Mrs. Brownell also commented on these items.

Adjourn 10:12 AM

There being no further business on this matter, Chairman Parrish adjourned the meeting.

Joseph A Parrish – Chairman FCBCC

Attest:

Marcia M. Johnson – Clerk of Courts