

HARDEE COUNTY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EDA)  
**(INDEPENDENT BOARD)**  
COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
412 WEST ORANGE STREET, ROOM 102  
WAUCHULA, FLORIDA 33873  
MAY 24, 2011 8:30 A.M.

**MINUTES**

**Members:**

David Royal, Vice-Chairman, P  
Bill Beattie, P  
Kenny Miller, P  
Derren Bryan, P  
Roger Hood, Excused

Bridget Merrill, P  
Perry Knight, P  
Bill Lambert, Chairman, P  
Terry Atchley, P

County Attorney Ken Evers, P  
Office Manager Sandy Meeks, P

County Manager Lexton H. Albritton, Jr., P

Chairman Lambert called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and announced that Roger Hood had a conflict and would not be at meeting.

**MOTION by Royal, second by Atchley** to approve the agenda. **Motion carried unanimously.**

**MOTION by Merrill, second by Atchley** to approve the February 01, 2011, regular meeting minutes. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- I. Acknowledge receipt of the Clerk's Financial Report for period ending 01/31/11, 02/28/11, 03/31/11, and 04/30/11.

**MOTION by Atchley, second by Royal** to acknowledge receipt of the Clerk's Financial Report for periods ending 01/31/11, 02/28/11, 03/31/11, and 04/30/11. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- II. Acknowledge receipt of the Project Status Reports from the Industrial Development Authority, Town of Zolfo Springs, and the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners.

Chairman Lambert gave a brief update on the Industrial Development Authority's Grant for the Spec Building. He advised they had commenced construction for a confidential client. Knight advised the Board that the City of Bowling Green had received a \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant and that engineering was underway for their project. **MOTION by Atchley, second by Merrill** to acknowledge receipt of the Project Status Reports from the Industrial Development Authority, Town of Zolfo Springs, and the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- III. Acknowledge receipt of Ranking Sheets from Town of Zolfo Springs, Hardee County BOCC, and the City of Bowling Green.

Chairman Lambert touched on the statute and how they were to consider the ranking in their application process, but was not bound by the ranking. **MOTION by Royal, second by Bryan** to acknowledge receipt of the Ranking Sheets from Town of Zolfo Springs, Hardee County BOCC, and the City of Bowling Green. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- IV. Presentation by Alane Academy.

Melissa Northup and Julie Poucher, Alane Academy thanked the Board for the opportunity and then presented a power point presentation on their project. They touched on where they came up with the name Alane Academy and provided several slides on what made them different, their backgrounds, mission statement, and their plans for the future and how the grant would come into effect. They also had several pictures of their school and classrooms.

- V. Presentation by Center for Great Apes.

Patti Ragan, President and Founder, Center for Great Apes thanked the Board for the opportunity to present her project and provided the Board with a fact sheet and several slides of pictures of the center and the orangutans/chimpanzees. She advised the Board the Center for Great Apes was a 501(c)(3) Organization. She also touched on the history of center. She further explained they were the only orangutan sanctuary in North America. She also touched on how they were planning on opening up for more group tours in the future.

- VI. Presentation by Lavon Cobb for the Country Gardens.

Lavon Cobb thanked the Board for the opportunity to make their presentation. He advised their project was for the senior citizens and introduced the members of their team. He advised that there were a lot of senior citizens from Hardee County that had to live in an assisted living facility in Highlands, Polk, or Desoto Counties because Hardee County did not have one here. He also touched on the jobs that would be created. He further advised they could not move forward with project until they had the grant. He explained the grant would make them competitive. He went on to explain they were ready to move forward and very excited about the project.

Chairman Lambert then asked if any of the board members had questions for Julie or Melissa of Alane Academy. Merrill asked when the additional jobs they mentioned during their presentation would come on board and what they were. Ms. Poucher advised it depended on enrollment and explained the positions.

Merrill asked at what point during their enrollment did those additional jobs come on board. Ms. Poucher advised when they enrolled around 16 or 17 students they could begin to look at additional staff. Merrill asked how many people they had interest from at this point. Ms. Poucher advised they had a handful of students enrolled and several meetings scheduled where they would take parents through the tour. She also explained the first year they were planning on doing most everything themselves to save money. Merrill asked if everything went as planned with enrollment did they think they would have the five jobs within the three years. Ms. Poucher advised that was their plan but it would all depend on enrollment. Miller asked if they felt after the first year tuition would sustain them or did they think they would need additional help. Ms. Poucher advised she hoped the tuition would sustain them, but if not, her grandfather would help if needed. Atchely asked if they were planning on becoming incorporated or having a board of directors. Ms. Poucher advised not at this time, but may have a board in the future. Chairman Lambert asked about vouchers and the McKay Scholarship and what would be the real impact of their full time enrollment status on the public education system. Ms. Poucher advised they had no answer on the vouchers at this time, but would keep monitoring through the state. She further explained they were in the process of accepting the McKay Scholarships and the Florida Tax Credit Grant, but still had other requirements to meet before they could start accepting them. Chairman Lambert summed up stating that they would be solely funded through private sector funds and would have no flow of public funds to their institution and that the kids they enrolled could not be counted in the public schools full time enrollment process. He further advised they were requesting two jobs at \$50,000 each. There were no further questions.

Chairman Lambert then asked if they had any questions for Patti Ragan of the Center for Great Apes. Merrill stated she was not sure what the \$18,000 requested was to do. Ms. Ragan explained they had three positions, but it would be difficult to fund the positions without other funding. Merrill asked if these positions were going to be ongoing expenses. Ms. Ragan explained they were and how they were going to need extra help if they had more tours. She explained how all their salaries were paid from donations, foundations grants, and from the special events. Chairman Lambert advised they were proposing two salaries at \$25,000 and one at 27,000 and how the 115% target rate was \$25,711. He went on to explain that the Board may need to decide if they were going to fund jobs that were below the median income range. Knight asked if the positions would be filled with local residents. Ms. Ragan explained the administrative position most likely would, but it was hard to find trainers and caregivers with great ape experience in Hardee County. Chairman Lambert asked how many full time employees they reported in 2010. Ms. Ragan stated 22 full time employees. Chairman Lambert then asked if she could expand on the innuendo of opening up for more visitors. Ms. Ragan explained it stemmed from

her visit to a big cat rescue in Tampa. She went on to explain how she felt they could open up to more visitors without disrupting the animals and hopefully, earn more funds for the center. She also stated this would be her board of director's final decision. There were no further questions.

Chairman Lambert then asked if there were any questions for Lavon Cobb of the Country Gardens. Merrill asked if the construction jobs were just going to be while they were building the facility. Mr. Cobb advised yes. Merrill questioned the number of full time jobs. Mr. Cobb advised there would be 38 full time jobs. Mr. Pontier, Project Manager explained that 38 would be the minimum number. Chairman Lambert explained he was confused on the nature of the application. He further explained how he thought they would submit a private sector – infrastructure application and it appeared to be a hybrid private sector infrastructure application based on job creation and how he was not sure if that was a glitch in the application process or a mistake in the way the application was filed. He went on to state that he felt if they were going to move this forward they should go with their original intention and structure this not as a grant, but as a performance based mortgage with either the Industrial Development Authority or the City of Wauchula holding the mortgage. He proposed that if they were going to consider funding this they either send the application back to be refiled or instruct the County Attorney or County Manager to construct a performance based mortgage. Merrill advised the request was for \$2.2 million and they did not have that, so what were they planning on doing about the shortfall. Mr. Pontier explained how they came up with their request and they were not opposed to a performance based mortgage and they were not going to flip the project. Merrill asked if they did not receive the grant would the project be dead. Mr. Pontier advised it would be. He further explained without the grant they would not be able to get a lender to participate. Bryan asked about their private equity. Merrill asked Lavon to clarify what would happen if the application was not funded at the \$2.2 million. Mr. Cobb advised they would not have a project if they were not funded close to that. He explained they could either take what they could get and go back and crunch the numbers to see if it would work which he doubted it would or they could wait and come back at another cycle to make up the difference. He further explained how the project was a win/win for Hardee County. Merrill advised it was a great project, but they just didn't have that much money available. Chairman Lambert explained they had received \$2,190,000 for their current cycle and what if they were to move the application forward and look at some refinements relative to their discussion during the meeting and maybe extend the current cycle thirty days then depending on what they funded with the other two they would have around \$3.7 million. Merrill proposed they roll the Center for Great Apes forward as well since they had a better understanding of how the process worked. She went on to explain that typically they look at jobs for two or three years, so if Alane Academy was planning on five jobs after three years; that would be \$20,000 for

five jobs instead of the \$100,000 for two jobs. Chairman Lambert asked if she wanted to condition the grant agreement on them having the five jobs. She advised no she just wanted the Board to take that into consideration as they were looking at the application. **MOTION by Merrill, second by Royal** to fund Alane Academy at their \$100,000 request making a notation that there was an expectation of the jobs growing to five jobs within five years and rolling the Center for Great Apes and Country Manor forward for reworking into a combined grant cycle of the remaining dollars with the new dollars and extending for thirty additional days. Miller asked Lavon if he was purchasing the 32 acre site. Mr. Cobb advised he was purchasing five or six acres. Miller also asked if they had considered scaling the project back. Mr. Pontier explained the numbers were based on the independent market research firm. **Motion carried unanimously.**

County Manager Albritton explained they would have to readvertise if they were planning on extending the cycle or did they feel the work could be done before the already advertised deadline. Chairman Lambert explained the process to the applicants.

VII. EDA Ranking.

See above.

VIII. Discussion on selecting an auditor (Request for Proposal).

Chairman Lambert advised the board they could piggyback off the county and asked the Board what their preference would be. County Manager Albritton advised his recommendation would be to piggyback off the county. He explained how the county had advertised request for proposals for auditing services. **MOTION by Lambert, second by Atchley** to utilize the same auditors that the county used. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Lambert asked about the date for awarding the next cycle. County Manager Albritton advised it would be in September and how the cities had to have thirty days for their ranking. After further discussion, the board asked the applicants if they felt they could get the applications in by two weeks, so they would not have to readvertise. The applicants felt they could have the applications in by two weeks. After further discussion, Merrill advised they needed to have the County Attorney rebrief them at the next meeting on what were job projects and what were infrastructure projects and how they should consider them. **MOTION by Royal, second by Atchley** to amend the extension of the application period by thirty days to leave the current application period as advertised. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Ms. Ragan advised she was aware of the sunshine law, but would she be able to meet with someone to get more clarification on her application. Chairman Lambert advised she could, but just one at a time and could not discuss what another board member had advised.

IX. Public Comment.

There was none.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.**

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William R. Lambert, Jr., Chairman