

HARDEE COUNTY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EDA)  
(INDEPENDENT BOARD)  
COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
412 WEST ORANGE STREET, ROOM 102  
WAUCHULA, FLORIDA 33873  
April 05, 2016 8:30 a.m.

**MINUTES**

**Members:**

David Royal, Chairman, P  
Linda Roberson, Excused  
Kenny Miller, P  
Stanley Pelham, P

Donna Doubleday, P  
Terry Atchley, P  
Sue Birge, Vice-Chairman, P  
Steven Southwell, P

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

County Manager Lexton H. Albritton, Jr., P

Chairman Royal led the Invocation followed by the Pledge to the Flag.

Chairman Royal called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**MOTION by Birge, second by Pelham to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.**

**MOTION by Atchley, second by Southwell to approve the minutes for the regular meeting on March 22, 2016, at 8:30 a.m. Motion carried unanimously.**

**AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION –The Herald Advocate 03/31/16 & The Florida Administrative Weekly 03/29/16.**

- I. Discuss continued funding of operating costs.

Chairman Royal asked for the County Manager Albritton and County Attorney Evers to lead the discussion. County Manager Albritton explained they had many discussions over the last year on this issue and he had done some research and looked at past meetings to refresh his mind on what opened the door to this. He stated that operational costs were very difficult to administer and it also, opened the door for them to be attacked, but the decision was ultimately up to the board. County Attorney Evers explained if the Board decided not to fund operating costs he did not believe a rule change would be needed. He also gave a brief history of when the EDA was created by the local bill and how the County Commission at the time, unanimously opposed the creation of the EDA.

Chairman Royal explained the EDA board has been successful and they have accomplished a lot of things, but with the operating costs they just did not have the Staff to handle these types of requests and needed to decide if they wanted to continue to fund them.

Commissioner Birge explained that if anyone went to the bank to borrow money they would ask for skin in the game and banks would not fund operating costs and felt they needed to look at it the same way. She further stated they could look at 50%, but wasn't even sure about that.

Atchley asked about the Economic Development Council (EDC) and their Admin Funding that the EDA funded every year. County Attorney Evers advised it was operational, but they were a different type of applicant and they did not generate revenue. Chairman Royal also stated that saved the County Commission money as well.

Pelham stated he felt the same as Commissioner Birge and the applicants should have some skin in the game. He also stated they needed an EDC Office and should continue to fund them.

Doubleday explained she had thought about this a lot and felt they should fund the EDC and the only other time they should fund operating costs was if a service was being provided to the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), EDC, or EDA. She gave the Incubator and Debut Development as an example.

Southwell stated he agreed, but wanted the money to create jobs and wealth for the community. He further stated he did not want all the money to go to government projects. He also stated they could look at relocation expenses for a company that wanted to come to Hardee County. Chairman Royal stated they had funded a lot of the Spec Buildings at the Commerce Park.

Commissioner Birge stated they had lost their original focus on creating jobs.

Pelham stated if they did not have the applicants they wanted to fund during a cycle, they did not have to fund them.

County Manager Albritton touched on how they did not have to fund every applicant and they could roll the money forward and have a fund if a big project came up.

Doubleday stated the infrastructure and job creation grant had deliverables that were pretty clear, but the grants they had funded this year with the operational costs did not have deliverables. County Manager Albritton reminded the board that they added the "up to" wording on the grant amount and that was a big change.

Commissioner Birge stated she felt just because they had money they did not have to fund projects they were not comfortable with and would like to see them go in a clearer direction and focus more on creating jobs.

Southwell stated the Job Creation Grant was what they need to use to create the jobs and really the incentives were not that big for the smaller companies. He also asked if they were restrictive to just a grant or could they do a revolving loan fund. County Manager Albritton stated they could not abandon the reimbursement criteria. County Attorney Evers advised he had never really thought about that, but probably not because of the reimbursement criteria.

Atchley touched on how they were required to solicit, rank, and fund projects and how they were somewhat tied to the legislation. County Manager Albritton also stated how they had to rank the projects relative to one another and that was why they never followed through with the quick closing fund they had discussed in the past. He also touched on the job creation grant and the incentives. Atchley explained the whole process was a challenge and how they had changed over the years.

Southwell asked if they received an economic development application could they award that as a job creation grant or would they have to have that application completed. County Manager Albritton advised they could amend the applications and gave an example of when they did that with Harvest Aviation during the first cycle. Chairman Royal advised they are hoping the Pre-Application Meeting will help with all that. County Manager Albritton explained that was on the timeline and felt that needed to be a mandatory meeting.

Chairman Royal advised they had a good discussion, but need to get back to the agenda item on operating costs and stated he would entertain a motion. Southwell asked what they needed to do to make a policy change on the operating costs. County Manager Albritton advised it was hard to decide, but they could not leave a wide door open because then everyone would just still apply to have their operating costs funded. Atchley asked the County Manager what they could do to make the process easier regarding operating costs. County Manager Albritton explained he wasn't sure and how it was hard to address and it might be easier to define what were not considered operating costs. Southwell stated that was what he was thinking as well. Atchley explained they did not need to get too restrictive, but needed to be consistent. Chairman Royal stated what if they stated they would not fund any day to day operational costs, but if they did it would be on a set percentage. Commissioner Birge asked what if they made them bring it back for a second vote. County Manager Albritton stated they did not meet enough for that. Doubleday stated she thought they needed to go back to the original intent. She went on to explain she liked the idea of a percentage but if they left the definition of operating costs and the definition of what they would fund wide open then they would be right back in the same situation. She

further stated they needed specific standards for the applicant to go by. County Manager Albritton explained that was like the county's grant process. Doubleday then stated what if they decided to do the operational costs of the EDC, contracts to perform duties like with the IDA and the Incubator, 25% of rent and utilities and 50% of expenses relating to trade shows for marketing purposes. County Manager Albritton explained that was similar to some of the grants the county had and it could be difficult to handle. County Attorney Evers advised he would like for them to stay away from having to advertise any rule changes to the application process. Chairman Royal asked if he had a recommendation. He advised he did not have one. Doubleday asked if they decided not to fund operational costs except of the EDC could the IDA pick those up. County Manager Albritton explained they could and that was the original intent. County Attorney Evers explained salaries were the main operating cost that raised the most criticism and might be the easiest place to start. County Manager Albritton stated the easiest way was just to state they were not going to fund operating costs because it was just too hard to try and figure out an easier way. Southwell explained they needed to have consistency. Doubleday asked if they did vote not to fund operating costs how would they handle the EDC. County Manager Albritton explained they would exempt them. Pelham explained they would have to take the same approach with the Incubator.

**MOTION by Doubleday, second by Atchley to not fund future operating costs, but will exempt the EDC and the operation of the Innovation Place.** Miller appreciated everyone's input and work today and asked if the IDA coming forward with an application like they did last cycle with companies would be prohibited. County Manager Albritton advised that was correct. County Attorney Evers explained they needed to make clear they were not eliminating the Job Creation Application and also, the incentives with the Job Creation were not that great and they might want to look at different numbers on that application. Atchley stated this would probably be another challenge, but everyone needs skin in the game. Mrs. Sarah Pelham, EDO Office asked if they had another company that came to them and wanted their product development and materials funded would that fall under operating costs and if it didn't could the company get job creation dollars as well and would they need two applications. County Manager Albritton explained they had the joint application and they would need to define that when it came up and they could not go over every scenario today. Southwell stated he felt that fell under operating costs. Miller stated he felt all they could fund under that scenario was the Job Creation. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- II. Acknowledge receipt of Clerk's Unadjusted Financial Report for period ending 02/29/16.

**MOTION by Pelham, second by Atchley to acknowledge receipt of Clerk's Unadjusted Financial Report for period ending 02/29/16. Motion carried unanimously.**

- III. Discuss timeline for Cycle 13 and approve advertising for new grant cycle.

**MOTION by Atchley, second by Pelham** to approve advertising for new grant cycle making the pre-application meeting mandatory that will be held on 05/24/16 at 8:30 a.m. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- IV. Public Comment.

County Manager Albritton reminded the board they would have to start working on the applications for the CF (Mosaic) money for the recreation and education, but it was still held up in the courts at this time, but they still needed to be prepared. Chairman Royal stated they needed to look at the vocational program at the High School for the education part. Atchley stated they need to make sure whatever they did the School Board could sustain it. After further discussion, County Manager Albritton stated they would set up a workshop in the future, so they could start working on it.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.**

  
David Royal, Chairman