

JULY 30, 2012

PORT ST. JOE, FLORIDA

SPECIAL MEETING

The Gulf County Board of County Commissioners met this date in a special meeting with the following members present: Chairman William C. Williams, III, Vice Chairman Tan Smiley, and Commissioners Ward McDaniel, and Warren Yeager, Jr. <Commissioner Carmen L. McLemore was absent>

Others present were: County Attorney Jeremy Novak, Deputy Clerk Kari Summers, Chief Administrator Don Butler, Deputy Administrator Lynn Lanier, Building Inspector George Knight, Grant Writer Towan Kopinsky, Mosquito Control Director Mark Cothran, Planner David Richardson, Public Works Director Joe Danford, Sheriff's Office Major Bobby Plair, Tax Collector Shirley Jenkins, T.D.C. Director Jennifer Jenkins.

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., E.T.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

T.D.C. Director Jenkins informed the Board that her Advisory Board made three (3) recommendations to bring to this Board for consideration.

T.D.C. Director Jenkins noted they are very low on the Gulf County Visitor Guides, stating they are distributing 200 per month to requesting visitors, and requested permission to have 15,000 Gulf County Visitor Guides reprinted. Commissioner Yeager motioned to approve this request. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (3-0).

T.D.C. Director Jenkins requested permission to hire an additional staff assistance to help keep the Welcome Center open on the weekends. Commissioner Yeager motioned to approve this request. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (3-0).

T.D.C. Director Jenkins stated that due to the change in the cycle for the Sponsorship and Special Funding, the Gulf County Sheriff's Department requested funding for their annual bass tournament in the amount of \$10,000.00 and requested approval, noting there are funds available in the budget for this. Commissioner Yeager motioned to approve this request. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (3-0).

Chief Administrator Butler discussed that the Board previously approved Interim T.D.C. Director Kopinsky to have signature authority for the T.D.C, and recommended T.D.C. Director Jenkins have signature authority, or whomever she may delegate to. Commissioner Yeager motioned to approve this recommendation. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (3-0).

RE-DISTRICTING

County Attorney Novak discussed that Michael Spellman of Sniffen & Spellman Law Firm is in attendance today to give the Board an update on re-districting. <Vice Chairman Smiley entered the meeting at 9:02 a.m., E.T.> County Attorney Novak gave a recap back to December, 2010, stating (1) this commission instructed him to reach out to special counsel, (2) in February, 2011 the County retained Sniffen & Spellman Law Firm to begin examining the census figures up through 2010, stating that they came back in July, 2011 with a report to the County, and following the report in July, 2011 the County proceeded with the re-districting as required in an odd year following the census figures. He reported the County was required within Federal and State guidelines to come within a 10% deviation of all population figures, and in September, 2011 the County adopted the re-districting of Gulf County. County Attorney Novak introduced Michael Spellman of Sniffen & Spellman Law Firm. Michael Spellman appeared before the Board and gave an update to the Board on the re-districting, stating he does not think the County re-districting needs to go before the Federal Court for approval at this time, and from a matter of practicality it would not behoove the County to put it in front of the Federal Court at this time; stating it is not necessary, nor practical for purposes of re-districting. He reported when Sniffen & Spellman Law Firm, Dr. Bullock, and Dr. Gaddie reviewed this a year ago they were studying the three Gingells factors, stating (1) there has to be a minority group sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute the majority in a single member district, (2) that the minority group is politically cohesive, and (3) that the minority preferred candidate is usually defeated by white majority block voting. Mr. Spellman reported for purposes of the study the experts essentially assumed that the minority group was politically cohesive, and really looks to see from precinct to precinct whether or not the candidate preferred by white voters would win in a general election, stating this is not about what makes the candidate, what matters is the preferred candidate by race of the voter. He noted there seems to be a shift in the populations, and it may be worth looking at, stating you can only re-district in an odd numbered year. Mr. Spellman stated it may be worth reviewing the re-districting and recommended it be done immediately into 2013 because this is a long process and it may be that District 4 needs to be reviewed as to whether it is geographically compact or not. He stated in that case we would have to go before a Federal Court and get approval and will probably have to engage in dialogue with the groups that will likely

want to be reviewing this very carefully, which might include the Americans with Civil Liberties Union and might include the N.A.A.C.P. Commissioner McDaniel stated he supports County-wide voting, noting under the County-wide system everyone is treated equal and everyone should be together. Commissioner McDaniel continued to share his reasons for feeling the way he does. Commissioner Smiley expressed his reasons for maintaining single-member districts. Commissioner Smiley stated that he does not support County-wide voting; explaining he is not a District Commissioner, he is a County Commissioner. Commissioner Yeager stated this is a passionate issue for this community and has been dividing for a long time. He noted this Board followed the proper procedure to see if this is still needed in our community, stating he would like to see this brought back to the Courts and let them review and make the decision. Chairman Williams discussed and stated that Mr. Spellman suggested re-districting not to be sent to the Federal Courts at this time, stating that the constituents of this County want County-wide voting. Discussion continued. Commissioner Yeager stated that we need to move forward after the 2012 election. Chairman Williams called for public comment. Gary Ross appeared before the Board and discussed that he would like to look at a way to move forward with this and recommended for Commissioner Smiley to bring forward people to get involved with the County and City levels so that they learn how the County and City works and they learn who they are. County Attorney Novak discussed that there was a previous vote among this commission to proceed with the review from Sniffen & Spellman Law Firm, and the proper process has been followed; noting re-districting has been submitted to the State. He reported that Mr. Spellman has advised this Board that it is not appropriate to submit the findings to the Federal Court for approval. Chairman Williams stated that Mr. Spellman has recommended not taking this to the Federal Court at this time, and recommended getting the data from 2012 and proceed at that time, stating we need to wait for the report from Mr. Spellman.

There being no further business, and upon motion by Commissioner Yeager, the meeting did then adjourn at 9:51a.m., E.T.

WILLIAM C. WILLIAMS, III
CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:
REBECCA L. NORRIS
CLERK