

**Minutes - Draft**

**PECS-Planning, Economic Development & Community Services  
Committee**

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Tuesday, June 8, 2021

2:00 PM

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*This meeting will be conducted via teleconference (Zoom). Simultaneous public access to the meeting will be available*

*(1) via live stream on DCTV's webpage,*

*(2) on DCTVChannel23.TV*

Meeting Started At: 2:00pm

Attendees: Commissioners Johnson, Rader, Davis Johnson, Cochran-Johnson, Terry, Bradshaw

**Present**      3 - Member Jeff Rader, Chairperson Larry Johnson, and Member Mereda Davis Johnson

**I. MINUTES**

**2021-2653**      Commission District(s): ALL  
Minutes for the May 25, 2021 Planning, Economic Development, and Community Services Committee Meeting  
**MOTION was made by Jeff Rader, seconded by Mereda Davis Johnson, that this agenda item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 3 - Member Rader, Chairperson Johnson, and Member Davis Johnson**

**II. STATUS UPDATE**

2021 Revitalization Resolution

*-Director Baker: commissioners previously, we had shown you some of the socio-demographic numbers and what we were trying to do was to evaluate what is the best way to look at these particular areas. We have reviewed several neighborhoods in commission districts, and where we've landed is to approach this from a team standpoint is to utilize the high school cluster districts. We asked GIS to review the data and apply that socio-economic data based on the high school clusters. The results of that analysis are as follows - looking at poverty, the ones with highest poverty is the Druid Hills cluster. The one with the most severe unemployment was the Columbia High School cluster. The one with the least median income was the Columbia cluster. Highest crime rate and code violations were found in the McNair cluster. Based on this data, we can start to effectuate change. Based on the policy direction from this committee, we will write those clusters and start as a County to address those issues, based on the ranking table provided. We have identified the partners we will work with to address the issues in the particular communities - for example we will work with WorkSource to address poverty, or Decide DeKalb to address median income.*

*-Director Baker: going forward, we will continue to facilitate the meetings with the county representatives and make sure that all the departments are reintroduced to what the revitalization strategy and ordinance is supposed to do. We're going to make sure that each department understands what they need to do to have success, based on that. Commissioners you can also update your 2019 resolution that's oriented to this new approach that we're doing; Planning and GIS will develop a base map based on the high school clusters. That map will have that asset mapping to show what are the benefits in this particular cluster (where are the libraries, where's the grocery store, where is the park, whereas the senior Center, etc.). We will use that and then do a SWOT analysis with the neighborhood, and the reason for doing that is to do some ground truthing. We still need to have a meeting with representatives from that particular cluster, to specifically alert us to the issues they are having that feed into why things like crime are happening. As we work with our communities, we probably need to have a community action group to monitor that particular situation and revitalization progress for that particular area. As a group, the department representatives will then move to the next cluster to also bring all their resources to bare on that particular area.*

*-Commissioner Johnson requests this come back to committee for discussion in 2 weeks*

Decide DeKalb IGA

*-update from President DeBarr, Decide DeKalb*

*-D DeBarr: based on the feedback and questions from the previous PECS discussion, our team developed a list of responses that will be presented to the commissioners soon. I have also had internal conversations with commissioners - as a result of those conversations, there were seven general points. 1 - DeKalb County should be mentioned first in terms of economic development. 2 - Workforce development is important, and we will work with our partners to foster that. 3 - Support small businesses, and create an infrastructure within DeKalb to support startups. 4 - Focus on underdeveloped areas of the County as well as assets in DeKalb County. 5 - Bring new tools to the toolkits that will support economic development in new ways. 6 - Continue to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders like the Schools, cities, etc. 7 - Bring on key personnel that makes business easy to do in DeKalb County.*

*-D DeBarr: we're currently in conversations with the Administration. Decide DeKalb has been asked to go back and make a few adjustments and present those back to the Administration. Our next step would be to bring this back to PECS when the Administration is comfortable with those adjustments. Once this is brought to PECS, we will have further conversation to finalize this IGA.*

*-Commissioner Johnson: Mr. Williams, it is going to be difficult to approve the budget if we haven't seen the IGA, so we need the IGA so that we can connect the budget at our next PECS meeting. Commissioner Johnson requests the IGA and the budget needed at the upcoming PECS meeting.*

*-Z Williams: regarding the IGA budget, there would not be a budgetary impact anticipated until fiscal year 2022*

*Commissioner Johnson: I see what you're saying - so we would need to look at the IGA so that we can review it and approve that piece prior to accepting. I think it would be good to have this a year ahead of time so that we can review it and work through it.*

*-Question Commissioner Rader: I would imagine the budget would inform the commitments in the IGA. I don't want to approve an IGA that, first of all doesn't have some very concrete expectations in it in terms of output, and then second I wouldn't feel comfortable in exacting those commitments without the resources necessary to accomplish them. We should have an idea, even if it's starting in six months, what that cost is so that we have reasonable expectation and that we can enforce those expectations, based upon the resources we put into it.*

*Z Williams: regarding the process, let's get everything mapped out in terms of what we anticipate accomplishing; Mr. DeBarr has done a fine job at putting a lot of that on paper. Then the sequencing of budgetary impacts. If we are looking for budgetary increases, it seems we can map this out with investments and deliverables from those investments, and then apply how much it would cost, and how much we would need to invest in 6 months, 12 months, 18 months. That's the foundation of what we're talking about; it'll make a for a good plan that we can monitor.*

*-Commissioner Johnson: I think you need to have a plan in the budget on the 22nd.*

*-Question Commissioner Terry: are we starting the process now so that January 1 we've got the people in place, or are we waiting until March 2022 or mid-year next year?*

*Commissioner Johnson: I agree, if you have the plan and you have the budget, let's start talking about it now, instead of waiting because economic development needs to be at the top of our priority. Requests this discussion come to committee on the 22nd so that the committee can begin to review.*

*-Question Commissioner Davis Johnson: can we have portions of this in the mid-year budget, rather than waiting to appropriate it all at once in 2022?*

*Z Williams: we will provide our recommendations, which will address what we're talking about in terms of phasing portions as a rolling start. We do not anticipate a recommendation of doing it all at mid-year.*

### III. DISCUSSION

#### DeKalb Tenant-Landlord Assistance Coalition (TLAC)

*-presentation from COO Williams on the County's strategy as it relates to rental assistance*

*-Z Williams: as it relates as it relates to the emergency rental assistance funding that we received previously from the US Department of Treasury, it is critical to note that we are guided by the rules set by the US Department of treasury for our spending for both TLAC and all other federal funding under CARES Act. A couple of weeks into accepting applications in the programs, we were victim of a cyber-crime, which at this moment are not at liberty to discuss as the FBI is investigating. In the meantime, we have continued the process with staff of around 50 auxiliary and temporary workers each week. I can have by the end of this meeting as to where we are with the processing, and we have onboarded Atlanta Legal Aid to assist in process management of the people who are subject to evictions. There are several hundred that have been processed, and we'll get you that exact number. That is process is ongoing.*

*-Z Williams: Additionally, the new ARP funding has 2 key features. One, is \$1.5M in discretionary funding for each Commission district and, two, \$20M in reserves. We anticipate many of the funds in the BOC to go to nonprofits who are in the same space of assisting those with housing needs.*

*-Z Williams: we have also just received a second funding source for emergency rental assistance; we are yet to bring that item forward as this was received between meetings so we didn't want to walk it on today. We have received the first \$9M of that, and will have a detailed conversation of this at the upcoming COW meeting on 6/15.*

*-Question Commissioner Johnson: is that \$9M part of the grant that was sent to you all a while back for assistance?*

*Z Williams: correct, that is from the grant that you sent us information; our staff is also diligently seeking grants on a daily basis*

*-Question Commissioner Rader: How will the administration be able to distribute the rest of the funds? Will we be able to fully deploy these resources to prevent evictions before the end of the month, when evictions begin? If there is reopening of the program, will people need to re-apply?*

*Z Williams: we're continuing to work with the courts closely in the management of this program, and we are aware of the potential lifting of the eviction moratorium. Throughout the months of June and July, this will be an ongoing process, and we will continue seeking other funds. The funding is set to last until the end of this calendar year; once the moratorium is lifted, there will be few organizations that have actually spent all of the money prior to that date.*

*-Question Commissioner Rader: how much of the money that we have appropriated for this purpose has actually been obligated?*

*Z Williams: we are gathering that information and will get it to you before the end of the meeting*

*-Question Commissioner Davis Johnson: the administration has been proactive and responsible during the pandemic in understanding the needs of the County. I am looking forward to the updating of the procedures in place and the data that we as commissioners need to know, at the upcoming committee of the whole meeting.*

*-Question Commissioner Cochran-Johnson: before we move forward we need to understand the facts. Can you tell us on which date the cyber hack took place?*

*Z Williams: March 23rd*

*-Question Commissioner Cochran-Johnson: regarding the 50 auxiliary workers in this program, could you describe the role these individuals play? Also what controls have been put in place to ensure the hack does not occur again? We also just received the \$9M in funding - when did we become aware that we would receive those funds?*

*Z Williams: Regarding the 50+ employees, they have never not been working. While there were data issues, there were thousands of applications and cases that the team has been working through. That is happening each day. Regarding the emergency rental assistance part II funding, we received that funding around the last week of May; I will confirm that date with you. What we would like to do is to put this in the bank, then bring an agenda item forward to accept and appropriate the funds. Regarding the controls put in place in response to the hack, Mr. Matelski will assist.*

*J Matelski: the answer is that we're moving into a completely different platform when this was first initiated back in February, we needed to come up with a quick and, what we thought was secure way, and then normally would be secure if there wasn't a hack. What we're doing now is working with the courts to leverage the state's e-file system, which is secure and managed by the State. This is a state system that all of the courts use and is part of our integrated justice information system that we have within DeKalb County.*

*-Question Commissioner Cochran-Johnson: does there remain a hierarchy of individuals that remain a part of the system that was compromised? When applications open back up, are starting at the ground floor in terms of applications and processing?*

*Z Williams: I'm not in a position to specifically state what a reopening will look like when that occurs; in a letter that you all received it was indicated that that type of process would happen. We will of course ensure that we are guided by the Treasury's guidance.*

*-Question Commissioner Cochran-Johnson: will the administration bring us a plan that will incorporate the utilization of*

nonprofit organizations?

*Z Williams: it's important for us know that the moratorium is scheduled to be lifted at the end of June. We don't believe that all of the funds would necessarily be spent at that time. This is an ongoing crisis of affordable housing. We need to have a good understanding of what this program is intended to do, and we will continue to work closely with our courts and nonprofits. The nonprofit strategy with the commissioners have done very well since CARES funding last year. This will also involve new strategies that we haven't yet thought of.*

*-Commissioner Johnson: this funding is addressing back rent for previous months. We also need to consider those behind their mortgage payments; Zach, please give us the policy options that the Commission can then decide on. Regarding that \$9M, some of that needs to go to people with mortgages instead of only considering renters. I'm willing to call a special called meeting because we have to get these funds out to people who need it.*

*Z Williams: We should continue to look at these funds as positives; if it were not for the hack, we wouldn't be having this conversation today necessarily.*

*-Commissioner Johnson: we also need to understand that federal funding is decreasing and soon there will be no more from the pipe of assistance coming to us. We need better efforts to identify the private sector, and financial institutions like mortgage lenders, and maybe write a letter as a commission to these entities requesting more time.*

*-Question Commissioner Terry: I'm not clear; I heard in the last 24 hours that applications weren't being processed, but then I just heard that we are sending checks and that we're processing applications and there are negotiations going on. Regarding TLAC, I would like to be invited to those meetings to understand what is going on in this process. From an accountability standpoint, I as a commissioner don't want to approve things that I don't know what is being spent. I believe that any additional funding that we receive should go directly to tenants to assist them, rather than landlords. Mortgage assistance should also be part of the conversation, especially those without the option of forbearance.*

*-Lindsey Siegel (Atlanta Legal Aid): Thank you so much for allowing us to speak for a couple minutes. The perspective Legal Aid brings is important because we are the entity that is running these negotiations. I will I will tell you that money is going out, we are negotiating cases, we're getting new cases resolved every day. But it's not happening very quickly, and there's a couple of things going on. One of the most concerning things is that many landlords do not want to participate - they don't want to accept the money or they don't like the terms. What they're offering if their landlord doesn't want to participate, is just far inferior. For the tenant, they're being offered two months' rent at a future place, but they still have to move, they still have that debt with the former landlord. We are reaching out to landlords several times to get a deal done, and that deal doesn't always happen. The new guidelines from the Treasury Department address this issue, because the money needs to get out to tenants faster. For example, if we reach out to a landlord or their attorney, and we say 'here's the offer, here's the amount of rent you can get from the program, here's what the tenant has to offer'. If they just don't respond to us or refuse the terms, the new guidelines allow the money to go to the tenant in five days. That makes a huge difference that we can resolve these cases five days after we start negotiations, and decreases the current backlog. There are also stipulations in place for renters that are moving to utilize those funds from their County-issued check towards security deposits, paying off old debts to landlords, moving expenses, etc. It's important that we discuss spreading the money out, but if that is not going out quickly, it will harm the speed at which assistance can be had.*

*-Question Commissioner Johnson: do you believe that giving a check directly to them will stop homelessness? There are other expenses like food to consider.*

*L Siegel: there are many people saving their funds for back rent; the flexibility of the TLAC program is to be able to get that money in the hands of the tenant as fast as possible, so that they can hand the landlord a check for the full amount. If the landlord doesn't accept, the tenant can then utilize those funds for use in moving to a new place. I trust that the tenants will be responsible and utilize the funds to provide shelter to themselves and their families.*

*-Z Williams: requests to discuss this issues with the full list of parties - Atlanta Legal Aid, the courts, the mediators, and other participants to modify the program as needed.*

*-Commissioner Davis Johnson: what one tenant may do, the other tenant may not. If there is a coalition, issues like this should be discussed within the coalition.*

*-Gary LaPaille (Dentons): There is a push in Congress, on the Republican side, to review unused funds, and take funds away from local governments and state governments that are unused. So the quicker you get the money out the better. At Dentons we will be your advisors and advocates in any way we can.*

*-Commissioner Johnson: I would advise you at Dentons to be on all our committee calls, because we are discussing the ARP funding and each committee will have a budget to review. If you have the information that you just described, please send to me.*

*-Commissioner Johnson requests COO provide a proposal of the \$9M funding to the Board of Commissioners at an upcoming meeting.*

American Rescue Plan Funding

*-COO Williams: as it relates to ARP funding, there's not specific programming in PECS, like there is in the other committees.  
Commissioner Johnson: understood. If any discussion is needed I will be present in FAB committee*

**IV. AGENDA ITEM**

*Previously Heard Agenda Items:*

[2021-2369](#) Commission District(s): Districts 2 and 6  
Resolution Conveying the Policy of the DeKalb County Governing Authority Concerning Property Tax Abatement for the Manor Druid Hills Apartment/Hotel/Medical Office Project in the City of Brookhaven

**MOTION was made by Jeff Rader, seconded by Mereda Davis Johnson, that this agenda item be recommended for deferral to the Board of Commissioners, due back on 6/22/2021. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 3 - Member Rader, Chairperson Johnson, and Member Davis Johnson**

-no additional information requested

[2021-2229](#) Commission District(s): 4 & 7  
A Resolution Authorizing the Sale of an Unredeemed and Unforeclosed Interest in Property at 759 Copley Court, Stone Mountain, GA 30088.

**MOTION was made by Jeff Rader, seconded by Mereda Davis Johnson, that this agenda item be recommended for approval to the Board of Commissioners, due back on 6/22/2021. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 3 - Member Rader, Chairperson Johnson, and Member Davis Johnson**

-Commissioner Johnson: I would like to learn from Law department - for the properties on our list without a structure, how can we leave these for our Land Bank to decide once that is reconvened?

-Question Commissioner Rader: did we get a particular request for this property? Was there indication of what they would do with the property market rate, or affordable unit, duplex, or single family house?

Chris Bell (GIS): we received a request from the individual for this property. Regarding those intentions, that was not discussed as to the plans the individual would have with the property.

-Commissioner Cochran-Johnson: this does allow an individual who has a legal right to present themselves, a year to date, and redeem the property - is that correct?

C Bell: that is correct.

-Question Commissioner Terry: the previous owner can get the property back within 12 months after the purchase? So I'm assuming this house would just sit there another 12 months, because why would someone invest and do something on a parcel if the previous owner can get it back in 12 months.

C Bell: this property has been sitting in this state since 2011

-Commissioner Johnson: that's why I say that let's move those away in committee, and the ones that have vacant lots, you have the opportunity to do affordable housing once we get the land back up and running.

-Question Commissioner Johnson: what is the process with the other properties? Do we have to defer or keep tabling them as we wait for the land bank to get established?

-Question Commissioner Cochran-Johnson: is there a status update on where we are with the land bank? We have too many abated properties that need to be put into productive use.

Commissioner Johnson: I'm working with Ms. Crowell to get the appointees from the City of Clarkston and City of Lithonia; those mayors are working through the process.

-Motion to approve JR

Second MDJ

Vote: yes unanimous

-additional discussion of properties not listed on this agenda that do not have structures on them

-Commissioner Rader: for these properties without structures, what we can do is recommend withdrawal of those items that are not there and the items can be brought back to committee when the land bank is going.

-Z Williams: Ms. Crowell has indicated that she will bring an appointment next week

-JR: Motion to withdraw the items 2021-2178, 2021-2221, 2021-2223, 2021-2224, 2021-2225, 2021-2226, 2021-2228, 2021-2229, 2021-2230, 2021-2232

Second MDJ

Vote: yes unanimous

*New Agenda Items:*

2021-2586

Commission District(s): All  
Acceptance of a Grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission for DeKalb Senior Services in the Amount of \$2,070,132.66- At A Cost to the County of \$160,164.49

**MOTION was made by Jeff Rader, seconded by Mereda Davis Johnson, that this agenda item be recommended for approval to the Board of Commissioners, due back on 6/22/2021. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 3 - Member Rader, Chairperson Johnson, and Member Davis Johnson**

*-information provided from Damon Scott*

*-D Scott: this is a planning allotment which allows us to continue services without a gap for case management, in home services, congregate meals, and respite services*

*-Question Commissioner Rader: is this consistent with the programming last year? Does this give us an opportunity to expand at all, or is this to maintain the existing level of service?*

*D Scott: this is consistent with the board from last year, and is an annual allotment, and we have the match funds in our budget for this fiscal year. There is no fiscal impact to the County.*

2021-2587

Commission District(s): All

CO - Change Order No. 1 to Contract No. 1226949 for Meal Services for Seniors: Provision of Congregate & Shelf-Stable Meals at Senior Centers (Annual Contract with 2 Options to Renew): for use by Human Services (HS). Consists of the provision of congregate and shelf-stable meals for seniors. Awarded to Meals On Wheels Atlanta. Amount Not To Exceed: \$14,000.00.

**This agenda item was no official recommendation**

*-item not heard in committee; previously approved during the 6/8 Board of Commissioner's meeting*

2021-2456

Commission District(s): All Districts

Request for approval to received \$2,500 from DeKalb County PIC

**This agenda item was no official recommendation**

*-item not heard in committee; previously approved during the 6/8 Board of Commissioner's meeting*

Meeting Ended At: 3:36pm

**MOTION was made by Jeff Rader, seconded by Mereda Davis Johnson, that this agenda item be adjourned meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 3 - Member Rader, Chairperson Johnson, and Member Davis Johnson**

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Barbara H. Sanders-Norwood CCC, CMC