Thursday, April 11, 2024

The regular Board meeting for the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County was held on Thursday, April 11, 2024, at 5:00 P.M.

Board members in attendance:
Mrs. Gayle Gardner, Chairperson
Mrs. Martha Gleason, Vice-Chairperson
Mrs. Gina LeBlanc, Secretary/Treasurer
Mrs. Catherine Brandhorst, Commissioner (Attended Via Phone)
Mrs. Trish Becker, Commissioner

Also in attendance:
Dr. Rui-De Xue, Director
Mrs. Amy Myers, Attorney

Chairperson Gardner called the meeting to order.

Commissioner LeBlanc led the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag

ROLL CALL: Chairperson Gardner noted – all were present, except Commissioner Brandhorst, she attended the meeting via phone with the Boards approval.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: NONE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Chairperson Gardner called for approval of the Agenda as presented.

A. A motion was made to approve the Agenda as presented.
   o Motioned by: Commissioner LeBlanc
   o Seconded by: Commissioner Gleason
   o VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioner’s present
   o MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY
APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: Chairperson Gardner called for approval of the Consent Agenda.

A. A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda with moving consent item #3 to new business #3.
   - Motioned by: Becker
   - Seconded by: LeBlanc
   - VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner Becker, Brandhorst, LeBlanc and Gardner
   - VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Gleason
   - MOTION PASSED 4:1

A. A motion was made to approve Commissioner Brandhorst to Attend the Board Meeting Via Phone.
   - Motioned by: Leblanc
   - Seconded by: Becker
   - VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
   - MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Consent Items ~ APPROVAL OF:
1. Chemical Inventory
2. Minutes: Regular Board Meeting, March 14, 2024.
3. SIT Cold room contract modification (Moved to New Business #3)
4. Update on organization chart
5. Job description of the DVEC Coordinator
6. Appointment of Dr. Ken Linthicum as a volunteer adjunct senior vector biologist

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

2. Item 1: Discussion and approval of AMCD design & build storage building 1100 and drainage RFP 23-24~ Mr. Richard Weaver
   - Mr. Weaver began reporting this RFP is to design and build building 1100 and do drainage work in the northeast corner of the District. He continued to report on March 21st at 9 A.M. the bid was opened by the review committee (Dr. Qualls Assistant Director, Aye McKinney Accountant, Rick Stockley It Specialist, Tomomi Hirokawa Education Specialist Education Specialist and himself Business Manager) and they used a score sheet. Mr. Weaver reported AMCD had 14 different companies, however some of those companies were engineers or subcontractors, three companies attended the pre-bid meeting and two bids were submitted. He continued to report Harrell Construction scored a 93.2 with a price of $1,180,744 and Clayton scored a 91.8 with a price of $1,530,210.60. Mr. Weaver explained the main reason the committee went with Harrell Construction is because the have done a lot of work at the District and offered a lower price.
   - Commissioner Gleason asked why the drainage and the shed storage were put into a combined RFP? She explained if you look at the cost breakdown by project, one contract is higher than the other one.
   - Mr. Weaver explained it was combined to save time and money.
Commissioner Gleason asked why Matthew was prescribed as the civil engineer if both Contractors have their own engineers?

Mr. Weaver explained it was because Matthew has done everything at the District and knows where everything is and did the original site work for that particular area.

Commissioner Gleason noted on Harrell Constructions proposal is was stated that AMCD directed them to use Matthew and the other company did not refer to it that way.

Mr. Weaver noted that was correct, however they were both giving the same exact price from Matthew, so it shouldn’t have affected the bid price at all.

Commissioner asked why a 4,000 square foot building, when AMCD has three or four sheds, why wouldn’t the sheds we have suffice?

Mr. Weaver explained that not all of the vehicles and equipment fit into the shed we currently have.

Commissioner Becker stated one of the things that stuck out to her was that it was almost double the number of days for Clayton to complete the project and Harrell was the quicker option. She also mentions Clayton’s organizational chart was confusing and they mentioned their approach mirrors successful methodology used by Department of Labor Miami Center, does that mean they are going to get people from the Maimi center?

Mr. Weaver stated he had no idea.

Commissioner Becker mentioned Harrell would take 150 days to complete the project and Clayton will take 296 days to complete the entire thing.

Mr. Weaver mentioned Clayton scored a 9.6 for that subject and Harrell scored an 8.6, so Harrell got a lower score for completion time because they were going to take longer.

A. Commissioner Becker made a motion to award Harrell Construction the contract to build the garage and fix the drainage pipe issue.

Commissioner Gardner pointed out before the Board votes AMCD had citizen participants present that would like to speak.

Former Commissioner Jeanne Moeller stated she promised herself she would not be the old Commissioner that comes back with opinions; however, the cost of this storage shed is very high and a million dollars for a storage shed so it can be beautiful is ridiculous with tax payers’ money.

Mr. Weaver explained a lot of the cost is drainage, the District has flooding from the property to the east and to the property to the north, the whole floodplain moves across the property through way and it builds up in this corner. He also mentioned the playground, the education center and the dorms still flood and compass had set the levels incorrectly and AMCD also has highwater in other areas on north east District. He stated a pole barn would be more inexpensive, however, it is on dirt and oil from the trucks could seep into the dirt and that would be bad for the environment, AMCD has trailers that are rusting and will need to be replaced.

Commissioner Gleason mentioned she thinks the drainage work needs to happen; she just doesn’t think $656,000 needs to be spent on a storage shed with taxpayers’ money. She
mentioned she would separate the bids and get them to do the drainage work separately, taxpayers are not paying for pretty.

- Mr. Weaver stated he thinks “pretty” is probably the wrong word to be used, but it is in line with all the other buildings, so a metal building that matches all the other buildings.
- Former Commissioner Gary Howell he thought any time you start to develop any kind of land or project drainage should be key, a million dollars is a lot of money and I would adjust the drainage first and then would come back and consider a shed.
- Mr. Johnson thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak, he noted he lives in Ponte Vedra Beach and has a lot of friends/co-workers and there is so much being discussed right now about this organization because of that museum and the money that’s being spent on it and it’s not positive. He continued to urge the Board to really take this expense into consideration because it seems like the budget is being treated as a piggy bank and he thinks the Board should be careful and take into consideration how the public perceives this organization and how the money is being spent.

- The Board of Commissioners discussed options, like whether they should ask Harrell and Clayton to come speak and explain the cost or table this subject for another meeting. Ultimately the Board decided the table this subject for another meeting. Commissioner Becker withdrew his previous motion to award the contract to Harrell Construction and ask that Harrell and Clayton come back to give presentations on the cost.

  A. Commissioner Becker made a motion to table this subject for another time.
    - Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
    - Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
    - VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all Commissioners present
    - MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Item 2: Discussion about removing “museum” from the road sign ~ Ms. Gayle Gardner

- Chairperson Gayle Gardner mentioned she would like to see the word “museum” dropped from the sign in the front because she believes it’s an education center not a museum. She also mentioned Mr. Johnson if he hasn’t seen the Disease Vector Education Center (DVEC) yet but it’s quite impressive and think it’s something that serves the community well. So, Commissioner Gardner thinks dropping the name museum is a big step in the right direction and labeling it as a museum is giving it a false pretense and that’s not the image we want to portray, AMCD wants to portray and education center that benefits the community.

- Commissioner Gleason mentioned she understood wanting to remove the word “museum” from the sign out front but there are more important questions need to be asked like why was the museum supposed to cost 1.5 million and has already cost the District 4.5 million and if AMCD wants to take donations for the DVEC we have to be a 5001C3.

- Mr. Hanna stated as a government agency we can take donations without a 5001C3.

- Commissioner Gleason mentioned you cannot co-mingle donations with regular revenue.

- Mr. Hanna stated FDACS has a category for grants and donations and AMCD does utilize it.
Former Commissioner Jeanne Moeller mentioned she was the chairperson when the museum blew up in the newspaper and was the person who had to talk to the county administrator, the angry people at the Tag Museum, the chair of the county commission, the Saint Augustine Record, the Ponte Vedra Recorder, and many, many, many, many, many people in the public. She also mentioned we all said that we were not building a museum, that the word museum came because one of our education specialists went to China and went through a museum and gave a report that we were building an education center and the reason we were building it was because at one point, we were in 19 different schools during the school year, educating students from kindergarten to high school on mosquito biology at sunshine standards. Jeanne Moeller continued explain people couldn’t understand how AMCD could be building a museum when they were even having problems finding money out of the federal government to build TAG children’s museum and to please coordinate with them when AMCD got the DVEC built, and would AMCD please coordinate with them and their staff for their events and training classes and they would do the same thing for AMCD. She mentioned having no idea where we are with that and 80 to 100,000 children come through Saint John’s County every year in February and March because of Black History Month and the Civil Rights Museum’s and that’s why we built an education center. Jeanne Moeller explained it was never supposed to be a museum and she signed the contract even though she voted against the DVEC because it was her job as the chairperson. She mentioned it’s a beautiful building with over seven million dollars in assets over and above what was paid for it but she has people calling her and they’re ready to go to state legislature and say take AMCD over and let the county run it. Jeanne Moeller wished the Board a good night.

Commissioner Gleason asked Jeanne Moeller if she was here when the Compass Group contract closed because she has been trying to get an answer on if the Board gave authority to the District to go ahead and finish the project with no Board oversight, in terms of bringing in quotes and RFP’s back to the Board.

Jeanne Moeller confirmed she was here when the Compass contract closed and AMCD released them from doing the media and artwork. She continued to explain from her understanding from Mr. Weaver that AMCD was still several hundred thousand dollars within budget but AMCD would be going over budget eventually but it should’ve come back to the Board and whether it did or not, she has no idea.

Former Commissioner Gary Howell noted he left the year of 2020 and voted for the project, he also went to China and visited different museums. He mentioned he has grandchildren and AMCD wanted the education facility so we could go to the school board and point out AMCD had a
facility that will help educate our students about mosquitoes and the diseases they carry. Gary Howell mentioned with that concept he voted yes or this facility and was proud of it but like Jeanne Moeller mentioned there was an education person that went on the radio and called it a museum and it spread like fire. He mentioned he urges the Board to take the museum stigma off of the DVEC.

➢ St. Johns County citizen Mr. Johnson wanted to address a comment Dr. Xue made about having international visitors and he believes AMCD is not here to impress international visitors, it should an organization that focuses on St. Johns County and how to improve the citizens quality of life.

➢ Dr. Xue mentioned St. Johns County is one of the top tourist areas in the world and these international visitors visit the AMCD facility and with them they bring technology, grant money and other related business. Dr. Xue mentioned AMCD holds an international workshop every year that brings a lot of business to St. Johns County.

➢ Mr. Johnson noted he feels like Dr. Xue is getting outside of the scope of what the mosquito control district is supposed to do.

A. A motion was made to remove the word “Museum” from the side sign and change it to Disease Vector Education Center.
   ○ Motioned by: Commissioner LeBlanc
   ○ Seconded by: Commissioner Gardner
   ○ VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner LeBlanc, Gardner, and Brandhorst
   ○ VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Gleason and Becker
   ○ MOTION PASSED 3:2

1. Item 3: Financial Report and Budget Amendment ~ Mr. Scott Hanna, C.F.O.
   ➢ Mr. Hanna reviewed the treasurer’s report/vouchers with the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Hanna also explained usually budget amendments are to amend over spending, however, the District earned more revenue than the budget originally anticipated.
   ➢ Commissioner Gleason asked if AMCD was fully staffed for the upcoming mosquito season.
   ➢ Mr. Hanna mentioned AMCD could use another person to help answer phones.
   ➢ Dr. Xue noted we are hiring a seasonal receptionist.
   ➢ Commissioner Gleason noted she understood the temporary positions but AMCD needs to start making a plan, this county has doubled in size in the last five years, AMCD has more areas to cover and will start getting measured on metrics. She mentioned we can’t have people constantly changing in and out, AMCD needs predictability in customer service.
   ➢ Dr. Xue mentioned AMCD will have a budget workshop in May and will budget for 35 full-time employees, an increase from 32.

A. A motion was made to approve the budget amendment as presented.
   ○ Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
   ○ Seconded by: Commissioner Gardner
   ○ VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioner’s present
NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Item 1: Arbovirus surveillance report and plan for 2024 ~ Dr. Steve Peper**
   - Dr. Peper began by reporting on the arbovirus surveillance noting that important components to any effective vector control, sentinel chickens, mosquito pool testing, human disease cases. He noted ways to detect exposure to pathogens, develop antibodies to specific pathogens, chickens are “dead-end hosts” meaning they don’t play a role in maintaining the pathogen. Dr. Peper mentioned AMCD started in-house testing in 2020, the pros of in-house testing were faster turnaround, beneficial for operations, and very reliable, the cons were associated cost, only testing for WNV, and requires permits. He reviewed some charts regarding the sentinel chicken program and mentioned AMCD is working on improving our sentinel program because it’s better for the chickens and the staff. Dr. Peper continued to explain for mosquito pool testing polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is one of the most commonly used techniques to detect pathogens. He explained the PCR provides quicker results, beneficial to operational control, more reliable and captures false negatives. He mentioned mosquito pool testing is currently used to test West Nile virus (WNV), Saint Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV), Eastern Equine encephalitis virus (EEEV). Dr. Peper noted the future direction of the arbovirus surveillance is replacing the sentinel chicken program, project with University of Florida (UF), submitted a grant with University of Central Florida (UCF), continue to work with state with PCR confirmations, work with districts around the state to help build up their programs, teach a course at DODD, and continue to work on improving the sentinel chicken program. He also mentioned the budget for the program will be about $46,000, that breakdown to $22,000 for the chicken program, $14,000 for mosquito surveillance and general lab consumables/equipment for $10,000.
   - Commissioner Gleason asked Dr. Peper if he had enough staff to support the arbovirus surveillance program.
   - Dr. Peper responded by reassuring her it is working well with the staff on hand but he would never say no to more hands.
     - NO MOTION WAS PASSED ON THIS ITEM

2. **Item 2: COL raise for FY 24/25 ~ Dr. Rui-De Xue**
   - Dr. Xue noted Federal Social Security COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) is 3.2% for 2024 and the Bureau of Labor statistics released 3.2% and included the food/energy, the index rose by 3.8% over the past 12 months. He continued to explain due to the increased cost of living in St. Johns County Florida, he would like to recommend 4% COLA for AMCD’s FY24/25 budget.
   - Commissioner Gleason mentioned there are certain things that are not included in the COLA calculations and some companies are raising it by 5% because with 4% you’re still negative. She asked if AMCD has bench marked 4% with other employees in the region to see what the average COLA increase is.
Mr. Hanna mentioned the Department of Labor is standard and has always been the most consistent, there is not a Florida CPI index.

Commissioner Gleason mentioned the Department of Labor analyzed 2.5 million full time jobs in January, not sure that number is credible. She asked if it would kill the budget to increase the COLA raise to 5%?

Mr. Hanna confirmed it will not kill our budget, it's within reason.

**A. A motion was made to approve increasing the COLA raise 5%.**
- Motioned by: Commissioner Gleason
- Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioner's present
- MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

1. **Item 3: SIT Cold room contract modification ~ Martha Gleason**

Commissioner Gleason began by asking if when the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) facility was built a cold room was not put in? She also asked why wouldn't we have had that in the plans? Commissioner Gleason would just like to make sure $144,000 is going to be it and wants to understand why AMCD needs a cold room in the SIT facility.

Mr. Weaver noted from what he understood the way immature or adult mosquitoes are handled has changed since the concept and design was planned.

Dr. Qualls noted SIT programs are moving from the pupal stage to the adult stage because there gives you a longer window of time to do the radiation process and still be efficient with that and so they been working on protocols and those SOPs. She mentioned because AMCD will be working with adults instead of pupae, you have to disable them in order to get them compacted into the canisters. Dr. Qualls explained it's a more efficient way and Dr. Dan Han at UF has recommended a cold room because its going to improve the workflow and function. She acknowledges how this would impact work flow, AMCD has to work on the mosquito life cycle but if you're at the adult life cycle it's a little bit more streamlined because with pupae you have a 72-hour window and with adults you have a much longer window.

**A. A motion was made to approve the change order to add the cold room to the SIT Facility.**
- Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
- Seconded by: Commissioner Gleason
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioner's present
- MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

**REPORTS:**

**Director ~ Dr. Xue** thanked the Board for all their support and reported the workshop went really well. He noted 274 registered, six international speakers, and the collected revenue was $21,000 and the expenditures were about $6,000. Dr. Xue mentioned AMCD will be hosting the CDC hurricane workshop on April 22nd to April 25th and it will probably be around 80 people using AMCD's facility. Dr. Xue also noted everything is ready for the surveillance program. He also
went on the explain AMCD has started hiring seasonal employees and has hired eight additional seasonal employees and the District is preparing for the annual mandatory training. He also mentioned AMCD is welcoming Dr. Neoh Kook Bon a visiting scientist and he will be spending the next three months with AMCD. Dr. Xue noted the DC legislation meeting will be on May 13th to May 16th. AMCD will have three commissioners attending, and Mr. Weaver will be representing the Florida Mosquito Control Association (FMCA).

Attorney ~ Mrs. Amy Myers had three things to report, she is still waiting on the sunshine manuals, there is a problem with the printer, a little house keeping their firm has been migrating to new accounting software and so you’re going to be receiving two bills back to back, she also noticed in the AMCD policy has limitations of the attorney to only work on items that are brought for review for one hour and she is spending more time than to get familiar with AMCD documents.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:
Commissioner Gardner ~ No comments.

Commissioner Branéhorst ~ Thanked the Board of Commissioners for allowing her to attend the meeting via phone.

Commissioner LeBlanc ~ Thanked the staff for all their hard work and noted she has been a big supporter of the education center and wanted to thank Mr. Weaver again for all the hours he put into it and this is going to greatly impact peoples understanding of what AMCD does and think its important people learn what the District does.

Commissioner Becker ~ Reported AMCD had a great turnout at the annual workshop and was really impressed by Dr. Florence, she flew in from the World Health Organization. She also mentioned Dr. Sutherland from Navy entomology Center was a great speaker, especially when he addressed how mosquitoes effect war. Commissioner Becker noted it was a really great experience and she is really proud of this organization.

Commissioner Gleason ~ No comments.

ATTACHMENTS: ~
1. None

ADJOURNMENT: Chairperson Gardner adjourned the meeting at 7:24 P.M.

ATTEST
Chairperson, Commissioner Gayle Gardner
Secretary/Treasurer, Commissioner Gina LeBlanc

These minutes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript of this meeting and could easily be misinterpreted by a reader who was not present. To obtain a full and accurate record of the meeting, an individual should view/listen to the entire proceedings.