

# Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County

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## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Gayle Gardner, Chairperson  
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Catherine Brandhorst, Commissioner  
Trish Becker, Commissioner



## DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Dr. Rui-de Xue



Thursday, May 9, 2024

Thursday, June 13, 2024 – 5:00 PM~ Regular Meeting

## MINUTES

The regular Board meeting for the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County was held on Thursday, May 9, 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 (Left the meeting at 6:05 P.M.)  
Mrs. Trish Becker, Commissioner

### Also in attendance:

Dr. Rui-De Xue, Director  
Mrs. Amy Myers, Attorney  
Ms.. Julienne Klien

*Chairperson Gardner called the meeting to order.*

*Commissioner Brandhorst led the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag*

**ROLL CALL:** Chairperson Gardner noted ~ that all were present.

### **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

- Mr. T.J. Mazzotta introduced himself and explained he was running for seat one in the Anastasia Mosquito Control District. He is doing so because he has learned over the past few months that some of the money allotted for this program is not being spent accordingly. Mr. Mazzotta mentioned that AMCD is a little over budget and spending money on things that the district shouldn't be spending money on, and he cares a lot about doing the right thing and helping people. He hopes everyone will look into him and vote for him in November.
- Mr. Gary Howell pointed out it's illegal to campaign on AMCD grounds.
- Commissioner Gardner thanked Mr. Howell for his reminder.

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

- A. A motion was made to approve the agenda as presented.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Gleason
- Seconded by: Commissioner Brandhorst
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioners
- **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 as presented.**

- Motioned by: Becker
- Seconded by: Brandhorst
- VOTE: Accepted Unanimously by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Consent Items ~ APPROVAL OF:**

1. Chemical Inventory
2. Minutes: Regular Board Meeting, April 11, 2024
3. Open House on June 27, 2024 at 3:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M. During National Mosquito Control Awareness Week (June 22<sup>nd</sup>- June 29<sup>th</sup>)
4. Dr. Xue attends the CDC/DVBD’s roundtable meeting, Washington DC on May 23
5. Rules for Visitors to Visit the DVEC

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**1. Item 1: Annual Auditor Report PPT ~ Ms. Julieann Klein (20 min)**

- Mrs. Klien thanked the Board of Commissioners and explained she was there to present the Annual Financial Report for AMCD for the year ending in September 2023. She continued to explain they have to define the responsibilities of management and themselves, the planned scope, and the timing of the audit. Mrs. Klien stated AMCD had an unmodified opinion, meaning financial statements present fairly in all material aspects, and AMCD had no significant audit findings or issues that needed attention or reporting, no compliance violations discovered, no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses discovered, and no significant control deficiencies. She also stated the net position increased by around three million dollars. Mrs. Klien mentioned that the personnel services and benefits went up due to the hiring of seasonal employees. The cost of gas went up due to fuel prices increasing and the number of trucks and helicopters being driven.
- Commissioner Gleason mentioned that it was interesting that Mrs. Klien had no findings to report, and she read from February 10, 2022, Board minutes and resolution, “allow AMCDS staff to hire the necessary contractors and complete the scope of work removed from the Compass Group contract. Commissioner Becker asked if this was so that staff could submit an RFP. Chairperson Moeller said it would be an RFQ, which is a request for a quote, and asked Mr. Weaver if he would be bringing the RFQs; Mr. Weaver said Staff would put out RFQs. He felt this was okay and pointed out that the board makes policy and can do what it wants.” Commissioner Gleason then pointed out that we are not only governed by our own procurement policies. She also mentioned that the Board had told him to go find vendors and bring back RFPs to the Board for approval. Commissioner Gleason continued to explain the entire project did not have to be bid out, but it could have been done in components and then pointed out four projects for fiscal year 22/23 and three in fiscal year 23/24 that are above RFP requirements.

- Mrs. Klien informed Commissioner Gleason that she does not look at every transaction but does a test.
  - Commissioner Gleason pointed out that Mrs. Klien commented that the AMCD Board of Commissioners allowed the District to continue.
  - Mrs. Klien stated it was her understanding that they were to continue with the contract after Compass was terminated.
  - Commissioner Gleason mentioned that if you're being told one thing and something else is happening, you would be testing against an assumption.
  - Mrs. Klien stated that she was under the assumption that because AMCD was this far into the contract, the District was to put things together to continue the contract. She also mentioned she did not look for individual contracts and did not know that AMCD staff was supposed to go back with all the artistic work and make individual contracts. Mrs. Klien explained she did the test and knew that those contractors were here, except for maybe the contracts for the roof, and she doesn't test every transaction except for the ones that had to do the mitigation for the poor work and leak on the roof. Mrs. Klien stated she knew that most other large contractors were continuing under the previous contract, and she had seen nothing that told her that wasn't what the board had wanted.
  - Commissioner Gleason stated she had never seen a termination contract, and the subcontractors were with Compass Group. She doesn't understand how AMCD can continue a contract without a new one.
  - Mrs. Klien stated she was under the assumption the Board was continuing the contracts, the ones under the compass group contract, because she had not seen anything that told her differently.
  - Mrs. Klien continued to report that revenues were up due to property values, personnel services were up because of COLA raises, and additional employees were provided with benefits. She also mentioned insurance, travel, and utilities have increased, and now the construction on everything is almost complete, and the focus can be operations and maintenance of equipment and properties. Mrs. Klien explained that, regarding internal control, there were no compliance violations, no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses, and no significant control deficiencies.
  - Commissioner Gleason asked if something could be produced to state how Mrs. Klien thought AMCD was operating the Disease Vector Education Center (DVEC) construction and how it was operating differently during the audit. Would Mrs. Klien have to go back and revise the auditor's report or re-test?
  - Mrs. Klien stated that she would not have to retest, it would not change the numbers but would be an audit comment.
  - Commissioner Gleason asked if the audit would need to be amended and resubmitted.
  - Mrs. Klien stated that it would be an internal control comment and they would have to go from there.
  - Mr. Gary Howell pointed out that AMCD did not have copies of the audit report for the public to see and recommended that copies be made available to the public in the future.
  - Commissioner Becker mentioned that a copy of the entire Board book, including the audit report, is posted on our website for the public to see.
- A. A motion was made to approve the auditor's report for FY22/23 as presented.**
- Motioned by: Commissioner Brandhorst

- Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner Becker, Leblanc, Brandhorst, and Gardner
- VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Gleason
- **MOTION PASSED 4:1**

**Item 2: Financial Report and Budget Amendment ~ Mr. Scott Hanna, C.F.O**

- Mr. Hanna reported that AMCD received around \$53,515 this month due to high Federal Reserve interest rates and smaller miscellaneous refunds and sources. He continued to explain that the amount above does not cover the cold room expense for the SIT building at \$140,000, and that put AMCD over budget by \$86,484.

**A. A motion was made to approve the budget amendment as presented.**

- Motioned by: Commissioner Gleason
- Seconded by: Commissioner Brandhorst
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Item 1: Discussion and Approval of the Request for Increasing Full-Time Employees from 32 to 35 for FY24/25 ~ Dr. Rui-De Xue (10 min)**

- Dr. Xue requested that the Board approve the increase of AMCD's full-time employees from 32 to 35 due to the fast development of St. Johns County, the increased number of residents that now need to be serviced, and the increase in the number of programs, and population of mosquitoes.

**A. A motion was made to approve increasing the number of full-time employees from 32 to 35.**

- Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
- Seconded by: Commissioner Gleason
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Item 2: Discussion and Approval of the Expenditures of the DVEC by the Original Scope of Work and the Cost of Dehumidifying, a New Scope of Work for the DVEC~ Dr. Rui-De Xue**

- Dr. Xue thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and taking an interest in mosquito control. He noted that the contract was modified with the Compass Group in Feb 2022 after the Board approved. The Request for Proposals (RFPs) was based on the concepts. Dr. Xue mentioned Compass Group was the lowest bidder, and less than a year later, they had some trouble and did not want to do the internal design. Dr. Xue then explained that Mr. Weaver, the business manager, was put in charge of the project to finish the rest of the work, and then he referred to the attached attorney letter regarding that was made to put Mr. Weaver in charge. He noted the change order and that this issue would be resolved. He mentioned that the February 10, 2022, Board meeting minutes gave authority after a long discussion. Dr. Xue also noted that everything is very transparent and is published on the district website, including the agenda, board books, minutes, videos, etc. He pointed out the motions were made to allow staff to negotiate and the attorney to review the detailed version of the compass group's change order and the unfinished scope of work. Dr. Xue explained that the second motion gave AMCD staff

the ability to obtain the necessary contract to finish the scope of work that Compass Group didn't finish. He continued to explain after discussing it with Mr. Weaver, they agreed AMCD would need to spend about \$310,000 to finish the original scope of work for the DVEC and about \$46,000 to add dehumidifiers to the DVEC so that the priceless specimens in the center do not get destroyed with excessive humidity, so he recommended the Board approve the above expenditures.

- Richard Hedges is the president of the St. Augustine Kiwanis Club, and the Kiwanis Club is known for being a worldwide organization of volunteers helping the community, especially children. He continued to explain they mentor children through programs like Key Clubs in high schools and the Builders Club in middle school, and they do an after-school program where they help students earn better grades. He mentioned the club took a trip to the DVEC and noted it was a very educational, state-of-the-art facility. Mr. Hedges commented he wasn't sure how much it cost to build, but there is a lot of educational material within the center, and he believes it is worthwhile.
- Margret Badger stated she is a St. Johns County resident and a Board-certified teacher. After touring the DVEC, she thought it was a remarkable educational experience, and it is offered to a diverse group of students. Ms. Badger stated she believes the DVEC is an asset to our community, and as a former educator and taxpayer in St. Johns County, she wholeheartedly endorses and supports it. Also, she read a residential letter to support the DVEC project from someone who could not attend the meeting due to a conflicting schedule.
- Diane Spooden noted she has been a St. Johns County resident for 25 years and also a beekeeper. She thanked Mr. Weaver and his team for being so considerate of beekeepers all throughout the county. Ms. Spooden mentioned everyone she has talked to about the DVEC has absolutely raved about it, but the one thing she would suggest is to get the word out more and maybe have some literature to hand out regarding the DVEC.
- Commissioner Gleason thanked everyone for their comments and noted she has been through the DVEC with her grandson, who loved it. There are a lot of learning activities, but her issues are not with science; the issues are with the process of building the DVEC. She mentioned the DVEC was only budgeted for \$2.8 million, and she still can not get a final number, but the last she had heard was around \$4.5 million.

- **Commissioner Brandhorst left the meeting at 6:05 P.M.**

- Commissioner Gleason continued to explain. She referred to the minutes previously quoted in the meeting and noted that Mr. Weaver said he would send out Request for Quotes (RFQs) and choose the lowest bidding contractor. Mr. Flowers said it was okay because it would satisfy the procurement requirements. Commissioner Gleason mentioned mosquito control districts are also subject to Florida Statue 287, 255 and procurement law 2870.17 and suggested the district adopt an audit committee since the district does not have one.
- Commissioner Becker mentioned she read chapter 255, which said, under the definition at number six, "if the project is undertaken exclusively as part of a public education program, that doesn't apply to that."
- Attorney Amy Myers stated she has read the statute and has formed the opinion that the district is exempt from 255 because of sub-section eight, which exempts projects that were competitively bid, and the contract was terminated, but the project still needs to be completed. She mentioned subsection six provides an exemption for costs exclusively related to public educational programs, which are not defined by the statute. Mrs. Myers also mentioned she

recommended that AMCD staff come up with a final number to finish the DVEC, not exceed the number they choose, and bring it back to the Board for approval.

- A. **A motion was made to approve the Climate Innovations Heating and Air's proposal to install four dehumidifiers in the DVEC for \$46,571.00.**
  - Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
  - Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
  - VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner Becker, LeBlanc and Gardner
  - VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Gleason
  - **MOTION PASSED 3:1**
  
- B. **A motion was made to approve giving AMCD staff the authorization to spend under \$310,000 to finish the DVEC's original scope of work by the end of September 2024.**
  - Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
  - Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
  - VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner Becker, LeBlanc and Gardner
  - VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Gleason
  - **MOTION PASSED 3:1**

**REPORTS:**

**Director** ~ Dr. Xue noted eight seasonal employees started on May 1<sup>st</sup>, and Dr. Joseph DiClaro, who retired from the Navy and previously worked as an entomologist for the Navy & CDC, started as AMCD's new Entomologist to manage the Education and Applied Research Department on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Xue thanked the staff for all their hard work, and he mentioned since the DVEC opened in March 2024, it has had 1,310 visitors, and 70% of those visitors are from St. Johns County, about 400 students, and 6 school programs visiting on field trips. He also mentioned that the DVEC makes appointments for visiting only on Mondays and Tuesdays and is open Wednesdays – Sundays from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. It has received much good feedback. Dr. Xue let the Board know that AMCD has an intern student who just finished a public health survey work report and finished his Master's degree in public health, and he will report back to the Board about it at a later date. Dr. Xue stated that everything is open to the public except social security numbers and personal medical history; anyone interested in the purchasing process, building process, purchase orders, etc., is more than welcome to make an appointment to check. He mentioned that the District takes very good care of the taxpayers and their money in St. Johns County, and he doesn't want to spend one penny on taxpayers' money for nothing. Dr. Xue stated that AMCD brings in a lot of business and grant money every year, and most residents pay about \$18 dollars per year for mosquito control, and in return, they receive wonderful service. He mentioned that many industries are interested in the work AMCD does. Since AMCD has moved to the new facility & established the Good Laboratory Practice (GLP), it has received about \$3 million in grants from the Department of Defense (DOD), CDC, and industries. Dr. Xue noted that AMCD made one mistake: going with the lowest bid and signing the contract with Compass Group for the DVEC. He noted that everyone needs to move forward, and he doesn't believe any Commissioners come here to destroy the district. They just seek more transparency, cost efficiency, and standard procedures. He noted that it's human nature to have disagreements but to

please respect each other and work together to provide excellent services to the residents of St. Johns County, save taxpayers money, and reduce the millage rate.

**Attorney** ~ Mrs. Amy Myers noted all the Commissioners had received their sunshine manuals and apologized for the delay. She mentioned she has been responding to many of Commissioner Gleason's emails, which brought her up to speed with the DVEC, and that helped address some of Commissioner Gleason's concerns, particularly the ones regarding the procurement law. Mrs. Myers also mentioned she participated in Mrs. Klien's request to provide an opinion on the audit, and she completed that task so Mrs. Klien could present it at the meeting. She also noted that if AMCD were going to have a budget workshop, she would like to attend that remotely if needed.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Gardner** ~ No Comment.

**Commissioner Brandhorst** ~ Left the meeting at 6:05 P.M. No Comments

**Commissioner LeBlanc** ~ Thanked the staff for all their hard work.

**Commissioner Becker** ~ Mentioned Commissioners and staff were getting all geared up for the DC legislation days and noted they would be in many meetings with legislators across the country. They would also meet with top Center for Disease Control (CDC) management. She also noted that transparency on her part is that everyone believes in transparency and doing the right thing. Nobody is trying to be nefarious, lie, steal, or do anything out of bad will, and that's the problem is maybe people are feeling attacked. Commissioner Becker mentioned she enjoyed being an elected official; it's a great job because they protect the residents' money and their lives because mosquitoes are dangerous and cause human death. She also noted that AMCD may have reviewed the purchasing policy and made changes to prevent similar situations from happening in the future.


**Commissioner Gleason** ~ Was not happy with how the meeting went, and given what she'd seen on the Board, she had no choice but to report the District to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and the Inspector General. Commissioner Gleason mentioned that if the Board would consider appointing an audit committee, she would wait to report the district because the taxpayers of St. Johns County deserve transparency and people who take care of their money.

**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.*