

Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Gayle Gardner, Chairperson
Martha Gleason, Vice-Chairperson
Gina LeBlanc, Secretary/Treasurer
Catherine Brandhorst, Commissioner
Trish Becker, Commissioner



DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Dr. Rui-de Xue



Thursday, December 12, 2024

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 – 5:00 PM~ Regular Meeting

MINUTES

The regular Board meeting for the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County was held on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 5:00 P.M.

Board members in attendance:

Mrs. Gayle Gardner, Chairperson (Excused Absence)
Mrs. Martha Gleason, Vice-Chairperson
Mrs. Gina LeBlanc, Secretary/Treasurer
Mrs. Catherine Brandhorst, Commissioner
Mrs. Trish Becker, Commissioner

Also in attendance:

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

Vice-Chairperson Gleason called the meeting to order.

Chairperson Brandhorst led the invocation and pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Vice-chairperson Gleason noted ~ that all were present, minus Commissioner Gardner. The AMCD Board of Commissioners came to the consensus to excuse Commissioner Gardner from the meeting.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Vice-Chairperson Gleason called for approval of the agenda as presented.

A. A motion was made to approve the agenda with the addition of New Business #3.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
- Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner LeBlanc, Commissioner Becker and Commissioner Brandhorst
- VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Gleason
- **MOTION PASSED 3:1**

B. A motion was made to approve the Agenda with the addition of New Business #4.

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

C. A motion was made to approve the Agenda with moving unfinished business #3 to unfinished business #1.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Becker
- Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- VOTE: Accepted by Commissioner LeBlanc, Commissioner Becker and Commissioner Gleason
- VOTE: Rejected by Commissioner Brandhorst
- **MOTION PASSED 3:1**

D. A motion was made to approve the Agenda with the changes and additions mentioned above.

- VOTE: Accepted Unanimously by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: Vice-Chairperson Gleason called for approval of the Consent Agenda.

A. A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda with the correction to the minutes removing the comment that Mr. Weaver made an apology letter and would like the record to reflect that.

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

Consent Items ~ APPROVAL OF:

1. Chemical inventory
2. Minutes: November 21, 2024 Regular Board Meeting
3. Board Members to Attend the FMCA's DODD Short Course, Gainesville, FL, January 30, 2025
4. Staff Travel Request for AMCA Annual Meeting, San Juan, March 3rd-7th, 2025
5. Approval of January 9th Board Meeting being switched to January 15, 2025

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Item 1: Discussion About Commissioner Bonuses ~ Commissioner Gleason

- Mrs. Meyers noted that she provided a memo in the Board packet indicating that she does not believe any new legislative actions is necessary for the Board to take. She mentioned a memo was also provided regarding the two course that the attorney general illustrated through a formal opinion and that spectrum goes from do nothing and presume that the validity of the prior year's actions to repayment. Mrs. Meyers stated her conclusion was the presume the validity of the prior actions against, so no further action is necessary

from the AMCD Board of Commissioners. She also stated she reached out to the attorney general to reconcile those two approaches because they were given within a matter of months of each other and she has not heard anything back as of now, however she will continue to reach out to try to bring the issue to a close.

- Commissioner Gleason noted that it was brought to her attention that the \$1,000 dollar bonus for each Commissioner was voted on a passed illegally since there is an established legislature that Commissioners are not to exceed the \$4,800 dollars a year cap and Mrs. Meyers verified this information. Commissioner Gleason also stated in the future the AMCD attorney needs to pay attention to what item is being put on the agenda and the legality of those items, this way the District is not being exposed to illegal activity or breaking Florida statues, or misusing taxpayer dollars.
- Commissioner Becker mentioned she was under the impression Commissioners have been getting bonuses since 1981 because it was a separate thing and not part of the yearly income.
- Mrs. Meyers explained there is a statue of general application that authorizes compensation to Board members of special taxing Districts and she took the conservative approach because AMCD was not named as one of the special taxing districts in the above-mentioned statue.
- Commissioner Gleason stated there is another issue with this Commissioners were provided a W-2 and a 1099 form, meaning the W-2 makes them employees and 1099 form makes them contractors and both can't be true at the same time.
- Mr. Slavin stated he is appalled by the manner in which this board is run and the lack of transparency within the District and we need me more public participation.
- Ms. Doris Taylor stated she finds this issue disturbing and it leads her to wonder what else would be found if a full forensic audit was performed and she would like to know how AMCD can proceed with a full forensic audit. She also mentioned she would like to take a look at travel expenses and how can a Saint Johns County residents can view those numbers and be a part of this.

A. A motion was made to officially rescind the November Board vote awarding Commissioners a \$1,000 bonus and direct staff to update AMCD bonus policy to exclude Commissioners from future bonus resolutions.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Gleason
- Seconded by: NONE
- **MOTION FAILED DUE TO LACK OF SECOND**

B. A motion was made to approve Attorney Mrs. Amy Meyers to contact the Attorney General for complete clarification regarding Commissioners receiving bonuses.

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

- Commissioner Gleason stated for the record that Dr. Xue is directed not to cut any bonus checks for Commissioners.

C. A motion was made to request a full forensic audit on AMCD to ensure the District is in compliance with state law and accounting procedures, including IRS.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Gleason
- Seconded by: NONE
- **MOTION FAILED DUE TO LACK OF SECOND**

2. Item 2: Report About Two Attorney responses to the RFP and Board Direction for Process ~ Dr. Rui-De Xue

- Dr. Xue stated two proposals were collected and one withdrew the day before the Board meeting and staff needs direction on how to proceed with this process to implement the Boards decision.
- Commissioner Becker noted she was really impressed with Ms. Hodges file and all the different things she has done for huge cities, counties and state organizations. She believes Ms. Hodges has exactly what AMCD is looking for in an attorney to help with our mission of public health and safety.
- Commissioner Gleason asked if it was known why the Douglas Group pulled their bid and did the District follow proper procedures to ensure AMCD has options to get the right attorney? She stated it would be negligent of this Board to award an RFP without sufficient respondents.

A. A motion was made to rebid the RFP to see if the District can interview more candidates.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Gleason
- Seconded by: Commissioner NONE
- **MOTION FAILED DUE TO LACK OF SECOND**

- Mr. Slavin mentioned the issue is the lack of advertising and respect for the people and there is no reason to not delay awarding the attorney bid when Mrs. Meyers has agreed to stay on for three extra months.
- Mrs. Moeller stated when she was on the Board of Commissioners there was no score sheet or RFP, it was an ad and applying for a job and interviews were held. She recommended the Board table this item and resend the ad for an attorney.
- Mrs. Audrey Mazzotta stated that a person can look great on paper but really the potential attorneys should be interviewed in person and asked questions and then scored.
- Commissioner LeBlanc noted AMCD has put out multiple bids for an attorney and each time have only gotten a handful of candidates and she would like to hear from the firm that is present and then make a decision.
- Ms. Hodges noted her and the firm is elated to have this opportunity to represent AMCD and believes as a special district the AMCD Board of Commissioners has the right to resend the bid for the possibility of more candidates and Smith Gambrell Russell would absolutely submit again.

A. A motion was made to hire Smith Gambrell Russell as the AMCD District Attorney.

- Motioned by: Commissioner LeBlanc

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

3. Item 3: Report About Two HR Firms' Response to the RFP and Board Direction and Process ~ Dr. Rui-De Xue

- Dr. Xue noted two firms submitted a bid; Risk Strategies and MGT. He also mentioned one is requesting a \$70,000 maintenance fee and additional charge when requested hourly. He stated the decision is up to the AMCD Board of Commissioners and how they would like to proceed.
- Commissioner Becker mentioned that even though Risk Strategies scored hire, they are more \$70,000 for the year and MGT is hourly and offers more.
- Commissioner Gleason asked if the HR firms were invited to the Board meeting for interviews?
- The Board came to a consensus to table this item until the January 2025 Board meeting and invite the two firms that bid for an interview.

A. A motion was made to table hiring an HR firm until the January 2025 Board meeting.

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

4. Item 4: Financial Report and Budget Amendment ~ Mr. Scott Hanna, C.F.O

- Dr. Xue reviewed the treasurer's report/vouchers with the Board of Commissioners. Dr. Xue also explained there was no budget amendment for this month due to the new fiscal year. Dr. Xue answered questions the Board of Commissioners asked and noted if they had any detailed questions, they were welcome to reach out the Mr. Hanna for a more detailed response.

○ **NO MOTION WAS MADE FOR THIS ITEM**

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Item 1: Discussion and Approval of the MOU between AMCD and MosquitoMate about Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes ~ Dr. Whitney Qualls

- Dr. Qualls noted that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has registered the MosquitoMate's Wolbachia-infected male mosquitoes as a biopesticide for control of *Aedes aegypti*. She also stated AMCD and MosquitoMate has worked out a mutually benefited Exploratory Collaborative Agreement and it has been reviewed by the attorney, Mrs. Amy Meyers. Dr. Qualls is recommending the Board approves the agreement.

A. **A motion was made to conceptually approve the Exploratory Collaborative Agreement between AMCD and MosquitoMate with the addition of legal language and brought back to the Board for final approval in January 2025.**

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

2. **Item 2: Appreciation of Commissioner Brandhorst and District Attorney for their Service ~ Vice-Chairperson Gleason**

- Vice-Chairperson Gleason presented a plaque to Commissioner Brandhorst for serving on the Anastasia Mosquito Control Board of Commissioners for four years and a plaque to attorney, Mrs. Amy Meyers, for serving as the District attorney from December 31, 2023 to December 31, 2024.

○ **NO MOTION WAS MADE FOR THIS ITEM**

3. **Item 3: Violation of the Sunshine Law ~ Commissioner Brandhorst**

- Commissioner Brandhorst stated she wrote a letter to the Commission of Ethics regarding the sunshine law violation between Commissioner Gleason and newly elected Commissioner Mazzotta and that Mr. Mazzotta stated at the November Board meeting that he was speaking on behalf of Commissioner Gleason and requested that an item on the agenda be tabled until Commissioner Gleason could be present to be apart of the vote.
- Commissioner Mazzotta noted what he stated in the meeting was not that he had spoken to her but that he believed Commissioner Gleason was sick and it would be common courtesy to wait for her presence before voting on such an important matter.
- Mr. Rick Stockley played that part of the November 2024 tape for review and Commissioner Brandhorst's claim was not accurate.
- Commissioner Brandhorst stated she was mistaken
- Commissioner Gleason kindly requested Commissioner Brandhorst to write an email and retract her accusations against Commissioner Gleason and Mazzotta.
- Commissioner Brandhorst stated she would consider it.
- Mrs. Audrey Mazzotta stated Commissioner Brandhorst should do more than consider retracting her accusations against her husband for something he did not do, it's slandering his name and reputation.

○ **NO MOTION WAS MADE FOR THIS ITEM**

4. **Item 4: Mr. Ed Slavin ~ Commissioner Brandhorst**

- Commissioner Brandhorst stated she asked Mr. Slavin why he has been disbarred as a lawyer multiple times and has been met with silence on the matter, so she did her own research. She noted multiple reasons why Mr. Slavin was disbarred and claimed he is disruptive at AMCD Board meetings.

- Mrs. Meyers stated Mr. Slavin's first amendment rights protect his right to address the AMCD Board of Commissioners. She mentioned it's up to the Board to decide if his behavior is disruptive and impedes the order of business.
- Vice-Chairperson asked the Board if they saw Mr. Slavin's behavior in meetings disruptive and the Board came to a consensus that Mr. Slavin's behavior is not disruptive and does not impede on the order of business.

○ **NO MOTION WAS MADE FOR THIS ITEM**

REPORTS:

Director ~ Dr. Xue reported that the 2024 hurricane season did not bring a lot of property damage, however it did bring a lot of rain making the mosquito population very high. He also noted that after the last major hurricane AMCD contracted aerial services with VDIC. Dr. Xue also mentioned AMCD has one visiting scientist from Taiwan. He thanked everyone for their hard work and wished everyone a happy holiday.

Attorney ~ Mrs. Amy Myers thanked everyone for the opportunity to have served the District this past year.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gardner ~ Excused Absence

Commissioner Brandhorst ~ Wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Commissioner LeBlanc ~ Thanked the staff for all their hard work, thanked Mrs. Meyers for all everything she has done and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Commissioner Becker ~ Mentioned the steady intake of people visiting the DVEC and how great of a program they have put together. She wished everyone a happy holiday.

Commissioner Gleason ~ Noted she will be making a motion every month for a forensic audit until people start listening and it is passed. She wished everyone a happy holiday and success for the new year, especially the District.

ATTACHMENTS: ~

ADJOURNMENT: Vice-Chairperson Gleason adjourned the meeting at **7:18 P.M.**

ATTEST



Chairperson, Commissioner Trish Becker



Secretary/Treasurer, Commissioner T.J. Mazzotta

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.