

Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Trish Becker, Chairperson

Vice-Chairperson

T.J. Mazzotta, Secretary/Treasurer

Gayle Gardner, Commissioner

Gina LeBlanc, Commissioner (Absent)



DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Dr. Rui-de Xue



Thursday, April 10, 2025

Thursday, May 8, 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, April 10, 2025, at 5:00 P.M.

Board members in attendance:

Mrs. Trish Becker, Chairperson

Mr. T.J. Mazzotta, Secretary/Treasurer

Mrs. Gayle Gardner, Commissioner

Mrs. Gina LeBlanc, Commissioner (Absent)

Also in attendance:

Dr. Rui-De Xue, Director

Ms. Lawsikia Hodges, Attorney

Chairperson Becker called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Mazzotta led the invocation and pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Chairperson Becker noted ~ that all were present minus Commissioner LeBlanc, who was absent due to illness.

PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

- Mr. Slavin stated that the action taken without proper public comment was null and void. He requested that the drainage contract be returned on a future agenda for a revote. He criticized the previous legal counsel's advice and expressed confidence in the current counsel, Mrs. Hodges.
- Attorney Hodges clarified that the previous counsel's advice was inadvertent and not malicious. She apologized to Mr. Slavin on behalf of the previous counsel. She cited Florida Statute 286.0114(8), stating that an action taken in violation of the public meeting section is not automatically void.

- Mr. Ed Slavin requested that the items be added to the agenda, including the monthly financial report, removing from the consent agenda, DVEC Mosquito Museum cost and the status of the museum, the draft 2026 AMCD budget, auditor selection committee, etiology of the "Friend of the City of Saint Augustine" status, the district's whistleblower protection policy, his 2024-2025 Open records requests & mediation regarding his records requests, the status of the State Attorney General's opinion regarding board members returning bonuses for the 2022-2023, to investigate allegations of pay-to-play.

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

- A. **A motion was made to approve the Agenda as presented.**
 - Motioned by: Commissioner Mazzotta
 - Seconded by: Commissioner Gardner
 - VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
 - **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: Chairperson Becker called for approval of the Consent Agenda.

- A. **A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.**
 - Motioned by: Mazzotta
 - Seconded by: Gardner
 - VOTE: Accepted Unanimously by all Commissioners
 - **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Consent Items ~ APPROVAL OF:

1. Chemical Inventory
2. Minutes: March 13, 2025, Regular Board Meeting Minutes
3. 20th workshop report
4. Drone pilot job description
5. Request for Quote for helicopter engine repair and AD compliance
6. Monthly Financial Report

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Item 1: Budget Amendments (Helicopter engine repair and Attorney fees for the March-September, 2025) ~ Aye McKinney & Scott Hanna

- Aye McKinney, AMCD Accountant, presented the budget amendments, including:
 - Attorney fees: \$6,000 per month
 - Lobbyist fees: Not to exceed \$24,000 (6 months x \$4,000)
 - Turbine engine repair: \$113,209.64 (Cataract recommended)
- Ralph Brunner, Aviation Manager, provided details on the turbine engine repair, explaining the need for the repair and the selection of Cataract. He noted that the engine is expected to be good for another 10 years after the repair.

- Attorney Hodges provided an explanation of her work over the past three months, including contract review and revisions, policy review, and board packet streamlining. She estimated a minimum of 10 hours per month for legal work.
- Mr. Slavin asked whether the previous engine repair contract was reviewed by legal counsel and if there was a breach of warranty.
- Attorney Hodges stated that she had not reviewed the helicopter contract but was happy to do so.

A. A motion was made to approve the Budget Amendment as presented.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Mazzotta
- Seconded by: Commissioner Gardner
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Item 2: Ethical training Ppt. ~ Attorney, Mrs. Hodges

- Attorney Hodges presented an ethics training presentation, highlighting potential danger areas related to government ethics and corruption. Topics included:
 - Gifts: Prohibitions on accepting gifts from lobbyists and vendors.
 - Asking for things: Restrictions on soliciting items of value.
 - Disclosing confidential information: Limitations on sharing non-public information.
 - Misuse of position: Avoiding the use of public office for personal gain.
 - Conflicts of interest: Addressing voting conflicts and prohibitive conflicts.
- Commissioners engaged in a discussion regarding acceptable gifts during regional and national events.
 - **NO MOTION WAS MADE FOR THIS ITEM**

NEW BUSINESS:

Item 1: Anniversary report about the DVEC (Ppt) ~ Dr. Joseph Diclaro

- Dr. Joseph Diclaro, Science Manager, presented an update on the DVEC Education Center's first year. Key highlights included:
 - Over 11,000 visitors (March 26, 2024 - March 22, 2025)
 - 10,000 general public visitors
 - Education events for schools and senior groups
 - Word-of-mouth is the primary source of awareness
 - 70% of visitors are Saint Johns County residents
 - Program development, including passports and themed activities
 - Ongoing construction completions
 - Plans for certifications and partnerships
- Commissioners expressed their enthusiasm for the DVEC Education Center and its success.

- **NO MOTION WAS MADE ON THIS ITEM**

Item 2: Discussion and approval of COLA raise for FY25/26 budget year ~ Dr. Rui-De Xue

- Dr. Xue recommended a 3% COLA for FY25/26 budget purposes.
- Scott Hanna presented data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Chairperson Becker suggested a 1% increase to accommodate the higher cost of living in Saint John's County.
- Commissioner Mazzotta agreed with the 3% starting point but suggested further discussion.

A. A motion was made to approve a three percent COLA raise for the District, with the intent to edit the number on economic conditions before the final budget vote.

- Motioned by: Commissioner Mazzotta
- Seconded by: Commissioner Gardner
- VOTE: Accepted unanimously by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Item 3: Discussion and collection of ideas and suggestions about the development of the next 5-year major work plan and program review proposal. ~ Dr. Rui-De Xue

- Chairperson Becker initiated a discussion on the five-year work plan, referencing a previous SWOT analysis assignment.
- Chairperson Becker shared her ideas, including employee strengths, mission statement revision, a monthly newsletter, CIP program development, northeast Florida expansion, and veterinarian outreach. She also noted weaknesses such as understaffing, unclear policies, and misinformation threats.
- Dr. Xue discussed the budget process, population growth, mosquito species shifts, education importance, personnel importation & increase, technology & equipment updates, especially A.I. and gene editing technology, robots, storage building needs, expansion of services with MOUs, and peer review for programs.
- Commissioner Mazzotta expressed concern about raising the millage rate and keeping money in the citizens' pockets.
- Chairperson Becker highlighted the Balmoral Group report, which affirmed the district's financial stability and good practices.

- **NO MOTION WAS MADE ON THIS ITEM**

REPORTS:

Director ~ Dr. Xue reported on updates regarding the surveillance program starts, seasonal employee hiring progress, budget preparation, the auditor report on May 8, and the auditor selection committee without any applications.

Attorney ~ Attorney Hodges discussed the auditor selection committee process, the travel policy development, the commissioner bonuses issue, and public records requests. She advised the board to waive its policy for the auditor selection committee and discussed the process for requesting an opinion from the Attorney General regarding the Commissioner's bonuses. She also addressed

public records requests, stating that many were operational questions and not actual record requests.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gardner ~ None

Commissioner Mazzotta ~ Thanked everyone for attending.

Commissioner LeBlanc ~ Absent

Commissioner Becker ~ mentioned Florida Mosquito Control Awareness Week and the district's efforts to control mosquitoes.

ATTACHMENTS: ~

ADJOURNMENT: Chairperson Becker adjourned the meeting at 7:00 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.