

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: June 2, 2009

Date Submitted: May 15, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator
Jennifer Langston, Special Projects Coordinator

Subject: Board Update Regarding the American Reinvestment & Recovery Act (ARRA) Funding Opportunities for Wakulla County Projects

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item provides an update to the Board on the recent activities related to seeking American Reinvestment & Recovery Act (ARRA) funding opportunities for Wakulla County projects.

Background:

At the January 20, 2009 Board meeting, the Board approved shovel-ready projects in anticipation of the potential economic stimulus funding initiated by the Federal Government. The approved projects total \$41.5 million and included:

- ✓ Community Center/ EMS/Fire Facility-\$5.3 Million
- ✓ Wakulla Gardens Sewer Expansion & Plant-\$20 Million
- ✓ Expanded Solid Waste Transfer Station-\$3 Million
- ✓ Bridge Construction Projects-\$3.1 Million
- ✓ Courthouse Renovation/Expansion-\$4.2 Million
- ✓ Storm water Plan-\$1 Million
- ✓ U.S. Hwy 319 Transportation Improvements-\$2.9 Million

Wakulla County Efforts

The Board has been made aware of the regional efforts taken such as partnering with neighboring counties, our municipalities, our school board, and other entities in a cohesive regional approach now referred to as the Tallahassee Capital Region group. The school board and our two municipalities participated in the regional meetings and their respective projects are included in the regional list. Press releases, meetings, and conference calls were held with various entities such as the Florida Department of Transportation and Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency. In addition, communications have also taken place with the Governor's Office, State & Federal Legislators, FAC, and the SCC.

Stimulus Lobbying Effort

At the March 17, 2009 Board Meeting, the Board approved for the existing State contract lobbying

firm (Governance Services) to lobby relevant State and Federal Governmental entities to leverage Economic Stimulus funding on behalf of Wakulla County as part of an overarching regional effort to secure lobbying services specifically for stimulus funding. County staff and Governance have had ongoing communications in identifying various funding opportunities related to Wakulla County's stimulus projects. *(See below for additional information)*

The State of Florida Stimulus Activities

The Governor appointed Don Winstead as the stimulus czar for the state of Florida to oversee the influx of federal funds to state programs over the next three budget years. In an effort to be transparent, a website flarecovery.com has been activated to communicate available funding opportunities and other information to eligible entities. The website also allows for taxpayers to track how the stimulus funding is being spent. In the latest legislative session, the Legislature proposed to utilize approximately \$5.3 billion in ARRA funding to close the budget deficit. We will continue to monitor the funding opportunities to be appropriated as state grants.

ARRA Funding

ARRA funding is either distributed by established state and federal formulas to allow funds to flow from the Federal Government through the State, or are discretionary funds where we must make application directly to state, or federal government through flarecovery.com or grants.gov. There are many sources of ARRA funding and largely contains strict eligibility criteria. The Federal Register contains notifications of grant opportunities on a routine basis. The Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents

WAKULLA COUNTY PROJECTS CURRENTLY FUNDED BY ARRA

TRANSPORTATION-Through the Federal Highway Administration and the Florida Department of Transportation, Wakulla County has been notified of the following funding:

- ✓ \$200,000 for Rural Road Safety pavement Marking-Striping of Curtis Mills Road, Rail Road Ave., Oak Park, & Persimmon Road. The rfp is anticipated to come before the Board in June and will be coordinated by the local RFP process, and overseen by the County. FDOT will assist the County in this process to ensure that Wakulla County adheres to the state and federal funding requirements.
- ✓ \$417,000 for Turn lane at US 319 Crawfordville Highway @ Russell Drive -near Happytime
The Russell Drive turn lane project will be conducted by FDOT, with assistance provided by the County, if needed. Construction should commence in August or September. NOTE: This turn lane is included in the Board approved stimulus projects referenced above in the U.S. Hwy 319 Transportation Improvements.

HOUSING-Through the federal Department of Energy and Florida Department of Community Affairs, Wakulla County is projected to receive as much as \$3.5 million in stimulus funding, 35 times the County's normal allocation.

Analysis:

This agenda item provides the Board with an update on the recent Economic Stimulus activities occurring after the April 21, 2009 Board meeting.

Broadband-As a result of the ARRA funding, a meeting was held with Mr. Allen Byington where staff discussed the possibility of expanded broadband capabilities through the Big Bend RHIO initiative and the potential benefits to Wakulla County. BBRHIO stands for Big Bend Regional Healthcare Information Organization and is has facilitated the sharing of patient data between two of three targeted healthcare entities in Tallahassee. It is anticipated that a grant application will be submitted in a regional broadband expansion project that Wakulla County may benefit from. Its focus is on healthcare technology and the services to facilitate the sharing and portability of health care and the integration of additional clinical data (i.e. labs, radiology, etc.) and will hopefully be accomplished in the near future with Economic Stimulus funding. A second meeting is expected soon and additional information will be provided to the Board. Staff recently participated in a n ACHA survey to relay the broadband needs of rural Wakulla County.

Grant Activities-

- On May 1, 2009, a meeting was held with the Department of Public Safety staff and Governance to discuss the submission of the FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grants. These grants were created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations in order to help them increase the number of trained, "front-line" firefighters available in their communities. The majority of our Volunteer Fire Departments identified their needs in order to take advantage of the grant opportunity. Governance assisted in reviewing the application narrative for some of the applications that were submitted. This was a tremendous cooperative effort between the VFDs and Department of Public Safety especially due to the stringent deadline. It is anticipated that these grants will be awarded from July-December.

- On May 20, 2009, County staff, Governance, Eutaw Utilities, and Public Works staff met with the USDA's Office of Rural Development to discuss specifics of the Wakulla Gardens/Sewer projects. USDA reviewed the grant/loan application and process in order to apply for the enhanced USDA's Water and Waste Loan/Grant funding program. It appears that in order to apply for the grant/loan program, much of the required documentation has already been prepared by various staff. Staff will begin accumulating the information in preparation for submission of the application. This program is an existing program that has received additional funding due to ARRA.

Regional Meeting-On May 8, 2009, a Regional Economic Stimulus meeting was held and discussion consisted of updates on bridge & highway funds, the regional lobbying effort, and an overview of the Big Bend RHIO broadband initiative.

State Stimulus Summit-On May 15, 2009, staff attended the Economic Stimulus Summit in Orlando held by the Florida Association of Counties and Florida League of Cities. Guest speakers included representatives from Florida Department's of Community Affairs, Environmental Protection, Transportation, Governor's Energy Office, Children & Families, Management Services, Agency for Health Care Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The specific reporting requirements and prohibitions of ARRA were also explained. The summit provided an opportunity to ask questions of the guest speakers in their respective areas.

Training-On June 1, 2009, staff will attend a mandatory training class on Local Agency Projects (LAP) held by FDOT. The training is required by all local agencies scheduled to receive or currently receiving federal-aid funding from FDOT District 3 for LAP projects. The training will focus on project implementation and reporting requirements.

Ongoing Communications-Staff and Governance continue to work together to establish a plan of action in obtaining funding by having regular conference calls and meetings with the appropriate state and federal representatives. We are tracking the following grant opportunities at this time:

- U.S. Department of Commerce's Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) grant program.
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants-Florida recently applied for State's share, currently awaiting further grant information from Governor's Office of Energy specific criteria and eligibility.
- USDA's Rural Development Grants-All Applicable programs.

Updates to the Board, and information will be posted on the County's website as progress is made in obtaining funding for the projects. At this point, the stimulus has generated an estimated \$4.1 million for County projects and services. We are exploring opportunities to generate funding for nearly \$40 million in other projects.

Options:

1. Accept the Update Regarding the American Reinvestment & Recovery Act (ARRA) Funding Opportunities for Wakulla County Projects.
2. Do Not Accept the Update Regarding the American Reinvestment & Recovery Act (ARRA) Funding Opportunities for Wakulla County Projects.
3. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1