



November 1, 2023  
Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee  
Meeting

The regular meeting of the Okaloosa County Infrastructure Surtax Advisory Committee was called to order at 10:00 A.M. in the Okaloosa County Administration Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Training Room, 1250 Eglin Parkway N, Shalimar, FL 32579. Members present were: District 2 representative: Vice Chairman Jeff Fanto; District 1 representative: Larry Ward; District 3 representative: Hannah Wilburn; District 5 representative: Jim Foreman. Also present were: Jason Autrey, Public Works Director; Patrick Maddox, Director of Public Safety; Ryan Prince, Chief of Emergency Management; Faye Douglas, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Director; Scott Bitterman, County Engineer; Roy Petrey, Engineering Manager; Carisse LeJeune, Surtax Project Manager; Brad Embry, Okaloosa Clerk of Court Chief of Staff; Nick Tomecek, Public Information Officer; Glynn Stringer, Surtax Project Coordinator; Melissa Wilson, Surtax Project Coordinator.

**Opening Remarks and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was opened by Vice Chairman Mr. Jeff Fanto. Mr. Jason Autrey stated that the meeting had been properly noticed in accordance with section 286.011, Florida Statutes on September 5, 2023.

Ms. Carisse LeJeune advised the meetings are recorded for public records.

Vice Chairman Fanto inquired if there were any public speaking cards or comments, but none were noted.

Vice Chairman Fanto then provided some information, stating that the agenda items will be rearranged to accommodate members' schedules, with action items scheduled after the presentations, and informational items later on the agenda. While there were no public comments or speaker cards at that time, he encouraged anyone interested to adhere to the established rules for engagement, ensuring they would have an opportunity to speak later in the meeting.

Vice Chairman Fanto opened the floor for presentations.

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Vice Chairman Fanto called for a vote regarding the approval of the meeting minutes. Ms. Hannah Wilburn made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Larry Ward. The motion passed unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

**Public Comments**

None.

**Presentations**

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Proposed Technology Upgrade – Presented by Mr. Patrick Maddox

Vice Chairman Fanto introduced the EOC Proposed Technology Upgrade by Mr. Maddox, Director of Public Safety. Mr. Maddox highlighted the urgency of upgrading the County's outdated Emergency

Management Center equipment, originally designed in 2008. This technology's incompatibility with modern tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams was exposed during the COVID pandemic. The proposal request is \$650,000 including contingency from Surtax funding to address financial challenges posed by emergencies like hurricanes and climate-related events. The proposal was reviewed by the County's legal staff and deemed an eligible use of Surtax funding.

Committee members raised questions about the \$650,000 upgrade, particularly inquiring about the new technology's expected lifespan, given the rapid evolution in technology. They also probed the need for follow-up maintenance and were assured that maintenance would be a General Fund budgeted item. A question was raised about using Emergency Management Reserves for the upgrade and Mr. Maddox clarified that Surtax cannot be used for General Fund backfill during disaster recovery and General Fund Reserves should remain available for that critical need. Additionally, it was confirmed that unused Surtax funds would be returned to Surtax Reserves. These discussions underscored the necessity of upgrading due to significant technological advancements.

In conclusion, it was affirmed that the upgrade would be integrated into an ongoing annual review program, ensuring that the technology consistently aligns with the organization's evolving needs. Finally, Vice Chairman Fanto entertained a motion to approve, which was motioned by Mr. Ward and seconded by Mr. Foreman. The motion was approved with a vote of 3-1, with Vice Chairman Fanto dissenting.

### **Project Updates**

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated the discussion with an agenda item dedicated to project updates.

#### **A. Project List Update –**

Ms. LeJeune provided valuable insights into several projects that have made significant progress since the last report as of September 30, 2023.

- a. John King Road Widening (ST000004) / District 1 –  
Acquisition is moving along, with one parcel agreement received and another package for a second parcel expected to be finalized soon.
- b. Wynnehaven Beach Road Stormwater Improvements (ST000025) / District 4 –  
The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) have approved the purchase for acquisition of property and the closing is pending.
- c. County Pond 314 Stormwater Improvements (ST000025) / District 4 –  
Plans are at 90% completion with a scope change under review.
- d. Live Oak Church Road Bridge Construction (ST000028) / District 1 –  
This project is currently underway.
- e. Willow Grove Lane Stormwater Improvement (ST000029) / District 4 –  
Survey crews are on-site for about five days, coordinating access to the area.
- f. College Boulevard (ST000030) / Districts 1, 3, & 5 –  
Staff completed a 30% plan review, and comments have been sent back to the design firm for the next phase.
- g. County Road 393 (ST000032) / District 1 –

The task order for preliminary design has been approved and sent to the design firm to initiate the work.

- h. Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Data Management System (ST000034) / Districts 1-5 – The project has officially kicked off in recent weeks and is now in progress.

Ms. LeJeune invited questions and discussion on the projects, but none were raised.

**B. Surtax Project Reconciliation –**

A significant change to the report has improved financial transparency. Bond debt has been separated from individual projects and is now tracked independently. A detailed breakdown of bond debt revenue and expenses associated with the Southwest Bypass project and the OCSO Communication Towers project are located in the upper right-hand corner of the initial page of the report. This adjustment allows for more accurate budget allocation within the surtax category, with the core project budget now isolated for a focused assessment. Ms. LeJeune asked if there were any questions regarding the changes to the report and there were none.

**C. SW Crestview Bypass Funding Summary –**

Mr. Autrey presented an October 2023 project update video, showcasing substantial advancements to the project. Vice Chairman Fanto expressed gratitude for the informative videos, highlighting their role in illustrating project value and progress. Mr. Autrey credited Mr. Nick Tomecek for creating engaging interview-style videos. These videos effectively communicate project success and outlines the complexity of the project, particularly the construction of piers on the South side of the railroad tracks and the river crossing. He also discussed the financial stability and remarkable progress of the project, with an estimated completion within approximately two years.

The committee appreciated the effectiveness of the videos in conveying complex engineering projects, and Vice Chairman Fanto stressed their importance in highlighting the County's achievements. Vice Chairman Fanto moved on to the next agenda item without further discussion.

**D. Surtax Webpage Dashboard –**

Ms. LeJeune presented the recently launched project dashboard on the website, offering insights into its features, including information on active projects, budgets, surtax expenditures, grants, and additional funding sources. The dashboard also highlights completed projects, which are categorized by districts and expenditures, providing an interactive map for users.

The committee appreciated the website creation and discussed ways to boost its visibility, like using QR codes and live demonstrations at speaking events to highlight the success of Surtax projects in Okaloosa County.

**E. Annualized Funding Projection –**

Ms. LeJeune provided an overview of the annualized funding projections as of September 30, 2023. In FY 2023, the surtax revenue reached \$22.8 million, resulting in a cumulative available fund of approximately \$92.7 million for FY 2023. The surtax budget was characterized as sound,

and the committee had the opportunity to raise any questions about the spreadsheet report, but none were raised.

### **Agenda Items and Discussions**

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated the Staff Reports discussion.

A. Kathleen Drive Parcel Purchase (ST000025) / District 4 –

Ms. LeJeune proceeded with an informational item regarding the Kathleen Drive parcel purchase in District 4. Ms. LeJeune presented the information, and no further questions or actions were necessary on this matter.

B. Carmel Drive/Beal Parkway Intersection Improvements Project (ST000010) / District 4 –

Ms. LeJeune informed the committee about the \$989,875 award from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for the Carmel Drive/Beal Parkway Improvement Project, which necessitated a 50/50 local match. The allocation of Surtax funding had been approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on October 3, 2023. This update was presented for informational purposes, and no further action or recommendation was needed from the committee.

C. West 98 Connector Transportation Improvement Project / District 4 –

Vice Chairman Fanto introduced the next item on the agenda. Ms. LeJeune reported the County had received a \$375,000 draft grant agreement from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study with a 50/50 local match requirement. Staff requested recommendation of allocation for FY24 Surtax funding in the amount of \$375,000 for the local match, and an additional \$625,000 for preliminary design, design, and permitting.

Mr. Autrey expressed his satisfaction with the Eglin meeting, where the traffic enhancement proposal received support from Commissioners. Mr. Scott Bitterman mentioned the secured state funding and underscored the historical importance of the project and the necessity for additional allocations to address easements and property acquisitions. Vice Chairman Fanto praised the potential of the project to alleviate traffic congestion and stressed the importance of cooperative efforts with stakeholders like Eglin Air Force Base.

Vice Chairman Fanto opened the floor for a motion to approve the request. Ms. Wilburn motioned, and Mr. Ward seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

D. Dirt Road Stabilization (ST000021) / Districts 1 & 3 –

Ms. LeJeune proposed the Dirt Road Stabilization “50-in-5” Dirt to Pave Project, requesting recommendation of allocation of \$4 million. The County has already made great progress, stabilizing 73.84 miles of dirt road with lime rock and 40.3 miles with chip seal and asphalt. With the allocation, an additional 24 miles can be stabilized. This program is cost-effective, saving approximately \$1 million annually by eliminating the need to lease graders, making it a valuable long-term investment for both infrastructure and the environment.

Vice Chairman Fanto initiated a motion to approve, and Ms. Wilburn motioned, with Mr. Ward seconding the motion. The committee unanimously approved the request, emphasizing the program's success and its significant impact.

E. Commons Drive Safety & Lighting Modifications Project (ST000020) / District 5 –

Ms. LeJeune requested recommendation of FY24 Surtax allocation in the amount of \$20,000 to address lighting issues in the area of Commons Drive and 2 Circle Road in Destin, FL. Local HOAs in the area raised concerns about inadequate lighting. The Committee was asked to allocate \$20,000 for inspection and repairs, with unused funds to be returned to Surtax Reserves. The cause of the lighting issues, whether underground or above-ground damage, is uncertain. An external vendor will inspect and make necessary repairs.

Vice Chair Fanto opened the floor for a motion to approve. Mr. Foreman moved for approval, which was seconded by Ms. Wilburn. The motion was unanimously approved with a vote of 4-0.

**Office of Management and Budget**

Ms. Douglas advised there is currently \$22 million of Surtax Revenues collected in FY2023. The project budget is \$215 million with an estimate for FY 2024 of over \$22 million.

**Clerk of Court and Comptroller**

None.

**Schedule Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 to be held in the North end of the County in Crestview (address TBD).

**Adjournment**

Chairman Fanto closed the meeting, extending early holiday wishes to all for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. Vice Chairman Fanto motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Foreman. Motion approved 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 11:04 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Wilson

Surtax Project Coordinator