

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**MADISON COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**COURTHOUSE ANNEX**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING**

**TUESDAY, JULY 2, 2018**

**6:00 P.M.**

The Board of County Commissioners of Madison County, Florida met this day in special session with the following members present: Alston Kelly (District 1), Wayne Vickers (District 2), Ronnie Moore (District 3), Alfred Martin (District 4) and Rick Davis (District 5). Also present were County Attorney George T. Reeves, County Coordinator Brian Kauffman, and Clerk Billy Washington.

The Chairman, Honorable Wayne Vickers, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and conducted roll call.

Chairman Vickers explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and possibly act on a request for an option to purchase county owned property. He then allowed the county's economic development consultant, Crawford Powell, to introduce the representatives from Synergy Farms, LLC. Mr. Brandon Richards then gave a brief overview of the company, their product, procedures and request to the county. Mr. Richards stated that Synergy Farms, LLC was requesting an option to purchase property with no other incentives. He explained that Synergy Farms, LLC would be growing marijuana and extracting oils from the plants to be utilized for medicinal purposes. He explained that Synergy Farms, LLC was preparing to apply for licensure as a Medical Marijuana Treatment Center through the Florida Department of Health. Having either purchased property or the option to purchase property was a requirement for licensure. Chairman Vickers then opened the floor for questions.

Several citizens expressed different concerns with the project. It was explained that a "treatment center" was a state designation and did not mean that patients would be treated on-site. This designation had to do with the treatment of the medical marijuana. It would be grown, oils extracted and then distributed to other sites for sell. Mr. Richards explained that he felt this to be manufacturing of a product determined by the Florida Department of Health to be a medicine. Therefore, he did not feel this to be agriculture. Attorney Reeves explained that the determination of agriculture use exemptions did not fall under the purview of the Board of County Commissioners.

Mr. Richards explained that the urgency of the requested meeting date was due to timing of the application process and Synergy Farms, LLC wanting to have a complete application when the licensure application window opened. He also stated

that the intention of Synergy Farms, LLC was to have this site as their headquarters. He expects to have approximately 40 employees by year three with an average salary of \$40,000 per year. He stated that jobs would include not only growing and manufacturing, but also marketing, communications, office and security.

It was noted that Mr. Richards's family owned buildings in Hamilton County; and asked why they did not look to locate there. Mr. Richards explained that Hamilton County had in place a moratorium that prevented this sort of business. He also stated that Synergy Farms, LLC was also exploring a site in Suwannee County, but were further along in the process with this site in Madison County.

Mr. Richards explained that in the first year of operation he expected to employ about 20 people for normal 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. business hours. The facility would also be required to have 24-hour manned security.

Mayor Eddie Bell from the Town of Lee questioned why no notification was given to the Town of Lee concerning this request, since the county owned property is in the Lee city limits. Mr. Richards explained that at this time, the request was only for an option to purchase property. The intent of Synergy Farms, LLC was to approach the Town of Lee and the City of Madison if and when the project became more certain. Mayor Bell expressed concerns for infrastructure costs to the Town of Lee as a result of this business. Mr. Richards stated that he was expecting there to be infrastructure costs to the business and not necessarily passed on to the Town of Lee.

Mr. Richards stated that he expects the development cost to be about 4 million dollars. If the license application is not accepted, he stated that Synergy Farms, LLC would not exercise their rights under the option.

Commissioner Kelly inquired as to the size of containers that leave the facility. Mr. Richards explained that the oils would be processed into 500 mg cartridges, tinctures and creams. These would be loaded onto and shipped by armored vehicle across North Florida. Commissioner Vickers asked if there was any intent to seek to have retail medical marijuana in Madison County. Mr. Richards stated that they were not planning to have retail sales in Madison County, only production.

Commissioner Moore presented a motion to approve the option contract at a sale price of \$5000 per acre with a 180 day due diligence period and issue a letter of land use concurrence from the Planning and Zoning Department. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion. Attorney Reeves explained that county ordinance 2016-226 requires a 10 day noticed public hearing prior to the sale of any county owned property. This means that approval of the option to purchase did not guarantee to the purchaser that the Board of County Commissioners would vote in that public hearing to actually sell the property. Commissioner Davis stated that the Madison County Development Council did not feel that enough notice had been given to the public concerning this project. Some citizens present echoed this sentiment. Commissioner Moore stated that this was just part of the process and that there would be other public hearings prior to

the sale of the land. The commissioners voted 3-2 to approve the motion. Voting against the motion were Commissioner Vickers and Commissioner Davis.

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p. m.

Board of County Commissioners  
Madison County, Florida

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wayne Vickers, Chairman

ATTEST:

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William D. Washington,  
Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners