MINUTES

SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

GADSDEN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
MAX D. WALKER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
35 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD.
QUINCY, FLORIDA

June 8, 2026

4:00 P.M.

The workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman; Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon; Mr. Steve Scott; and Mr. Charlie D. Frost. Also present were Mr. Elijah Key, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board; and others. Ms. Cathy S. Johnson was absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

   The workshop was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 4:34 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

   The opening prayer was led by Mr. Charlie D. Frost.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Recited in unison.

4. DISTRICT'S BUDGET FOR 2026 – 2027 FISCAL YEAR

   Mrs. Bruner shared with the Board the FEFP (Florida Education Finance Program) – The primary funding formula used by the Florida legislature to allocate state and local funds to public K-12 school districts. She stated that the 26-27 budget year and this presentation is going to be an overview to break down the pieces and parts for the budget and then we're going to go over some things that we know right now, and bits of information that we're going to collect and pull together before the next budget workshop. She stated that the funding sources are categorized in three ways, general fund, capital or special revenue. She stated that the general funds are for general operations and can only be used for those activities, salaries and benefits, materials, transportation, utilities, etc. She stated that the capital outlay funds are for long term physical needs, school construction, renovation, building purchases, repairs and maintenance, buses, furniture, technology, equipment, ADA or security upgrades, leases, debt payments, property insurance. She stated that some of those items must be disclosed in the ad that we will run in July when we're doing the tentative budget. She stated that the State of Florida Department of Revenue Division of property tax oversight is very particular about how those ads are laid out and how the verbiage is used to run in the ad. She stated that special revenues are federal or state grants. She stated that each of these different types are governed by different rules and laws. She stated that funds cannot be used interchangeably, but general funds are the most flexible with what it can be spent on. She stated that the funding source, property tax, is the required local effort, the RLE. She stated that it's a mandatory property tax revenue that school districts must contribute first. She stated that the Legislature sets this amount statewide. She stated that the property tax is given as part of the district's FEFP calculation. She stated that the number is given by the Legislature and cannot be changed. She stated that the FEFP is the Florida Education Finance Program which is based on our FTE counts and collected during various survey periods throughout the fiscal year. There is usually a formula to support, enhance and provide equitable education and specialized student population. She stated that the entitlement grants are an example of our largest share of our student population, we have a larger amount of grants in some counties, but again those grants are very specific and they're targeted. She stated that this doesn't offer us a ton of flexibility. She stated that there are donations through our Grants and Education Foundation, end of year awards, district annual recognition banquet, among other activities.

F U N D I N G   S O U R C E S

She stated that the district's funding sources can be categorized as follows:
General Fund - Daily operations
Salaries and benefits
Materials and Supplies
Transportation operations
Utilities

Capital Fund – Long-term physical needs
School construction, renovation, building purchases
Repairs and maintenance
Buses, furniture, technology, large equipment
ADA or security upgrades
Leases, debt payments, property insurance

Special Revenue
Grants

- Each type is governed by different rules and laws.
- Funds cannot be used interchangeably.
- General Funds are the most flexible.
- Capital and Special Revenue have strict rules about how they can be spent.
- Capital CANNOT be used for items such as salaries and benefits, instructional programs, training, utilities, materials, etc.
- Violating state rules can result in negative audit findings, repayment requirements, or state funding reductions.

Property Taxes – required Local Effort (RLE) is the mandatory property tax revenue that school districts must contribute first. The Legislature set the total statewide amount.

FEFP – The State Legislature calculates the amount the District will receive from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) based on our FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) Student Enrollment and budget funding counts, which are collected during the survey periods.

Grants – State & federal grants to Local Educational Agencies (LEA) are primarily distributed via formula to support, enhance and provide equitable education, with a focus on high-poverty, rural, or specialized student populations.

Donations – The District receives donations through the Gadsden Education Foundation, which primarily funds scholarships, EOY (End of The Year) awards, and District's annual recognition banquet, among other activities.

F U N D   B A L A N C E

If the fund balance is projected to fall below 3%, the District must provide notification to the State. The State will then require a plan of action for recovery.

If the fund balance is projected to fall below 2%, the State could require the formation of a committee to review all district expenditures and to ensure that a plan is formalized to bring the fund balance back up. This could trigger State takeover and eliminate local control.

School Board Policy 7.10 requires the District to retain at least a 4% fund balance, if feasible.

T R I M

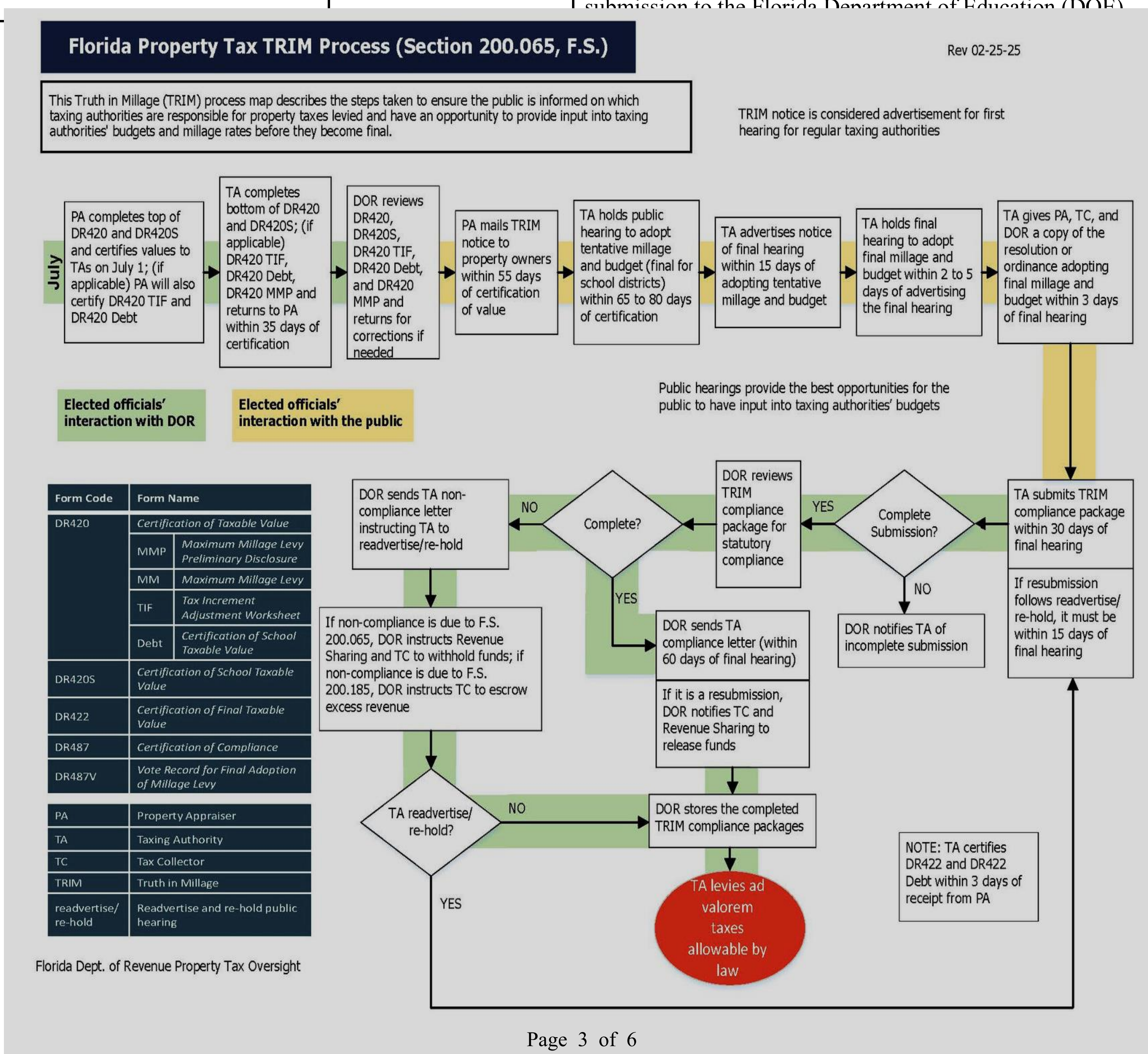
Truth in Millage (TRIM) - This law is designed to inform taxpayers which governmental entity is responsible for the taxes levied, and the amount of tax liability taxpayers owe to each taxing authority. The property appraiser sends this information, known as the TRIM notice, to the property owner.

July 1
Governor signs the budget bill into law, typically effective July 1 - the start of the new fiscal year.

July – SEPTEMBER
There is a tight window for developing the tentative budget based on the TRIM schedule. This includes advertising and holding public hearings

T R I M   T I M E T A B L E

Action	Date	Description
PA Certifies the Tax Rolls	July 1, 2026	The property appraiser certifies the taxable value in the school district's jurisdiction on Certification of School Taxable Value (Form DR-420S) to the school district. If required, the property appraiser will also certify Certification of Voted Debt Millage (Form DR-420DEBT) to the school district for completion.
Board Meeting	July 21, 2026	Superintendent sends the tentative budget to the Board for approval. Board approves tentative budget for advertising.
Newspaper Ads	July 23, 2026	School District advertises its intent to adopt a tentative budget and millage rates, including proposed millage for capital outlay projects
Board Meeting/Public Hearing	July 27, 2026	Public hearing on the tentative budget and millage, adopting the tentative millage rates and tentative budget and publicly announcing the millage rates exceed the roll-back rate, if applicable.
Board Meeting/Public Hearing	September 3, 2026	Public hearing on the final budget and millage rate. Board approves the Annual Financial Report (AFR) for submission to the Florida Department of Education (DOE)



PY Actuals
Prior year actuals can give us a good starting place when developing a budget and calculating allocations between departments.

Priorities – District priorities and initiatives can determine where remaining funding is allocated.

Mrs. Bruner stated that the one mil equals $1.00 for every $1,000 of taxable value of the property. She stated that there the property value and the mileage are two variables that will impact this amount. She stated that the mileage is set by the State. She stated that if the mileage remains the same but the property values increase, then the amount collected increases. She stated that is what we saw this past fiscal year. She stated that we had a lot of constituents complaining about looking at their taxes and saying that the education tax was so high. She stated that it's because there was an increase in property values and that was again, outside of the school districts control. She stated that if the property values remain the same but the property values decrease, then our amount that we would collect from that would also decrease. She stated that if the property values remain the same, but the State reduces the required local effort amount, then our funding is reduced and any combination of those two is going to either increase or decrease based on the net result. She stated that the districts cannot levy more than the required local effort without voter approval. She stated that there is a House Joint Resolution that will appear on the November 26th ballot requiring 60% approval by the voters. She stated that the last approved version did not apply to the school district's property tax. She stated that there are still different estimates after the legislative staff did their analysis on how much property tax savings would impact school districts. She stated that the FEFP proposal is still waiting on the Governor's signature. She stated that State and federal grants are still in various processes of the application process. She stated that we are still waiting to hear regarding donations. She stated that the district has a donation platform from last year to pilot with GTC. She stated that we're hoping to get that off the ground for our campuses this upcoming school year so that our sport teams and clubs can do fundraising in a transparency way to properly record and track, and gain community support for some of those items. She stated that donation dollars also provide some flexibility in things that we can't fund from FEFP or that can't be funded from one of these other sources, like food. She stated that our food service money is used to purchase our regular food for breakfast and lunch and types of approved activities. Mr. McMillan asked if the donations were a pilot program. Mrs. Bruner stated yes for GTC with their nursing program. She stated that the students have to sign up to take the entrance exam through a national portal for the registration fee. Ms. Hannigon stated that follow up to what the chairman was just asking, what does the backside of that look like? She stated that it's a fundraising platform with funds being donated from a variety of individuals and entities. She stated that once she give her donation, what does that process look like? She wanted to know if it was being routed to various bank accounts for each of the schools or is it being dropped into the district's main operating account, what does that side of the transaction look like? Mrs. Bruner stated that she would set it up with each school and their individual bank account. She stated that when they are tracking their general ledger ins and outs, this information would go into that account. She stated that it could be set up for any reason at the district level. She stated that once the donation is received into the district's account, we would create the cost strip for it and make sure the revenue was appropriately charged to them. Ms. Hannigon wanted to know how many programs or offices would fall into that category instead of their individual office handling it, it would have to be routed to the district? Mrs. Bruner stated that anything not tied to a school campus, for example, Head Start, Maintenance, and Transportation. Ms. Hannigon wanted to know how many areas or offices that would actually apply to where the finance department would end up having to manage. Mrs. Bruner stated that as far as workload, we currently receive donations via check or payments for facility use. She stated that having a digital platform would allow us to not have to wait for an individual to go get a cashier's check or whatever. She stated that we currently have a manual process for entering all that information into our system. She stated that we would create a digital process to hopefully save time, and to increase our revenue source. She stated that right now our campus programs, sport activities, are not generating enough funds fees to pay for referees. She stated that if they go out and achieve corporate sponsorships or some other type of fundraiser, then that gives them the flexibility to create some revenue for the things they want to do, but also allows us the transparency to track it and make sure everything's Board approval. She stated that the fund balance is projected to fall below 3%. She stated when it falls below 2%, DOE comes in and start approving the district's expenditures and this could trigger the State taking over or eliminate local control. She stated that in discussion with DOE, they have stated that until you know hard and fast numbers don't send them a letter. She stated that they want the district to try to do whatever they can to pull themselves out of the nosedive by using funds and resources available to maximize based on what those funds can and can't be used for. She stated that once the letter is received, DOE will immediately turn around and send a template. She stated that the district has started with a hiring freeze, travel freeze, non-emergency type expenditures, and anything that we can delay until July 1 in the new fiscal year. She stated that DOE will say whether or not the district's plan is working and sufficient. She stated that the School Board Policy 7.10 requires that the district retain at least a 4% fund balance if feasible. She stated that the district's fund balance has been unstable, up and down, trending down the last few years. She stated that some of those bumps up were due to increased funding that came during COVID when we received all those extra dollars to stabilize ourselves, and with ESSER funding. She stated that we are in the position where we're really going to have to look at the FEFP budget, and all of our funding sources. She stated that we have to start with a budget that's going to be conservative. She stated that Board policy also requires that the Board approve a balanced budget presented by the Superintendent. She stated that a lot of development would start with allocations. She stated that obviously the FEFP categories that we're told to fund would be our first place, such as how much we receive for safety and security, mental health, teacher salary increase, and safe schools. She stated that the staffing plan presented is based on those FTE numbers, but the next step would be taking a look at the individuals who were recommended back who have done all of their paperwork or eligible. She stated that when schools have spots and laying that all out so once we do that we can start looking at actual salaries and start pulling that information. She stated that by the next budget workshop we will have that information to present. She stated that the prior year actuals and all of our other departments, especially maintenance and transportation. She stated that those are the two departments that the Board has the most flexibility in determining how those dollars are spent, also any other Board priorities or projects. She stated that the staffing plan that you have before you for tonight is just the instructional teachers. She stated that there is a different calculation that we run based on campus size, square footage, then the Superintendent would have to present district level staff. She stated that the finance department is still collecting information from departments, what contracts they have, what renewal information goes with those contracts, and closing out purchase orders. Ms. Hannigon wanted to know when the district would have a concrete number. Mrs. Bruner stated that our fiscal year ends June 30 and we'll still have to go through the process of all of our expenditures, especially the grants. She stated it will probably be in July before we have that final number, but if we can get a much, much closer estimate then, we should have that, hopefully by the end of the month.

5. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key stated that the new K-8 school is moving along fine. He stated that Ms. Hannigon requested some information that has been shared with all Board members. He stated that the information consists of the per pupil expenditures for all of our schools. He stated that this information came straight from the DOE website. He stated that information for Gadsden Central Academy was not provided for some reason. Mr. Scott questioned what goes into this calculation. He wanted to know if it was the number of square feet of the site itself, the instructors, the number of students, the cost per month of utilities. Mr. Key stated yes, the site goes into that calculated divided by the number of students that are there. He stated that it is much higher for a smaller school or an older school that you're having to put more maintenance into. He stated that the second set of sheets is the number of students at Carter Parramore Academy and Gadsden Central Academy. He stated that the starting date for school starts somewhere in August. He stated that it may fluctuate differently, but somewhere schools started at different times. He stated that there is no data for 25-26, currently for per pupil expenditures because the AR has not been submitted for the 23-24 year. He stated that because of the lateness of that AFR, they did not calculate our numbers, and there no data for 23-24 year.

6. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Scott stated that he was still concerned about the GEMS site (Old Quincy High School). He stated that he was still being contacted by citizens that live in that area. He stated that there is asbestos in the building. He wanted to know what we are doing to keep people off the property. He stated that he noticed that one of the chain link fences looked like a tree came down or something on it because you can practically just step over. Mr. Key stated that it's going to have to go through the abatement process first. He stated that Mr. Hudson has already been asked to find out what the abatement cost is going to be. Mr. Scott stated that for the last four years, he has been trying to get this Board to do something with it, if nothing more than an appraisal so that we could put it out for sale. Mr. Key stated to the public that he would go back and tell the citizens to vote for the ½ cent sales taxes. He stated that in 2024 the ½ cent sales tax was voted down. He stated that would have helped at least do something with that building.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she was under the impression that we were getting a quote on the fencing. Mr. Hudson stated that currently there are two quotes, and waiting for one more. Ms. Hannigon wanted to know if there was a timeline. Mr. Hudson stated yes, he has reached out to vendors regarding the abatement. He stated that a construction manager would be another route to take. Ms. Hannigon stated to Mr. Hudson that based on your experience and exposure in situations like this, are you familiar with the whereas any type of outside funding that you've seen school districts or even just government entities acquire that help with abatement of older buildings. She wanted to know if there was anything on the grant level that would help the school district in this process. Mr. Hudson stated that he does not know of anything exactly pertaining to our situation. He stated that he has reached out to DAG and Mr. Stuart Wiggins. He stated that he talked with Mr. Wiggins a couple days ago, and he says he's going to do some more research for the district to see if there's anything out there that will assist us with this. Ms. Hannigon stated that within our insurance policy if there’s a natural disaster, there are services that our insurance carrier would provide for us. She wanted to know is there anything within our insurance policy that we could utilize to assist us in this process. Mrs. Bruner stated that no because this property couldn’t be covered under our insurance because of the damage that we didn’t repair back when, so the only liability was towards our people.

Mr. Frost wanted to know if the abatement was for the entire campus. Mr. Hudson stated that he was trying to get two prices for the entire building. He wanted to know if there was a way to raise a portion of the building that was collapsed.

He stated that whatever we are able to do, he wanted to have those prices covered so we can execute one of the two. Mrs. Hannigon wanted to know how much of the campus was currently occupied. Mr. Key stated that the migrants are still using portables, the library, and the JROTC building is being used at this time. Mr. Key stated that we are currently moving staff to other locations. Mr. McMillan stated that the last time he was involved in abatement it was extremely expensive. Mr. Scott stated that Quincy Main Street wanted it and did two presentations here with architects. Mr. McMillan stated that the Board voted not to give it to them. He stated that something prohibited us from giving that to them because they mentioned it in one of the presentations that they were going to possibly turn one of the buildings into condos or apartments or something like that. Attorney Minnis stated that the law says that it has to be for the public good or in the public interest and the story of public good and public interest that we were trying to discern. She stated that it showed that is privately sold and you're going to make a profit through what sells would be in the public good. She stated that was kind of where the sticking point was with some of the Board members, that if it was going to be a passive part or if it was going to be totally public. She stated that she has seen cases where the entities who got the property did do something that may have been a little on the private side, but they bought the property. She stated that the funds you get from the sell must serve the public good or the public interest. Mr. McMillan wanted to know if the health issue would be for the good of the public. Mrs. Minnis stated that would be one of those where we'd have to make sure we put enough information on the record to support that. She stated that she could not tell if someone challenges that, what the outcome will be because she has not seen that kind of public interest mentioned in the case. Mr. McMillan stated that there’s no way a district can afford to go in and do abatement of that entire campus. He stated that with the auditorium collapsing, that's even going to be more expensive because it's a safety hazard. Mrs. Minnis stated that she don’t think there was ever a discussion with Quincy Main Street or whether they were going to do the abatement or whether they were going to expect us to. She stated that regardless of what you decide to do with this property, at some point there needs to be some discussion on who’s going to be responsible for the abatement with whoever wants it, or who we give it to or sell it to. Mr. Frost stated that he knows that Quincy Main Street came in and did a presentation and asked for the property, but we have to give other people a chance if they would like to bid on the property as well. He stated that we cannot just pick and choose someone if other people put their interest in and may want the property. Attorney Minnis stated that the law gives the Board a great deal of flexibility. She stated that from a public interest point of view, in my opinion, the better way to do it would be to allow multiple entities to express interest in the property instead of dealing only with one entity. She stated that she knows for some people that's not popular, but it is a public interest thing. She stated that because the Board is in the process of hiring a realtor to handle other property, this could be a very special project for the realtor to try to see what he or she can get done with this property. She stated that if you did not want to go through the realtor, you could go through the process of advertising, allowing people, whoever's interested, to come in and make presentations to the Board. She stated that based on the information you get, you decide what's in the best interest of the public and the best interests of the Board and select an entity from there. She stated that this would give everyone a fair chance to make their presentation. Mr. McMillan stated that we are in a workshop we can’t vote on it.

Mr. Frost stated that he was concerned about the possibility of the 2% and 3% fund balance. He stated that we will begin to look at our way of spending to get us where we need to be.

Ms. Hannigon stated that continuing the conversation on GEMS. She stated that the suggestion about advertising that property itself, she was looking through the RFP, RFQ for the realtor and I thought when we discussed and voted on that, all of the properties were going to be managed by that individual. She wanted to know why spend additional money to take on a separate project when we were planning for that individual to get all of these properties. She stated that she would think that a realtor would have the inside scoop and have some contacts that they could even reach out to as far as investors are concerned that could take this property off of our hands. She stated that she would not be open to starting another process separate and apart from what we've already decided on. She stated that based on the RFQ proposals are supposed to be open the middle of July. She stated that's a long way off considering how we voted to do this back in March. She stated that if her memory serves her correctly, when Quincy Main Street came before us, there was almost no discussion. She stated that yes, she did ask the question regarding their mention of the apartments. She stated that she was concerned that we're taking governmental property, donating it for someone’s personal gain. She stated that we never had a follow up discussion. She stated that they came before us several times and she recall saying, you know, why are we letting people just come and stand before us and talk and then we have nothing to give them back in return. She stated that we never did take things any further regarding whether or not this would be a good move for us. She stated that it's unfortunate that it now takes the collapse of a portion of the site for us to even be open to Quincy Main Street having the property. She stated that she was not in favor of us starting another whole separate process to address this property all by itself, when we're getting ready to pay someone to do something with all of our property. She stated that since the RFQ has been put out, can we pull that date back so it's not so far out considering how long we've been talking about this. She stated that she was interested in doing something sooner than later.

7. The workshop adjourned at 5:05 p.m.