

**AT A WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON JULY 2, 2013, AT 4:30 P.M., THE
FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS WERE HAD, VIZ:**

Present: Doug Croley, Chair-District 2
Eric Hinson, Vice-Chair, District 1
Gene Morgan (appeared by telephone)
Brenda Holt, District 4 (arrived late)
Sherrie Taylor, District 5 (arrived late)
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court
Robert Presnell, County Administrator
David Weiss, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

INTRODUCTION

Chair Croley called the workshop to order at 4:34 p.m. and then turned the meeting over to Richard Stewart.

PRIVATIZATION OF THE GADSDEN COUNTY PROBATION DIVISION

Richard Stewart, President/Co-Founder, Florida Probation Service, LLC, appeared before the Board and introduced his staff and gave a brief overview of their company and services. He stated they currently handle probation services for Bay and Franklin Counties.

Commissioner Holt appeared at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan telephoned in at this juncture of the meeting.

Mr. Stewart informed the Board that his company provided total comprehensive case management solutions for Courts by providing a variety of options depending on the current needs of Gadsden County and listed what some of the solutions were.

Commissioner Taylor appeared at this juncture of the meeting.

He said that they monitor every aspect of probation through a software system called Probation Surveillance, which was developed specifically to assist in the monitoring of probationers. He informed the Board that they follow the guidelines of Florida Statutes 948, which is misdemeanor probation. He also told them they had met with the County Judge on two occasions and she was onboard with this service.

Harold Bazzel, Vice President/Co-Founder, appeared before the Board and stated he understood the number crunching and believed this was a good fit for the County and would save money for the County. He explained that what Gadsden County was doing was exactly what Bay County had done eight years ago. He said there had been a private probation company that had been their provider for over 20 years and in looking over their collections, they realized the collections were poor and it was costing the county a lot of money and they were looking at ways to improve. He explained one thing they did when Probation Services took over Bay County was interview every employee and hired some of the employees but with

their software system they did not need the same number of employees as were employed.

COMMISSIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Commissioner Taylor asked if someone was present from the Probation Office to answer questions and asked what would happen to the current employees. Mr. Presnell stated Martha Chancey was present and had run the office for a number of years.

Mr. Bazzel stated they would do everything possible to keep all current employees.

Commissioner Taylor asked if she could address some questions to Mrs. Chancey.

Martha Chancey, Supervisor with Gadsden County Probation, stepped to the podium. She explained that while they didn't have the high-tech equipment that the company had, they pretty much had everything else. Mrs. Chancey stated if it were only about the money, probation services was the way to go but if it was about Gadsden County residents, this would not be the way to go.

Commissioner Holt said Mrs. Chancey had commented that the technology was not there and asked had she looked to see what it would take to get the technology there.

Mrs. Chancey said she had asked several years ago about upgrading and was told it would cost several thousands of dollars. Commissioner Holt asked her what their percentage of collections was and Mrs. Chancey stated at about 37.6116%. She asked if they helped clients with job searches. Mrs. Chancey said if they were unemployed, they take a job search, go out and try to find a job.

Commissioner Holt asked what would help get the collections up and Mrs. Chancey said she did not know how to answer that because there were so many unemployed in the County and with the bad economy, they did not have the money to pay.

Commissioner Holt asked how many employees were in the Department and Mrs. Chancey stated there were five. She asked Clerk Thomas if he had any concerns as far as paperwork, collections, signing people up, etc. Clerk Thomas stated it was a county department and He did not get involved with that, that they were receipting the court costs and court fines and probation fees, but did not get involved with anything else generally.

She asked Mr. Stewart how they were able to get the collections up and he attributed it to their software system because it enabled them to look at the Defendant, track his record of paying and try to help him.

Commissioner Croley stated some of his questions had and had not been covered. He asked Mr. Presnell if it was his opinion if they contracted with FPS, the savings would be \$140,000 at a minimum. He asked Mr. Stewart how many officers would be involved to replace the current five employees and he responded three. Mr. Presnell explained they had one position that one of the employees would be moved into so one employee would lose their position if not moved into another position.

Mr. Stewart responded the worst county he had was collecting .93¢ on the dollar.

Chair Croley stated this should be placed on the agenda for a more formal comparison of the different elements involved and there was a due diligence on behalf of the taxpayers' money.

Commissioner Taylor asked if “our office” could come up with a way to improve the collection percentage because she was mindful when a person was unemployed, it hurt the County. She stated the Chairman was correct that fiscally, this was probably the proper way to go, but she knew what it would do to a County to put five people out as unemployed and asked that they look into what software was available to help increase the percentage of collections.

Commissioner Morgan asked the term of agreement and Mr. Stewart stated Bay County was 36 months and thought it was the same for Franklin County.

Commissioner Hinson asked the cost of inmate in jail a day and Mr. Presnell said it runs approximately \$53.00/day.

Mr. Stewart said they did different programs in different counties and mentioned the different programs that were offered.

Commissioner Taylor said RFP was good, want she asked that they look at what software was out there to assist in upping the collections for current department.

Chair Croley stated it was not his role to be placing the self-interest of BOCC employees above the county as a whole and wanted to see a competitive RFP regarding this.

Commissioner Holt said Mrs. Chancey had asked for help and technology several years ago, why RFP without looking at what could be done to make things more efficient.

Commissioner Taylor stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Hinson said he had spoken with the Judge several times and added that FPS gave a great presentation but started thinking, with this situation, there needed to do more research regarding this and would like to have more research and see what could be done to help the departments. He stated he had been an elected official for almost nine years and if it was something you did not understand, just say no until you have all the answers needed.

Commissioner Taylor returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Hinson said as of today, he was against it and would like to review this in one year.

Mr. Presnell said if they were not going to look at this at this time, they needed to look at implementing some of the things to provide better efficiency in the county department and re-address this next year.

Chair Croley said for the record, it didn't make sense if the Board wouldn't consider \$140,000/year savings to the taxpayers.

Commissioner Morgan stated he has heard about this from other counties and thought it would be better for our county probation office and that this was something that the County could learn from, that this was an opportunity to safeguard taxpayers' money and he supported this. He added that it

was important to find every avenue they possibly could because revenues were decreasing and there was a need to find avenues to increase that.

Commissioner Holt stated she had no problem in looking at this after seeing what the County could do, but it was not an emergency to be decided today.

Chair Croley said he was leaving the workshop with the understanding that the Commissioners wished to not do anything at this time.

Commissioner Holt said that was not true, she wanted directions to the Administrator for the staff to look at that department and have things done to assist the department.

Mr. Presnell stated he understood the commissioners wanted the existing probation office to be looked at to make that department more efficient and to re-evaluate this at the next budget cycle.

Commissioner Holt stated she would like to see what would happen if the software was gotten to help the department to better improve the collections.

ADJOURNMENT

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD, THE CHAIR DECLARED THE MEETING
ADJOURNED AT 5:35 P.M.**

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**DOUGLAS M. CROLEY, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

**Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk for
NICHOLAS THOMAS, CLERK**