

## Minutes

### Present: County

**Sherrie Taylor, Sherrie Taylor, Chair, District 5**

**Eric Hinson, Vice Chair, District 1**

**Brenda A. Holt, District 4**

**Dr. Anthony "Dr. V" Viegbesie, District 2**

**Gene Morgan, District 3**

**Robert Presnell, County Administrator**

**David Weiss, County Attorney**

**Beth Kirkland, GCDC**

**Beryl H. Wood, Deputy Clerk**

### **4:00 PM Welcome**

**Jim McShane, Chairman, GCDC**  
**Sherrie Taylor, Chair, BOCC**

Mr. McShane welcomed everyone to what he calls a World Café. He gave overview of program. He then shared a video testimonial.

Chair Taylor welcomed everyone.

At this juncture they adjourned to 3 different tables for dialogue. This portion will be transcribed by the recorders of each table and provided to the Deputy Clerk to be included in the official minutes.

### **4:10 PM Roundtable Format Overview**

**Jim McShane**

*Conversations are based on the principles and format developed by the World Café, a global movement to support conversations that matter in corporate, government, and community settings around the world.*

### **4:15 Table Topics (switch tables every 10 minutes; total of 3 rotations)**

1. Allow opportunities for elected officials and community to understand Gadsden County.
  - Unique and positive mission statement
  - Who we are and what we have to offer, such as Freight Logistics Zone, being near a major airport and state government
2. Training & Education
  - Focus on soft skills early in education process with redundancies

- Fluid offerings of trainings to match current demands

### 3. Infrastructure and Sites

- Encourage private development
- Obtain grants

## **4:50 Group Discussion**

“What does economic development success look like?”

Below is the information provided to the deputy clerk by the scribes of each table?

### **Scribe - Jill**

#### **Unique and positive mission statement**

- What is unique about Gadsden County?
- Take our rich history (founding principles) and bring it to a contemporary platform from which younger generations can learn;
- Emphasize the culture and history of our community;
- Understanding the community from building strong relationships;
- Heritage

#### **Training & Education**

- How do we align the workforce needs of our community? Are we filling the jobs we need to fill right now? What is our biggest challenge for training and education in Gadsden County;
- Commitment from the residents (e.g. showing up for interviews, nefarious behavior, show up for work – leave by lunch). Choices of utilizing government assistance – following a learned behavior established through family, friends, peers, etc.;
- Investment in education needs improvement;
- Funds are limited;
- Teacher salaries are not attractive enough to sustain engaged educators;
- Lack of learning high work ethic and soft skills at an early age (reading, writing, in-person communication)
- Utilizing adult education opportunities;
- Transportation is a challenge amongst the municipalities

#### **Infrastructure and Sites**

- What ideas do you have to encourage private development and obtaining grants?
- Commit to developing training resources to provide businesses qualified, trained prospective employees;
- Bring individual industry leaders together to understand their needs;
- Creating certainty in our government system – sustain predictable outcomes;
- Ideas generated from businesses should be discussed – focus on what government can do to assist with growth opportunities;

- County needs to invest in itself – what are the next generation opportunities? Look forward to the future.

### **Scribe – Beth Kirkland**

#### **▪ Unique and positive mission statement**

- agricultural base county
- near the capital of Florida
- Tri-state area
- rail, interstate exchanges
- largest employer pulls from 7 different counties -financially sound
- great Chair -near three major universities plus the BEST community
- College
- 1.6 hours of the coast
- no state income tax
- two quality health care facilities
- 20 minutes from the capital of Florida -county with six
- municipalities - unique for a rural county -working well together;
- managers do not meet as often because they are together thru GCDC and
- other avenues; statewide meetings are positive about Gadsden County
- 180 degrees from dialogue before
- GCDC had no guidance at the beginning without trained staff -getting
- involved with railroads, engineers, developers, realtors -working with
- four counties on the FLZ from here to the coast -outdoor recreation;
- waterways -fairly adequate utilities available via the municipalities

#### **▪ Biggest challenge for training & education**

- Understanding the market; are we training for the wrong thing?
- We are changing the narrative; asking the colleagues to update the
- MPA programs to attract more young people to the profession - train for
- Truck drivers -train for diesel mechanics -what are the recruiting
- Requirements for the FSF program; how can it be widespread and
- Successful -vacancies for nurses -fill vacant school facilities
- Quickly -Chattahoochee looking at community center; recreational center - should look at putting businesses in the school -program will have a curriculum of courses; push same material in five days a week 1.33 hours five days a week, which allows for completing a class in 6 or 8 weeks TCC is shutting down Lively.

- **Ideas to encourage private development and obtain grants**
- County has a good incentive package
- Needs more promotion
- private grants often require match
- local Governments are good at getting state and federal grants for
- infrastructure -private developers have to meet credit requirements,
- SBA - good way to jumpstart a business; World War I; JP Morgan came with an idea - got a \$500 million bond; America found a way to benefit financially from the war.
- 1 cent sales tax for the school board so that the developers can
- refurbish the schools as needed - Leon County model - puts people to
- Work in the construction industry; hardware stores would benefit -go outside the county with your appeals and advertising -have the finest of webpage's that include property inventories that show things like.
- How much is developable
- What are the taxes
- What utilities are available and what are their capabilities - is there adequate fire protection? How robust is the wastewater system?

### **What does economic development success look like?**

#### **Commissioner Holt**

- low unemployment
- EPA respected
- good school system
- good healthcare
- good living conditions
- getting zoning right
- Madison Co offers two free years of college

#### **Commissioner Hinson**

- Strengthen transportation options
- more banks
- clean water
- clean air
- liked Holt comments
- water park
- more manufacturing companies with higher wages - 400+ jobs with good
- benefits - create a great environment -focus or aim on what we see ourselves as - we seem to be all over the place - Plant City makes you think of Strawberries -Market things like Pat Thomas State Park and River Landing in Chatt have your own community college in your County.

**Commissioner Morgan**

- better job of branding ourselves as a rural Ag County; Rivers, Lakes,
- make us a destination even if not final destination; great place to
- stop on the way to coast
- all generations contribute to live work play -not all growth is good
- growth -rural counties it is harder to accept change -the interstate
- changed small town American -be in a position to want people to learn
- more about locating here -make the short list more often

**Commissioner Dr. Viegbesie**

- metrics not all ideology
- provide a living wage
- more recreation to increase quality of life -reverse the brain drain
- assimilate diverse culture which comes with growth
- citizens to have a feeling of ownership and pride in the path the community is taking

**Commissioner Taylor**

- three categories
- 1)Skilled workforce so employers see it as an advancement -focus more on what industry wants with training so companies will hire from within.
- 2)Reduce the cost of doing business; change the comp plan; that will be an incentive - compare Leon to Gadsden 3)resources that businesses want -we had dollars at once; offer companies free land; culture shift in mindset of residents on the value of business (story of workers who stole from business)

**Scribe – Desiree/ Jim McShane, Chair, GCDC**

After welcoming everyone to the table, we moved into a round-robin approach to answering some key open-ended questions. At each table, and there were three, notes were taken and then conveyed at the end of the meeting with the County Commissioners. This was based on a World Café™ conversation that encourages frank and open discussion.

1. The first question that was asked of all three tables was: what are the unique and positive statements one can say about Gadsden County?

Some of the answers from the notes are following:

Small town, countryside, close proximity to Tallahassee, good for business, everybody knows one another, a beautiful area, great weather, small rural atmosphere, amenities close by in Tallahassee and Bainbridge, great outdoor activities, hunting, fishing, people are here by choice. Additional comments were: the culture and the history and the stability of the people, lots of organizations that really help, affordable housing, homegrown, not typically a hurricane target, started with Coca-Cola, and good business atmosphere.

2. The second question was focused on soft skills early education and training offerings to meet the current demand.

Some of the comments were as follows: We have skilled employees, many lack communication skills, customer service skills, and basic skills, there is a lack of knowledge of navigating computers, need a better work ethic, no coordinated efforts from within the community to address these needs, need to fund a balance between training and job availability, need buy-in from the community teachers counselors and parents, it's a different culture, need discipline, self-control, past had higher expectations, had to work, go to school and get good grades, classism is a big problem, dress code in dressing properly for a job seems to be lacking, need more certifications, work more closely with the school system, and build community awareness of the opportunities in Gadsden County.

3. The final question was opening the discussion on encouraging private development and obtaining grants for infrastructure and sites to grow Gadsden County. Some of the comments were: transportation is an issue in this county, living wage is a challenge, how do we reverse the brain drain, train the community to assimilate diverse culture, citizens feeling of ownership, and improving the quality of life.

Some of the suggestions were building incentives for new businesses, 6 to 8 months to get going something to entice businesses to start, plan for future developments, everyone needs to work together as a team, almost all sites are green sites very few commercial buildings at strategic sites, change to commercial but don't change taxes-grandfather current residence, reduce the cost of doing business in Gadsden County, streamline our processes in order to speed up the process for businesses to get permits, make sure our resources are aligned with the needs and wants of the businesses, focus on branding as rural County, good place to retire, we need more good paying jobs, we need to attract more manufacturing companies, we need to lower our unemployment rate, we need to come together and target the types of industries that are County wants and needs to thrive.

**\*Final Summary from each of the Commissioners**

**Commissioner Holt**

- Low Unemployment
- DEP – Regulations
- School System
- Healthcare
- Living Conditions

**Commissioner Hinson**

- Banks
- Clean water, clean air
- Water parks
- More manufacturing companies to bring more jobs
- More focus, Market what we need for Gadsden
- Functioning Community College
- Transportation

**Commissioner Morgan**

- Branding - agriculture county
- Destination
- Take pride in County and make it show (all growth is not good growth)

**Commissioner Dr. Viegbesie**

- Measurable Elements
- Leading Wage Employment opportunities
- Recreational activities
- How do we reverse the brain drain
- How do we get community assimilate of diverse culture
- Citizens to have pride in community

**Commissioner Taylor**

- Skilled workforce
- Professional development on what industries are looking for (train from within)
- Reduce cost of doing business in the county (Comp Plan should be revised)
- Resources that business need and want
- Mindset needs to be developed

**Public Comment**

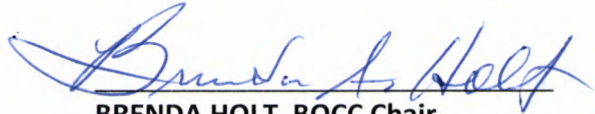
- Mr. Byron Spires from Havana Herald spoke of a couple whom he met while worshipping and they complimented Quincy and the entire County on its uniqueness and its beauty.
- Commissioner Holt inquired where the certified sites zoned.
- Mr. Antonio Jefferson spoke of the fulltime presence of unity throughout County.
- Chair Taylor said this was great dialogue and asked if it had a budgetary impact. She noted they are about to start the budget process and it can be addressed then. She thanked everyone for their attendance.

**Adjournment**


There being no other business to come before the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA



  
BRENDA HOLT, BOCC Chair

ATTEST:

  
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Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court  
Gadsden County, Florida