

**AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN  
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON FEBRUARY 12, 2019 AT 4:30  
P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:**       **Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2**  
                  **Sherrie Taylor, Vice Chair, District 5**  
                  **Eric Hinson, District 2**  
                  **Gene Morgan, District 3-Absent**  
                  **Brenda Holt, District 4**  
                  **Dee Jackson, Interim County Administrator**  
                  **David Weiss, County Attorney**  
                  **Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk**

**INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Viegbesie called the Workshop to Order at 4:32 p.m. Mr. Willie Scott gave the Invocation and then Chair Viegbesie led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**1. Welcome**

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone to the Workshop and said it was to discuss how they would handle the situation of our Seniors County-wide and come up with an action plan.

He advised everyone that Commissioner Morgan would not be in attendance as he was out of town.

**Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items**

Mrs. Jackson said this was for anyone that wished to speak on any Non-Agenda Items.

Chair Viegbesie asked if there were any seniors that wished to speak before they started with the workshop.

**Willie Scott, 26 Shaw Lane, Quincy, FL** appeared and said he was a member of the Gadsden Senior Citizens services since 1998. He said he had been working with the Seniors since then and at one time sat on the Board. He also said one time the County had to run the Senior Center because they had issues. He said he had been complaining for many years. He said Seniors that go on trips to different places have to pay money out of their pocket and he did not like that and has told the County Commission it was not right. He said they started a fund among themselves to have money to be able to go to movies, etc. He said there were a Director and people that come to the Center that work for them and would stay a little while and then are gone and was unsure of what the issue was. He said if the County Commissioners don't get things right at the Senior Citizens Center, they are going to strike and stop going to the Center and let the County solve the problem.

Chair Viegbesie said he could almost assure them by the end of this meeting, the situation will be on the right path.

**Elizabeth Cosby, 33 Church Street, Apartment 20, Gretna, FL** appeared. She said she was an

employee of Gadsden Senior Services and was managing the Chattahoochee Center and there was a lot of ways that the Chattahoochee seniors were neglected and mistreated. She said they wanted to come to the Quincy Center and participate and was denied a ride because if there were no more than two seniors, they were not allowed to come. She also said she was harassed by the Director when she was called at her home after work and she asked that she not be considered a part of the direct service work any longer.

**Ozzie Williams, 173 Serenity Lane, Quincy, FL** appeared and said she was terminated because she was told she did not have the experience to do what she was told to do and had worked there several years.

**Gladys Hinson, 265 Hayward Dupont Road, Midway, FL**, appeared and said she was very unhappy at the Senior Center. She said Ms. Hart was asked to come over. She was questioned about the meals and said there was a fully equipped kitchen and asked why they couldn't have hot meals like other senior centers do. She said her response was (inaudible). She said when they have a meeting; her staff feels necessary to watch them and makes them feel they are "on a chain gang or on a plantation". She said she was very upset about what go on down there and nobody comes to see about them.

Chair Viegbesie said these were the types of things they want to work on and are going to resolve this. He said he had received numerous anonymous letters that he was not going to read into record.

## **2. Discussion on Improving Services to the Senior Citizens of Gadsden County**

He said the floor was open to see what they could do to make the lives of the seniors better.

Commissioner Hinson said when this meeting was scheduled he had reservations about coming, today was his Mom's birthday and this was too important and what he heard today was touching. He said this was embarrassing. He said the County gives money to the Gadsden Senior Services and to him that money should be used to take them to Panama City. He felt if they don't comply, the County should take the building and they can go wherever, cut the relationship and the Board of County Commissioners would not be a part of it.

Commissioner Holt said to Ms. Cosby, Ms. Williams and Mr. Scott, those were very brave statements. She said she wanted to put some numbers with the activities. She said they could not fix anything until they went to the documentation and moved numbers to do what they needed to do.

Chair Viegbesie then recognized Berta Kemp. She said she was puzzled because they were not informed this meeting was to discuss complaints but thought it was concerning the funding that was allocated for the Gadsden Senior Services was going to be dedicated for activities for the Seniors only. She felt this should have been handled totally different from how they were being confronted today, unaware of what was being said. She said the Gadsden Senior Center has an office in Quincy and a satellite office in Chattahoochee. She also said a lot of things go on in Chattahoochee that had nothing to do with the Gadsden Senior Services, the City did a lot there, not Gadsden Senior Services. Chair Viegbesie asked the Administrator when the workshop was scheduled was it scheduled for a discussion of the issues with the Seniors and Ms. Kemp said no. Mrs. Jackson said when she met with Ms. Kemp, Ms. Hart and Mr. Dupont, they did discuss having

a meeting to discuss this part however, this was a public meeting, it was an advertised meeting and the citizens have the right to appear and speak. Chair Viegbesie said he had also received a lot of complaints from across the County.

He acknowledged the presence of Lisa Bretz, MSW, Executive Director Area Agency on Aging.

Chair Viegbesie said he went to the Center pretty regularly and did not think there was a senior there that he had not met or did not know. He added that he would like to see every activity that had to do with the Seniors come directly under the Board of County Commissioners and let them hold someone accountable for the activities that were provided to the seniors across the entire County. He added that he felt the different groups were fragmented. He said he knew the buildings in Quincy and Chattahoochee belonged to the County. He suggested they do an inventory of the facilities and see if have anywhere can have in different municipalities. He said he understood the Seniors were given a Code of Conduct and it was ludicrous to do that to the Seniors.

Ms. Kemp said he made his statement but all the complaints seem to be coming from a certain program. She said the congregant meals people that come out there are the able-bodied and that was not the main program for the Gadsden County Senior Services. She said they have seniors that are shut-ins and need care in their home. She said Ms. Bretz was there but not to defend them; she knows the programs and what was the most important as to what should be served and she did not know if they needed to sit down and have a workshop so they would know what their services were and what needs they were needing with the Seniors. She said the most important part to her was not about who owned the building but the concerns of the seniors should be the concern of the County anyway and should be playing a big part in making sure the seniors were taken care of. She said the could not even afford the transportation they needed to bring the seniors in because the vans they had have to go out on roads and A-1 is receiving their money because of the type of roads they had to travel to pick up the seniors and bring them in. She said if there was a senior so concerned about going to the movies and going out to eat, that was recreation. She said their main concern was about the welfare and care of the seniors and the services they provided. She said the concerns and complaints they were hearing today came from the congregant site in Quincy. She said Chattahoochee was fortunate enough to have a City that stepped up to the plate to assist them. She said it cost a large amount of money to run the vans and because they made a decision in order for them to go to Chattahoochee and pick up and go back and forth, there would have to be another method and was not profitable to do that. She said the concern with employment, positions are eliminated and other positions were sat up. She said she had not heard any concerning the direct service workers and how they were providing meals and taking care of them; all she was hearing was from the congregant meals, the able-bodied people.

Commissioner Holt asked how the money from Elder Care was broken up and being used. She asked to hear from Ms. Bretz to see how the money was broken up.

Chair Viegbesie said Commissioner Taylor was sitting quietly and asked if there was anything she wanted to share.

She said at times she sits back and listens before she formulates her thoughts. She said they need to come up with a plan that would work. She said the majority of money out there for Gadsden

County Senior Services was not being pulled down. What disturbed her most was to hear complaints and not be able to do anything about it. She said she heard about the Code of Conduct and felt that should have had input from the Seniors. She said she was kicked out from being the liaison with the Seniors because she got made at the fact that their money was going to different agencies in other counties and it was legal. She said the money had to be spent and not sent back to the State. She said they could receive \$64,000 for the Florida services under the Older Americans Act and right now they had \$49,000 (inaudible). She said they could get \$168,000 and at the end of the year they only spent about \$94,000 and when the money was left over it went to other counties. She said the letter that was sent to them talked about how the \$60,000 was being used as leverage because it has to be matched and that was incorrect. She said there used to be 60 plus seniors that came every day and now there was only about 20.

Ms. Bretz said they could not do anything about funds because they were State and Federal funds. She said she could provide them with general budget numbers but if they wanted to see how the dollars were being appropriated (inaudible). Commissioner Holt said she was where she wanted her to be because they were getting ready to do the Legislative session. Ms. Bretz suggested they investigate options to start a media campaign.

Mrs. Jackson said when she met with Ms. Kemp, Jo Ann Hart and Sterling Dupont, the way she got the meeting was holding their match as leverage. She said in that meeting, she knew there were concerns that were happening at the Chattahoochee location as well. She said she has received calls from the then Interim City Manager and from Commissioners who had the same complaints.

Chair Viegbesie said they did not come today to point fingers but to find solutions. He asked when was the last time elections were held and was told today at their annual meeting. He asked if there were term limits on the positions and was told yes. He said he can separate the position from the person. He said he hoped with the conversation that was had here, it was not taken personally.

Commissioner Holt felt they may have been a little harsh, because there are Board members that volunteer and may have never gave them what was included in their responsibilities as a volunteer. She said she did not think they ever gave them what was included in being a volunteer and had not heard from any of the other Board members and would like to.

Chair Viegbesie asked members of Gadsden Senior Services for their input.

Berta Kemp said from hearing everything, she felt they were not getting all the information they need. She said she knew there were By-laws that were done in 2012 and the current By-laws were revised in 2018. She said they met often with Mr. Robert Presnell, he gathered information, and they met with different ones. She said in the past the Board was in the red and since this board has come onboard, they have never operated in the red. She said if there was information the BOCC needed, they should have asked for it. She said a lot of the information had been previously sent. She said they met here before Mr. Presnell left. She said they have tried to do fundraisers and contacted every Pastor in the County, mailed out letters and has had meetings with Pastors and some came. She said they did not have the money to hire a PR and was doing what they could themselves. She said they needed to lay everything on the table and see where they go from here.

Sterling Dupont said he had been on the Board a few years and one of the difficulties they were

having was getting people to serve on the Board. He said it would be great if they came up with some way to have a workshop so they could have people understand the program, costs of everything because they were not getting the support they needed. He suggested they set up a workshop so the BOCC could fully understand what they are doing. He said the biggest thing they were trying to do is help everyone and it was hard to do. He said to be careful when they start talking about programs and money, because the money was not going into anyone's pocket except the ones that needed it and their job was to try to make sure they help ones that can't do for themselves.

Commissioner Taylor asked who the President was now. Ms. Kemp said they elected a Board of Directors today but because there were Board members that could not be there, they received a Resignation from one in writing today, it was the decision of the Board to continue the election at the next meeting, which would be held March 19th. She said the election of the Officers within that Board would be done at that time. Commissioner Taylor said they need to find an avenue to pull down the funding so no-one goes without. She said she will ask that this gets on the Agenda and hopes the \$60,000 is earmarked specifically to do what the Seniors want to do at the center. She said she was leery to do anything with the building because the ones that would be hurt the most was the ones that were looking for a place to be.

Commissioner Holt said do a workshop and they needed to follow-up from this one anyway. The other thing was the building was built for the seniors and no-one else, and that should stay there. She said with the money, if they save \$60,000 for activities, they needed to remember there were homebound seniors too.

Commissioner Hinson said he did not think it was a funding issue; it was how they were treated.

Chair Viegbesie said have begun to have dialogue he never thought they would be able to have and they would schedule another meeting. He said he would not condone anyone that mistreats seniors, whether in this country or anywhere else.

Commissioner Hinson said he believed they needed to meet at a place where they could sit down and eat at the same time they were discussing this. He said maybe they could go to Creek Entertainment or someplace big enough to meet.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners  
February 12, 2019-BOCC/Gadsden Senior Citizens Workshop

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

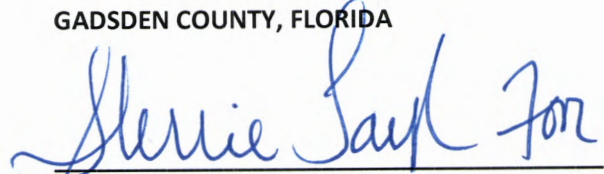
**THERE BEING NOTHING MORE TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, THE WORKSHOP WAS ADJOURNED AT 6:05 P.M.**



ATTEST:

  
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NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA



ANTHONY O. VIEGBESIE, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners