

**AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MARCH 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, County Administrator**  
                  **David Weiss, County Attorney**  
                  **Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk**

**Welcome**

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone to the workshop held on behalf of the Gadsden County Senior Citizens. He noted that the meeting was a continuation of the workshop held in February.

He stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the following:

- Ways to improve the quality of services for senior citizens;
- Allegations of disrespect shown by some staff to the seniors and other staff members;
- Allegations by seniors and staff of disregard and abusive treatment;
- Perception of adverse impact on the clientele resulting from the quality of services being rendered;
- Ways to improve the relationship between the clientele and Senior Center;
- Establish the responsibility of each party to help resolve the issues for the sake of the citizens being served;
- Gadsden Senior Center should hold its employees accountable.
- Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) must ensure the safety and the quality of life of the citizens of Gadsden County.
- In fulfilling that responsibility, the BOCC must look into the quality of the services and why the citizens feel the way they do.
- The Board of Directors has the responsibility of determining reasons for high staff turnover, funding issues, and expenditures.

Chair Viegbesie summarized his remarks by saying, “We will continue doing what is in our authority to ensure that the seniors receive respect, regard, and honor.

**INVOCATION**

Reverend Shirlean Thomas of Stewart Temple AME Church gave the Invocation.

*Commissioner Hinson arrived at 4:48 p.m.*

**Citizens Comments**

Chair Viegbesie recognized the following people for comments to the Board of County Commissioners:

**Willie Scott, 26 Shaw Lane, Quincy, FL –**

Mr. Scott gave a brief overview of his experience with the Senior Citizens Center, which began in 1998. He then called for the resignation of some of the Senior Citizens Center, Inc. Board of Directors (whose terms had expired) and allow Area Agency on Aging to step in to run the programs for the benefit of those it is intended to serve.

*Commissioner Holt arrived at 4:57 p.m.*

**Inez Frances Robinson**

Ms. Robinson said that she had been attending the center since 1990. She reported that she had witnessed seniors and staff members crying because of the way the directors were treating them. She requested the dismissal of Diane Carlton and Jo Hart and for Area Agency on Aging assume management.

Commissioner Viegbesie took a moment for a personal privilege to comment on the complaints alleged by the former speakers. He clarified that it was not the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to run the affairs of the Senior Citizens Center. However, it was incumbent on them to provide for the well being and safety of the citizens of Gadsden County of which the senior citizens comprise a large portion. In keeping with that responsibility, he stated that the BOCC was willing to explore the issues that brought the seniors to this point and to help guide the parties to a solution. He added that the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. (GSSI) Board of Directors is responsible for holding employees accountable for their behavior.

He then requested that the people who address the BOCC to state their issue without calling names.

**Lori Bouie, 816 Hardin Street, Quincy, FL**

Ms. Bouie's statements included the following points:

- She once served on the Senior Citizens, Inc. Board of Directors and was familiar with the responsibilities associated with it.
- She first learned of the recent issues when the seniors were asked to leave the premises as they staged a protest outside the Gadsden Senior Center.
- The safety of the protesting seniors was in jeopardy once they were told to leave premises because they were prepared to move into the street to make their voices heard. The weather was also very cold.
- As soon as she learned of what was happening, she shared her concerns with others.
- The Seniors had the right to voice their opinions;
  - they should have been heard by the Board of Directors short of telling their story on film over the local television stations;
  - the Seniors have been offended;
  - It was a sad day when the seniors had to ask the BOCC to intervene and hear their

concerns.

She urged all parties to “come to the table” to resolve the matter.

**Jessie Albert Conway, 50 Eagle Drive, Quincy, FL**

**Mr. Conway made the following points:**

- He is a member of the Senior Center;
- He heard about the protests from the television news;
- He knew of some staff accusations about some of the seniors that are not true. He asked to have any record of those accusations corrected.

He then addressed Ms. Bretz and asked if she was going to do anything.

There was some unruliness at this juncture of the meeting, and the chair called for order.

Chair Viegbesie thanked Mr. Conway for his remarks and responded by saying, “Ladies and gentlemen, this is what is going to happen here today. We are here to have a dialogue. You do not have to agree with what everyone says, but, I will tell you what my mother told us when we were growing up. “Opinions are like (inaudible), and everybody has one.” ...Everyone can express their opinions in this conversation, and we hope that it will lead us to a solution.

When the finger is pointed at me or to the County Commission, they are pointing to me as the commissioner, not the real Anthony. So, I try to keep them separate. For that reason, when it is time to go home after the meeting, I am going to shake his hand. As soon as I can do that, I can leave in peace. “

**Sonya Hines-Hall, 3070 Bainbridge Highway, Quincy, FL**

- She said that on several occasions, she had witnessed disabled seniors with walkers or those who could not walk as fast as others were not allowed to participate on trips. She took issue with it. “If the money comes from the federal government, and it is for a directed activity for the seniors (inaudible) grant for the seniors, they should not exclude the disabled seniors.”
- She told of an incident when she had to close her shop and drive to Tallahassee to a theater to walk her uncle down the darkened aisle of the theater even though five paid staff members were with them.
- She told of other festivals to which her uncle was denied participation with other seniors because of his limitations. (Mule Day and the Seafood Festival )
- She asked, “What is happening that the staff is so busy on a paid trip that you can’t break up (inaudible)or however you split it up and do your job? It doesn’t make any sense that the families are paying for these seniors to go on trips and not have to miss a day of work.
- She expresses concern that the staff is discriminating against the disabled seniors.

**Reverend Eddie Allen, 2772 Mt. Pleasant Road, Quincy, FL**

Rev. Allen addressed the board, saying he represented the seniors who are trying to work out a solution. He reported that the seniors had drafted a Senior Citizens Bill of Rights, which spelled

out the kind of treatment of they (the seniors) want. ( Each commissioner received a copy before this meeting.) He asked for a discussion of it.

Chair Viegbesie acknowledged receipt of the Senior Citizens Bill of Rights. He stated that it was explicit, easy to understand, and put together well. He commended those who composed the document. He said that the BOCC is reviewing it. He expressed his hope that the bill of rights would become a part of whatever solution results from the ongoing conversation.

**Sam Palmer, 1225 Berry Street, Quincy, FL**

Mr. Palmer made a plea to the commissioners to continue having workshops until there is a resolution. He supported the position that the protesting seniors had taken and expressed his sadness at the fact they had to resort to protesting in the street. He referenced the by-laws of Senior Citizens, Inc. He stated the following:

- The problems will return unless the board finds an appropriate and timely resolution.
- The seniors should be empowered to resolve matters through an oversight committee to eliminate the need to protest in the street;

**Pastor Charles Morris, 23209 Blue Star Highway, Quincy, FL**

Pastor Morris recalled a saying he remembered from the Moms Mabley Show when he was young, "If you do the same thing, the same way, you will get the same results."

He reported the following facts:

- He was a member of the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. Board of Directors for nine months and served as a chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee.
- The board of directors is violating its own rules because some of the members continue to perform leadership roles even though their appointment is expired.
- While he served as chairman of the personnel subcommittee, they needed an executive director. After advertising the position over a wide area, they received 50 applications. They ultimately narrowed down the applications to 20 and held 15 interviews and further narrowed down the applicants to only three people. Two of the applicants were ideal candidates for program services administrator. The personnel subcommittee took the recommendations to the board of directors. The board of directors did not take the recommendation to interview the three finalist applicants. He resigned after the incident because it seemed that the board had behaved unethically and he could no longer be a party to it.

He summarized his remarks by saying that he believed the major problem is that there is a disconnect between the board of directors and the people they are serving.

He supported Mr. Scott's call to protest and requested the resignation of the entire board of directors.

**Emma Gray, 360 Frank Jackson Road, Quincy, FL**

Ms. Gray sang a song.

**Alice Williams, 188 Martin Street, Quincy, FL**

Ms. Williams reported that she had been a part of the protest at the Senior Center to which the staff called the police because they claimed the seniors were disturbing the peace. She stated that it was the most disrespectful thing she had ever encountered.

**Helen Chapman, 225 River Road, Chattahoochee, FL**

Ms. Chapman said that she began attending the Quincy Center in 2018 and enjoyed it in the beginning. However, she began noticing changes, and she had observed that things that were not right. (Such as the servers were not wearing gloves when they served the food, and the workers were not treating the seniors respectfully.) She asked that all the staff treat the seniors with dignity and respect. She also asked that transportation be provided for those in Chattahoochee so they could participate in activities at the Quincy center.

Chair Viegbesie assured the seniors that a solution would be found “real, real, soon.”

An unidentified lady spoke, but, it was inaudible.

At the request of Rev. Morris, Rev. Eddie Allen read the Bill of Rights into the record.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**1. Overview of Programs and Services for Elders in Gadsden County**

Chair Viegbesie introduced Lisa Bretz, Area Agency on Aging.

She made the following statements:

- She met with the seniors on Friday, March 8, 2019, when she received their letter of complaint dated March 5.
- The seniors are not asking for anything unreasonable.
- She asked the board of directors if the staff had followed the complaint procedures and logged it in as a complaint and what was done immediately in response to the formal complaint.
- She expressed disappointment that during the meeting, several board members called out “The seniors protested. They were out in front of the building for two days. “

Yes, I understand that you scheduled a time for them to come and talk to you at a time that wasn't convenient for them. I don't care when the seniors told you; you did not make an immediate response to them and did not hear their complaints. “You had the controllability to hear your seniors concerns.”

- She voiced some concern about the building itself. If County decides they don't want the corporation to be in building anymore, that is their right, but it presented a challenge for Area Agency because she has no other building to offer the seniors to come to be served.

- She was disappointed that the board of directors is continually out of compliance with their by-laws.
- It was necessary for her to bring the matter to the attention of Representative Alexander, and he was also very concerned for the seniors.
- Her task now at hand is now, "To follow through with what the board of directors has done as far as the letter of complaint dated March 5th. They do have complaint procedures to follow, and they have written grievance procedures to follow. We are filing a complaint against the board of directors because they did not terminate anyone from the program. That is when we institute grievance procedures according to the contract, and I have provided you with a copy of it. They do have complaint procedures, and this is something about which the board of directors will have to speak with their staff. I don't know if the director has received a copy. If she has not, again, the board of directors should have provided her a copy so that she could do her due diligence."

"I have no power without my board of directors, so I can't decide today to go ahead and pull this contract from the corporation. That is not within my power. There has to be a breach of contract. Hearing your complaint is not a breach of contract. Not responding to the seniors to voice a complaint and trying to reach a reasonable resolution is a serious breach.

So, I have to go to my board of directors. I will not wait for the regular meeting at the end of the month. I will call my executive committee depending on how things end here today. The corporation had an opportunity to find a resolution. I don't want my hand to be held any closer to the fire. You need to resolve the issue, and I have been very clear about what our expectations are. "

Chair Viegbesie remarked that the Board of County Commissioners role at this point is merely facilitating a meeting so that Senior Citizens, Inc. can attempt a resolution to the issue at hand. He added that he wanted a resolution to the problem at this meeting and he wanted the services restored.

Upon being questioned by an unidentified gentleman, Ms. Bretz stated that she would find an emergency provider so services could continue for the seniors in the event, it is necessary to pull the funding from the corporation.

Commissioner Holt recalled that the Board of County Commissioners had stepped in on another occasion and operated the center until adequate staff was found. She asked Ms. Bratz what qualifications are required for another non-profit to run the center.

Ms. Bratz replied that she provided the previous RFP material to the county administrator earlier in the afternoon.

Commissioner Holt said that she did not think it was good to have people making derogatory remarks about people who were sitting in the room without giving that person a chance to respond.

Chair Viegbesie said he recognized everyone that raised their hand when he called for comments.

He then turned to the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. Board of Directors and asked them to speak if they had remarks or a resolution to share.

**Berta Kemp, 129 Tyre Road, Havana, FL**

Ms. Kemp said that she had been listening to all the comments and confirmed that some of them were true and others were not true.

She raised the following points:

- The BOCC does allocate some money to the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. as well as provide the building and maintenance of the building.
- She did receive a request from one of the congregate meal sites, but congregate meals is only 1 component of what the programs offer.
- In response to the complaint that none of the board members were ever on site, she reported that she is at the site 2-3 days a week for 2-3 hours at the time.
- In response to the complaint, "Blacks were fired, and whites hired," she responded, "that statement is not true because we did not fire one black, but some did resign because of circumstances." She added that no white person had been hired to replace those that resigned.
- As to the comment about calling the Sheriff's office and Police Department, she denied that any board member was at the facility when the staff call made the call.
- The board set a meeting with the seniors. We posted notices on the door, and we gave each senior a copy of the flyer announcing the time and place of the meeting. The entire board of directors was present on that morning to hear the seniors concerns. Only one senior came to that meeting. The board received notice the day before the scheduled meeting that the seniors were not available even though the notice went up the week before the meeting.
- As to the accusation that they are not attentive to the seniors and would not allow seniors to participate on trips, she responded, "We have never refused the seniors to participate in trip or part of the money or all of the money for trips. Now, all our clientele are 60 and above. They wanted to go on trips to Atlanta and Orlando. We told them that was fine, but a registered nurse would have to be on that van or the bus because (inaudible) they could not go without a registered nurse. Some raised their own money was able to take trips.
- As to the accusation that staff refused to help a client in the movie, she responded that she did not know of a time when staff refused to assist a disabled person. Staff always assisted the clients. She often accompanied them to the movies and never witnessed what was alleged. Also, she said no one ever came to her to report such an incident.
- She admitted that she was aware of an incident of reckless driving, and the board addressed the incident. The board even conducted a workshop for driving safety with handicapped vehicles. All drivers went through the training to ensure the client's safety.
- She said that the County does not allow seniors to have alcohol on the premises or trips. One senior retorted that they would do what they wanted to do.

There was an uproar in the room in response to her statement. At that time, Chair Viegbesie called for order and asked the seniors to be respectful and not interrupt the meeting so that the meeting would be productive. He promised a solution.

*Chair Viegbesie stepped out at 6:03 p.m.*

- Ms. Kemp went on to say that the board can't get volunteers. She suggested that they need a public relations person who is in the community that can solicit volunteers to come to the center to help. She reiterated that when the seniors were protesting, no one tried to come in to find out what was happening or help resolve the issues. She reminded everyone that she and the other board of directors volunteered their time for the benefit of the seniors even though she is a senior herself. She declared that she was all about trying to help them, not to cause them grief or harm. Each time she arrived at the center, she made a point of speaking to each person there. However, not all of them would respond to her in kind.

*Chair Viegbesie returned at 6:05 p.m.*

Chair Viegbesie suggested that speakers limit their comments to specific facts and not filibuster. He reminded her that others wished to speak as well.

- Ms. Kemp apologized to the chair for lengthy remarks, but she was only responding to the complaints made earlier in the meeting. She assured him that she was not filibustering.
- Regarding a remark concerning the need for a Code of Conduct, she responded that everyone needed to follow a code of conduct, not just staff and board members. The board of directors is held accountable for the way they carry themselves.
- The center has three vans, which is inadequate to allow them to bring the seniors into the center and also deliver meals. Other programs require transportation also.
- She expressed concern for the shut-ins at home where workers have to go in and care for them.
- Not one senior has come to the board of directors to open conversations with them about their concerns.
- She has full knowledge of how the programs work and what they are doing, but she stated, "We can only service so many people with what we have."
- She agreed with Mr. Palmer in that an oversight committee would prove helpful.

#### **Robert Youman, 825 Sparkleberry Blvd, Quincy, FL**

- He observed only complaints during this meeting yet heard no proposed solution.
- He was in favor of adopting the Senior Bill of Rights because the mission is to serve the need of the seniors.
- He suggested that the board of directors should start meeting with seniors once a month to get feedback from them.
- He asked to receive a daily summary report on the activities of each day – what went right, what went wrong, # of services performed, etc.
- The first time he heard of the dissatisfaction among the seniors was at a county commission meeting when the seniors lodged their complaints.

#### **Lori Bouie**

- She reported that she served on the original board of directors for the Senior Center. She



asked Chair Viegbesie to recess this meeting to allow time for the board of directors to meet briefly, then reconvene. She said she hoped that some of the directors would resign and some new board members could be elected.

**Naisha Sanders, 105 Mary Brown Road, Quincy, FL - Former OAA Coordinator**

- During her brief employment, she came to realize that she did not have adequate training for the job, yet no training was offered to her.
- She was asked to resign but refused.
- She informed the chair of the board of directors but never received an acknowledgment or feedback from Ms. Kemp.

**Chair Viegbesie declared a recess at 6:23 for 15 minutes during which time the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. board of directors could meet if they so desire.**

**Chair Viegbesie called the meeting to order at 6:48 p.m.**

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone back to the workshop and said they were here to find a solution to problems that brought everyone here. He reported that the Board of Gadsden Senior Services Inc. had their meeting, and he asked that everyone listen to what they have to say. He explained that he no longer would be taking complaints, but, would only be taking comments related to recommendations toward a solution.

**Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. Chair Kemp reported:**

- SSI Board just met. (they normally meet every other month)
- In the future, they will meet with all of the seniors during the month they do not meet as a board.
- They approved the proposed Seniors Bill of Rights.
- They agreed to form an Oversight Committee.
- GSSI will review their By-Laws to make sure they comply with everything, even in terms of service.
- GSSI agreed to include/add one senior to the Board of Directors so that the recipients of services will have proper representation.

**Chair Viegbesie asked for any other alternative suggestions or actions**

**Lori Bouie addressed the Joint Boards**

- She argued that if the GSSI Board was only meeting every other month, they were not giving adequate oversight of the funding from the grants they received – she considered that to be malfeasant.
- She asked some of the board of directors to resign without delay and
- She asked GSSI to elect new members today and change the leadership of the board immediately.

**Rev. Eddie Allen**

- He agreed with Lori Bouie.
- GSSI violates its By-laws.

- He called for resignations of those members whose terms had expired.

**Ms. Hines** recommended:

- GSSI board members Kemp, Dupont, Dudley, Powell resign today;
- Release or fire Ms. Jan Peacock;
- Terminate Ms. Jo Hart as the executive director.

**Millie Forehand**

- She asked Lisa Bretz if she would go back to her Area Agency on Aging board and ask for a vote of confidence regarding the Gadsden Senior Services Citizens, Inc. She said, "Without a vote of confidence from the state, I don't see how the Gadsden Senior Services can remain a viable vendor in its current status. "For the good of the seniors, she asked the directors whose terms had expired to resign and let the services continue for the ones that need it so badly.

**Lori Bouie:**

- She stated that it is a privilege to serve, and she thanked the directors for their service. Because it is imperative that the services continue, she pleaded with the directors to yield in the best interest of the seniors.

**Chair Viegbesie reiterated the following:**

- As the facilitator of this meeting, he had heard comments from all who wished to speak.
- Area Agency on Aging had stated that the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. was in breach of the contract by not providing the services adequately.
- He could see no reason to continue to work through Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. to deliver services because the Area Agency on Aging has no confidence that they can deliver them.
- It is time to change course in leadership.
- The County Commission only controls \$60,000 of the budget for the seniors and has no real say in what Area Agency on Aging decides to do at this point.
- The Gadsden Senior Services, Inc met briefly during the recess and reported back on the things they were willing to do, but none of the members resigned as others had demanded.
- At this point, he thought it best to allow Area Agency on Aging to conduct their meeting and decide what they are going to do.
- The services will continue under the direction of Area Agency on Aging for the seniors in a way to have the maximum productivity.

Chair Viegbesie recognized Commissioner Taylor.

Commissioner Taylor yielded to Ms. Berta Kemp.

**Ms. Kemp** stated that the board of directors would meet with the Area Agency on Aging, Inc., and follow their recommendations even if it meant their resignations.

Chair Viegbesie recognized an **unidentified gentleman from Havana**. He asked that the matter be resolved at this meeting and not add fuel to the fire by delaying action for another day.

Chair Viegbesie recognized **Ms. Bretz** who asked, "When can seniors feel welcome again to come to the center and have meals that are waiting to be prepared for them and have use of the center to come together for a meal and to fellowship?" She then turned to the seniors and asked, "What would it take for you to be willing to come back?"

In turn, Chair Viegbesie asked the seniors what it would take for them to return to the center.

**Willie Scott** replied that the board of directors must resign. He turned to the seniors and asked them to raise their hands if they would return if the board resigned. They all raised their hands.

Chair Viegbesie said that the board of directors heard all the dialogue and he felt that they would do the right thing without procrastination. He reiterated that a negative image of the Senior Citizen Center prevails everywhere, even as far away as Washington D.C.

Chair Viegbesie recognized Commissioner Holt who yielded to Katrine McSwain.

**Katrine McSwain**, 635 Strong Road, Quincy-

She said she heard negative things about the center before she became a board member. After she joined the board of directors, she continued to receive negative feedback.

She added that Mr. Hinson brought the seniors' complaints to the board, but the board never took action. She took full responsibility for her part in doing nothing as a member of the board. She concluded by saying, "I want to do what is right by the seniors. I want to see them happy."

**An unidentified Lady** addressed the board saying that the staff locked the doors to the building while the seniors protested, Reverend Morris, opened his church for them to use during the severe cold and rain.

**Commissioner Hinson** spoke to the seniors with encouragement. He promised them that he took the situation very seriously, and resolution is forthcoming. He thanked them for their courage to stand up for their cause. He assured them that he had been in touch with people who informed him of what had been happening. He pledged his support to their cause and viewed it as being critical. He thanked the board for their service, but the issue needed to move on to a resolution for the sake of those who need the services.

**Commissioner Taylor** also spoke to the seniors in a manner that they could understand her message. She summarized what had happened:

- The seniors had concerns and complaints.
- Before this meeting the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. met and elected their chairman.
- They put the same people back into place on the board of directors.
- By their most recent action, they sent an unmistakable message.
- Mr. Scott came to her before the strike. She told him she did not agree with a strike because she knew that the board of directors was not inclined to hear their concerns. She asked him not to strike because she knew the kind of treatment they would get. The Police got called, and you got locked out of the building.

- As of this meeting, their concerns have been heard and bargained again.
- She knew the majority of the board of directors did not care because they put the same people back in charge on this day. You cannot expect change when they keep doing the same thing.
- You have to have people in place that care.
- The BOCC can't put anything forward for action because this is a workshop and not an advertised meeting with an agenda (If this was meeting, they could take a vote.) However, they can only give direction to staff.
- She stated that she is willing to take the services from Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. and put it under the board of county commissioners.
- The building belongs to the County Commission

Chair Viegbesie gave Commissioner Taylor an alert that her time was almost up. She requested just two more minutes.

- She said that if only one of the accusations was true, it was a significant concern to her.
- She referenced a sign that someone at the meeting was holding. She overheard another person criticize the sign because it contained a misspelled word. She reassured everyone that she totally understood the message conveyed by it.

Commissioner Taylor then turned her remarks to the county commission and requested that they take a vote of confidence in Ms. Bretz if she was willing to take over the operation of the services.

Chair Viegbesie recognized Commissioner Holt.

**Commissioner Holt** kept her remarks short because of the time factor. She said that Ms. Bretz needed to meet with her board at Area Agency on Aging and then report the results of her meeting to the County Commission in a timely fashion regardless of what the Gadsden Senior Services does or does not do.

She reported the following interactions that she had regarding the seniors:

- She had visited the Center to see what "the talk" was all about.
- She stated that she had participated in several protest marches, so it was nothing new to her and found that that is was an appropriate action for the seniors.
- She felt the seniors were disrespected and mistreated.
- The GSSI management denied the seniors to "their" facility.
- She met with the seniors then met with the director because so many people approached her to ask what was taking place at the Senior Center.

She then said, "Before we leave here tonight, we need to know what is going to happen, and when we will meet again."

**Chair Viegbesie** summarized the following:

- No one here has any control over the Gadsden Seniors, Inc because it is a 501(C)(3) corporation with its by-laws and board of directors.
- The responsibility for the county commission is for health, welfare, and safety of all citizens, which includes the senior citizens.

- The county commission believes that some of the seniors' health and safety are in jeopardy.
- The County Commission cannot take any actions at this meeting because this is a workshop and not an advertised meeting.
- The Area Agency for the Aging must meet to reach their own decision about rendering services for the Gadsden County seniors.

**Commissioner Holt** called for a special meeting to take action.

**James Hinson**, Gadsden Senior Services Inc. board member, addressed the board.

He said as he listened to the comments at the meeting from various individuals, he remembered something he heard from an old professor, "Figures do not lie, but liars figure."

He told of his affection for the seniors and for their sake, he took the challenge of Commissioner Taylor and resigned from the board of directors.

Chair Viegbesie called for more resignations. In response, Berta Kemp, Gwynn Robinson, Jerard Dudley, George Martinez all spoke up. They all agreed to resign.

Chair Viegbesie stated, "Now we know what direction we will go in, and Area Agency can see what direction we will go."

Commissioner Hinson made several comments as follows:

- When he heard the staff had locked the doors and denied access to the building on rainy 30 degree days, he was disturbed.
- He said that it was disrespectful and bold to put the safety and health of the seniors in jeopardy.
- **He called for a special/emergency meeting.** Following the emergency meeting, he felt the county attorney should write a letter to Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. informing them of the outcome of that meeting.

Commissioner Taylor explained to the seniors what just happened in the meeting.

**Ms. Bretz** responded that she would call a meeting of her executive board and be in touch with the county administrator to apprise her of the results of their meeting.

There was a consensus to hold a special/emergency meeting on Thursday, March 14, 2019, at 2:00 p.m.

**Attorney Weiss** addressed the issue of the lease agreement with Gadsden Services, Inc. He explained that there is a 30-day termination clause in the lease.

Commissioner Holt said they would have to abide by the lease agreement. She encouraged everyone to be at a special meeting on Thursday.

**Ms. Bretz** said her organization would step in and run the center and provide the continuity of the

services.

**Willie Scott** asked the seniors to stay after this meeting adjourns.

**2. Joint Discussion**

There was no joint discussion.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Chair Viegbesie declared the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Gadsden County, Florida



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Anthony Viegbesie, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Nicholas Thomas, Clerk