

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON MARCH 14, 2019 AT 2:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, Viz:

Present: Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2
Sherrie Taylor, Vice-Chair, District 5 (Appeared by Phone until her arrival at 2:39 p.m.)
Eric Hinson, District 2
Brenda Holt, District 4
Dee Jackson, County Administrator
David Weiss, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

Absent: Gene Morgan, District 3

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Rev. Shirlean Thomas gave the invocation. Chair Viegbesie then led in pledging allegiance to the U. S. flag.

AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HOLT AND SECOND BY CHAIR VIEGBESIE, THE BOARD VOTED 4 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS WRITTEN.

AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS, AND APPEARANCES

1. Area Agency on Aging Report – Lisa Bretz, Executive Director

Lisa Bretz addressed the Board. She reported the following:

- She met with Executive Committee this morning.
- The community of seniors was very clear in their expectations at the meeting on March 12, 2019.
- The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) encouraged the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. to consider the public recommendation for the resignation of certain members of their board of directors. AAA expects the resignations by noon on March 15, 2019.
- If the board members do not resign and they are unable to come to a decision, AAA will suspend the contracts as of 5:00 p.m. on March 15, 2019.

Chair Viegbesie called for questions from the commissioners.

Commissioner Taylor stated (via telephone) she could not hear the discussion, but reported she would arrive at the meeting in only two minutes.

Citizens Requesting to be heard on Non-Agenda Items

Chair Viegbesie called for questions or comments from the public. There was no response.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Resolution No.: 2019-008 (Attached)

County Administrator Dee Jackson introduced the above item by reading a description of the resolution. "Resolution No. 2019-0000888 - supporting the discontinuation of Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. as the lead agency for the provision of services to the elderly citizens of Gadsden County and authorizing the Chairperson, County Attorney and Staff to take all action necessary and appropriate to terminate the lease and occupancy of the buildings located at 79 LaSalle Lefall Drive, Quincy, FL and 680 Maple Street, Chattahoochee, FL and to terminate and discontinue the disbursement of funds under the grant agreement with Gadsden Senior Services, Inc."

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION.

Chair Viegbesie asked the attorney to explain the resolution.

Attorney David Weiss said, "It sounds like from Ms. Bretz' presentation, it may be that by noon tomorrow some of the Board members would resign, which may negate the need to adopt this resolution. If you adopt this resolution right now, regardless of what happens by noon tomorrow, it is going to authorize us to start moving forward with termination of the lease, the termination of the funding agreement, and removal of the Gadsden Senior Services from the building, which they currently occupy in Quincy and Chattahoochee. So, if you want to leave the option of leaving all of that in place, I would say that you would want to make this contingent on the failure of GSS Board members resigning."

Commissioner Holt said, "If it is contingent upon their meeting tomorrow, then that makes sense, but for one thing. If they do not resign and they do not honor the wishes of the citizens, then we are back to where we were. If they say, "We are going to resign," and then that agency still holds the contract, then we start all over again if they don't do what the citizens ask them to do. So, I would like to hear from her, Mr. Chairman, again. How will that put us back? Will it put us back?"

Ms. Bretz addressed the commissioner's question by saying, "Commissioner Holt, we intend to work with the community, the Gadsden Commission and our seniors to find replacements for those positions on the board that have the best interest in their constituents at heart. We would work closely with you to work on a transition for our well-standing on this issue."

Commissioner Taylor arrived at this juncture - 2:39 p.m.

Commissioner Holt:

So, what you are saying is that If those board members resign, then we are looking at a replacement for those board members. It does not mean a replacement for the director. It does

not mean a replacement for any staff with whom they are having a problem. What I am concerned about is there will still be a conflict. It will be a conflict as soon – it puts us back to where we were.

Ms. Bretz:

I can tell you that according to their by-laws, the board has oversight of the executive director, so that is a decision that the board would immediately have to take up. It would not be my recommendation to let staff go because you cannot have continuity of operations without staff that is capable of fulfilling their duties.

Commissioner Holt:

That puts us back to where we were.

Ms. Bretz:

I believe that with public input, we can resolve these issues with a board that is willing to work with the public. I do not feel that it is in the best interest of the community for it to have county government running the Senior Center. The program needs to be locally driven, and in such, we would open it up for community input to drive the delivery of services and ensure that the constituency is satisfied with the delivery of services with the dollars that we are allocating to the corporation.

Commissioner Holt:

I am not debating that part. We ran it before. The county has run the Senior Citizen Center before.

Ms. Bretz:

Because they were financially failing. We are not in that situation. I would have administrative oversight.

Commissioner Holt:

I am not debating that with you. What I am saying is – If down the road (five or six months down the road) we end up back at this point, then we are back at this point. That is all I am saying.

Ms. Bretz:

I can't guarantee you the result. I can tell you the vision I have for moving forward.

Commissioner Holt:

O.K. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair Viegbesie:

Commissioner Hinson, you are recognized.

Commissioner Hinson:

Ms. Bretz made a strong recommendation. My reservations are that I received this information only a few minutes ago. I am not sure exactly what is in here. If I had received it yesterday or last night, I would have been able to read it at least. This resolution right here could either help or hurt

us right here. I am not sure what is in this. So, I may be for it, or I may be against this packet. I am seeing this information for the first time. I am talking about me; I am not sure when the other board members were able to receive it. But, I do support the ideal. I would love for the board to get together and see if they can come to a resolution before we make this move.

My thing is that I want to help the seniors out, whichever interest it is. If they comply, then let us move forward, we can do that. That was my initial plan – to abolish everything, and we (the county commission) take it over or give us someone else. But, at the same time, I want to make sure that I know what is in this thick piece of paper that I just received a few minutes ago.

Chair Viegbesie:

Thank you, Commissioner Hinson.

I think that the problem we are having here is after reading this packet, the county cannot be the lead agency here. That is exactly what I am hearing, Ms. Bretz saying. The county cannot be the lead agency that provides the services. From reading this packet, the county had it in 2010 on August 5; the County handed it back to Gadsden County Senior Services upon the revision of the by-laws. So, I think we need to work with the Area Agency on Aging. I would also imagine that if the board of directors is changed and those who were called to resign do resign, I do trust that the new board would also change the staff to provide the services that have been provided by the GCSS as the lead agency.

Whatever we decide to do as a board, I hope we know what our limitations are, where our jurisdiction remains and how we can go about resolving this. It is in the hands of the board members to decide on how to handle this, having gotten the advice from the attorney as to what we can do and having heard from Ms. Bretz.

Commissioner Taylor, do you have comments?

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Yes, if you don't mind. Let me first say I apologize for running late. I had some very important business in Tallahassee that I had to take care of and it took longer than I anticipated. I have been over there since the early part of the morning. So, please accept my apology for running late. I certainly wanted to be here and be here on time.

So, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman, will you recap what has happened up to now. I didn't get a chance to hear Ms. Bretz's report. I know they had a meeting at 1:00 p.m. I don't know the outcome of that either. But, there was suppose to be some reorganization, so, give me a recap of what was said.

Chair Viegbesie:

Commissioner Taylor, Madam Vice-Chair, I am going to yield that to the county administrator to give the recap as to what was just said. Some of you know that I was pushed for time. There is a doctor's appointment that I must make. That is an appointment that you cannot get for nine months, and I have had it since last year. If I miss it at 3 o'clock, I will not be able to get it again in another year. So, I am going to release the gavel to the Vice-Chair to run the meeting and Madam

Administrator, if you don't mind, you can recap the conversation up to this point. Thank you all very much.

Administrator Jackson:

Ms. Bretz made a presentation where she said that her board had spoken and her board is inclined to support the Citizenry which has spoken. They feel that certain board members from Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. should resign. Should they not do that by noon tomorrow, then they are willing to terminate the contract with Gadsden Senior Services, Inc.

The county attorney has stated that given Gadsden Senior Services an opportunity to make that adjustment by noon tomorrow, this agenda item should be adjusted to say contingent upon them not making those adjustments, then termination of leases. But, not to terminate it now because they may make those adjustments tomorrow and we will move forward with the board's direction to still terminate the leases.

Vice-Chair Taylor::

Enough said.

Ms. Bretz, will you come back to the podium?

Again, please forgive me. Please give us just a few minutes so that I can understand

So, you had a meeting at 1:00 today. Correct or incorrect?

Ms. Bretz:

I had suggested that the board of Gadsden Senior Services Inc. meet today at 1:00. They did not have enough numbers to have a quorum, so we had an open discussion.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

O.K. So, as far as right now, have you reached out and asked for those to terminate. Have you said that to them? Have they received that in writing?

Ms. Bretz:

They have not received it in writing. They heard from me verbally. They will receive it in writing. I did discuss this with the board president.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

O.K. is it in the board in its entirety?

Ms. Bretz:

No, ma'am. I have heard that the four that were mentioned publicly on Tuesday have submitted their written resignations. The board has not formally heard those resignations yet. But, two members remain on the board.

Vice-Chair Taylor

What I hear you say is, "Let's say hypothetically that these two people choose to remain. Then what will be your course of action?"

Bretz:

I will suspend the contracts on Friday at 5:00 p.m.

Vice-Chair Taylor

After you suspend the contracts, then where and when would they be reinstated and how?

Bretz:

Well, my board of directors will not reinstate the contract with the current corporation.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Understood.

Ms. Bretz:

We will be required to put out a bid. I will have to have an emergency provider come in temporarily. Right now that could serve as my agency providing administrative oversight. The services would continue with the current staff. Certainly, we would make accommodations to the staffing requirements per the citizen's input.

Vice-Chair Taylor

You said the current staff. To what level?

Ms. Bretz:

If my agency takes over, I will not need an executive director. I could also have oversight as a managing entity over other staff.

Vice-Chair Taylor

The resolution that we just adopted.

Commissioner Holt:

We haven't adopted it.

Administrator Jackson:

There is a motion, but it did not carry forward.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Oh. There is a motion, but it has not carried.

Commissioner Holt

No one made a second to the motion. So, it dies anyway.

Vice-Chair Taylor

It dies for lack of a second.

Did the chair know that? Was it moved?

I just wanted to see where we are on that.

Alright. Thank you.

Are there any other comments?

Commissioner Holt:

I am hearing that if the others resign (the ones that you asked to resign), I am concerned that we are at a point that maybe we don't move any further in correcting some things. How long are we going to look at the situation if they resign? If they still can correct these actions and the seniors do not accept it, it puts us back to where we were. If you keep your same people and they say that they are going to resign and those people resign. Then, they say, "Wait a minute; you are not making any other changes." How does that help us? I am looking at the long term. I am not looking at a couple of weeks. I know she is saying they didn't have a quorum and they could not vote this morning, but that does give some leave way as to tomorrow. We can call a special meeting. That is an option we can do. We can call another special meeting, and we can look at this if it doesn't turn out the way that it needs to turn out.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Your statement was made well,.

Ms. Forehand, did I see your hand? Please come forward.

Now when you all come to the podium, you have to state your full name along with your current address.

Millie Forehand:

My name is Millie Forehand, and I live at 620 South 11th St. Quincy, FL.

I just wanted to hear from - is it possible that we can hear from the seniors? I understand the process very well that if they don't resign, it is not within the board of county commissioners or the state to suspend staff. The staff has to be suspended by the board of directors. So, I need to know – you said you need to receive two more resignations? I would like to hear from them.

Vice-Chair Taylor

I think at this point, I will bring her back up, but let me give you some clearance. Based on what you said a moment ago, the board (Gadsden Senior Services) has the authority to remove the executive director. I thought you said it did not have that authority.

Millie Forehand:

No, no. The board of county commissioners does not, and neither does the state. But, the executive director, which is what Ms. Holt is talking about, has to be removed by the senior citizen board.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Correct.

Then there were questions you had for Ms. Lisa Bretz?

Millie Forehand:

I got the clarification from her. May we hear who resigned from the senior citizen board and who did not resign, or if they plan to resign. If not, the services for the seniors are still going to be in flux. It will take a board to decide on the executive director.

I would say to the senior citizens to be patient because that new board will have to decide on a new executive director based on what their findings would be.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Is there anyone else who would care to speak?

Again, your full name and your current address for the record, please.

Regina Davis:

Good afternoon. I have just one question. I am Regina Davis. My address is **315 West Washington St.**

I heard the agency state that in the worst case scenario that they would take over and staff would remain. Is that correct?

Ms. Bretz:

Yes.

Regina Davis;

I don't know how many staff members there are, so are they employed by the state at that point or still by the Gadsden Senior Citizens, Inc.? That is what I need to understand. Who will be paying those staff persons if the contract is no longer in existence? That is what I was trying to find out.

Vice-Chair Taylor

As a point of clarity, I understand that the agency that is providing the funding will step in in the beginning to oversee the operations; we will continue to use some of the staff that is already in place, but it would not use the executive director. That is what I understand about moving forward.

Regina Davis:

Correct. However, when she said the contract would be voided, it was the entire contract. That is the way that I understood it. So, legally, who would be paying the other staff? That is what I was trying to understand.

Vice-Chair Taylor

I think it will be the same funding source, but a different director. I know it is the same funding source.

Yes, Please.

Lisa Bretz:

For clarity, the organization would fall under my board of directors' jurisdiction. Our board of directors has ensured that the allocation to the provider is the money that will be used to continue the services and to provide payment for staff.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I didn't think there was any other funding source other than what was already in place.

Are there any other comments?

Yes, Ma'am.

Berta Kemp at 129 Tire Road, Havana, FL

I presently serve as the chairperson for the board of directors for the Gadsden Senior Services. We have an emergency board meeting scheduled for 9:00 a.m. I know that we will be responding to Ms. Bretz at that time. I can't give you any information as to what will transpire, but the main concern from the board of directors is the senior citizens of Gadsden County in entirety. We will do what is in the best interest of the citizens because as you are aware, as she said, the board of county commissioners cannot be the lead agency for the Gadsden Senior Services. So, for the continuity of things, they will have to come in, and we will go through a transition period to get everything in place. They will be ones running the program. It has been said over and over, the Gadsden Seniors Services Board of Directors have only one employee. That is what we will be going into an emergency meeting for at 9:00 a.m. Notice has already been sent.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Thank you. Are there any other comments?

Any other comments from the county commission?

Let me sum it up by saying this. If there is not a quorum by in the morning –

Ms. Bretz, will you please come to the podium.

Now, first of all, I want to make this comment. I would personally like to see where it is that the Gadsden County Board of County Commission cannot run and operate the agency temporarily until we can get a new provider. I would like to see that in writing. I heard the conversation between yourself and Commissioner Holt when you said that the last time it was taken over, it was a fiscal issue. I am pretty sure that not having an overseer at this particular time as well as the disruption of services due to claims, I won't say allegations, would pretty much fit into the same concerns as it being a fiscal issue. There are some mandatory issues down there that could very well allow the county to take over.

My understanding is that it is more subjective as to whether or not the county takes over. In other words, it is something that you all do not wish to happen, not necessarily being against the law if it happened. So, there is a difference. We could very well still become a provider temporarily. I

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would hope that the two entities, yours and this board could come together and maybe come up with a 90 or 60-day transition if there is not a resolve first thing in the morning.

Now, we are going along with contingencies. I think we may be able to get Dr. Viegbesie back on the phone while he travels .

Administrator Jackson:

He lost his phone.

Vice-Chair Taylor

He lost his phone. Oh, gosh.

Give me just a second, Commissioner Holt, and I will certainly recognize you. What will be the ideal is to put in some contingencies that will put things in place if tomorrow morning does not evolve to the measure the seniors need. I am still very concerned, and I know you are, too, with what may happen tomorrow morning. They have been steadfast in trying to get some resolve, as well as former employees, have been steadfast in trying to get some resolve. I am sure you are, too. I have had several conversations with you. But, we need to be able to let them leave here this afternoon knowing that after tomorrow morning is over, we have clarity instead of leaving it open-ended. That is not fair. We called this meeting to get something that is concrete, and they can appreciate and have total clarity that it is resolved. We know what is going to happen after their meeting in the morning regardless of what happens. So, that is what we need to talk about and try to get clarity before we leave within the next few minutes.

I am going to be quiet and see if we can come up with a contingency. So, Mr. Attorney, get ready to start writing in hopes that we can move forward.

Commissioner Holt.

Commissioner Holt:

You pretty much said where I was going. If there is a state statute, I would like to see it, that says we cannot run the Senior Citizens Center. I know that it has happened in the past. I am wondering I go from the constitution to the state statute on down to policy and procedure. I would like to see whatever is there. I would appreciate an email. If you do not have it, I will get it to you because I need to know that. The county needs to know that.

Commissioner Taylor pretty much summed up the other things that I was going to mention. You said that you would put out an RFP or whatever documents you put out for an organization to take over. So, we need to know what that time lapse is. What is your requirement for that?

Ms. Bretz:

I might point out that Florida Statute does not dictate that you can or cannot be a lead agency. My procurement procedures dictate that you are not eligible to be a lead agency on even an emergency basis at this point because you don't have designated staff to oversee the operations.

Commissioner Holt:

That does not mean that we cannot designate staff to oversee it. But, what I am saying is send that to me in an email. We can take care of that part.

Ms. Bretz:

I will send you our procurement policy an process.

Your other question? The RFP?

Legitimately to have a valid document out, it would probably be a four to six-month process.

Commissioner Holt:

We are not quite as bad as that, but we are close.

Ms. Bretz:

There are a lot of requirements to make it fair and competitive.

Commissioner Holt:

So it is a four to six-month process to get it out.

Ms. Bretz:

I can get it out before that, but, it would take a month to six weeks to initiate it.

Commissioner Holt:

So, the board of directors will meet tomorrow at 9 a.m. The seniors can be there if they want to be there in the building to see how that comes out. We need to know something.

Mr. Attorney, you said this could be contingent upon what?-

Attorney Weiss:

Yes, Ma'am. I think you could make it contingent. If the board members, whoever they are, and I think we need to make it specific that if they don't resign by a certain time tomorrow that this resolution will be approved and it will go into effect.

Commissioner Holt:

May I Madam chair?

Vice-Chair Taylor:

O.K., madam, hold on for just a second. The only problem is this thing that we have before us doesn't have any teeth in it. That is my concern.

Yes, Ms. Forehand?

Millie Forehand:

I am sorry, Commissioner. Clarification, please. I am not sure which governing document, but, from my understanding and experience, you don't need to have a meeting or a quorum to get

resignation. A resignation can be just sent in. People write resignations all the time. In other words, give me a letter, and I am resigning. It is a statement. So, why do we have to go another day when we can know if you have people to resign or if the people say they are going to say they are resigning. That will stop the delay, delay, and delay. You may not ever get a quorum.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Well, here is what was said to us. The funding agency has set a timeline. Whether there is a quorum or not. You are right, and I am glad that you put that into the public record. You don't have to be there to submit a resignation letter. I asked Ms. Lisa Bretz whether she sent the individuals a request for their resignation in writing. If they choose to come or not come, that is up to them. But, what is on the county commission and what will be on the floor of the diocese tomorrow will be clear and concise (verbally or written.) I suggest highly in writing. I suggest that.

That being said, the only thing that I think, Mr. Attorney, you may want to give clarity on what we have here. As Commissioner Hinson said so eloquently, we are just getting this information in front of us. You did say that it was prepared yesterday. However, it doesn't negate the fact that we are seeing it for the first time. I am just sitting down, and I can't grasp all that is here. So, what teeth do we have in this other than just taking a lease? That appears weak.

Attorney Weiss:

Yes, Ma'am. That is the primary authority that we have. That is the county commission's major stick if you will. The county commission does not have authority to force the Area Agency on Aging to remove Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. as the lead agency. We can certainly support that, and that is part of this resolution. The county commission is supporting the discontinuation of the lead agency services by Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. It is a support, but we don't control that.

But the other things that the county commission can do is to move forward with terminating the lease and occupancy of the space both in Quincy and in Chattahoochee and terminating and discontinue the disbursement of funds under the grant funding agreement. (the money that the county commission grants to the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc.) That is all that the county commission has the authority to do. They are a separate non-profit corporation, and the county commission doesn't have the authority to tell them how to operate their corporate business. At one point in time that was the county commission did have some responsibility for that, but, it was transferred back to them in 2010.

We don't choose their board members; we don't have any authority to do that.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Yes, sir. You are recognized.

Pastor Roosevelt Rogers, III – 9260 Florida/Georgia Highway, Havana, FL

I am just trying to make sure I understand what Ms. Lisa was saying regarding, and this is hypothetical, so I hope I am making it right. If they go tomorrow, if the two remaining board members resign, in the emergency meeting (I am just trying to make sure that I am following the process) in the emergency meeting, they will then elect new board members as far as executive chair, co-chair and this, that and the other. But, they still have to address the issue that the

seniors had, which was the executive director that is physically running the place. That seems to be the major sticking issue, kind of like to what Commissioner Holt was eluding. It sounds like what you were eluding to as well, Commissioner Taylor. We still have that issue. So, what then do you do in that situation? I am trying to figure out if they resign, you then appoint a board. What is the timeframe as far as addressing the staffing issue that is the main issue that the seniors have a question about. I am just trying to follow up on that.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you. Thank you.

I think she kind of answered that but didn't say. You've got a two case scenario. If the board of directors stays in place, then they will be the ones who decide who will be going forward as the director. But, if the board of directors decides not to resign, then Area Agency will take over and would take it upon themselves to dismiss the ED. So, that is why I am saying that the resolution that we have here before us, as Commissioner Holt as said, really puts the senior citizens still up in the air as to what happens tomorrow. The goal here in the next few minutes is to compromise and work in support of Area Agency, but that we don't overstep or understep in this case so that what happens tomorrow, it is done.

Regardless, we will make certain we meet the seniors' needs and concerns. That is what we want ultimately at the end of the 10th hour or whatever hour it is that they need. Right now, I don't see it. As you said, there are two case scenarios. Either the ED stays or doesn't stay. It all depends on what happens tomorrow. But, we need to make sure that what they have asked for happens. That is the goal right now.

So, we need to add some more language to this soup. It is too thick, and it is not enough that everyone can eat from it. So, we need to add just a little bit more language, Ms. Area Agency, a little bit more language. I know that you are governed by a board as well, but let me digress for a moment and hear from someone else. I thought I say a hand.

Yes, then I will hear from you, young lady.

Berta Kemp, 129 Tyre Road, Havana, FL

I have been sitting there listening, and I wanted to say that I don't want us to continue to go on and on like we are going. I don't think that would even be necessary. The board that is there, whatever we do is going to be in the best interest of the senior citizens and to make sure that things are being properly done. I know for a fact that we do have three resignations already. We will still have a quorum in the morning. Those numbers will be there. A decision will be made to give to Ms. Bretz. We are asking the board of county commissioners as well as the citizens to allow us to meet and report back to you. You will have an answer by noon tomorrow. If they allow us to meet. There are other members that are here already, and I am pretty sure which direction they will be going in. So, we are just asking you to allow us to be able to do this because those board members that have served, they have been good board members. I think that everything they have done has been in the best interest of the seniors of Gadsden County.

The ones of us who will be leaving ask that those who will follow us to please become educated as

to how the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc. operate and what they are doing and how they are doing it.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you very much.

I recognize the young lady at the very, very back, and then this board member.

Thank you, Ms. Kemp.

Sonya Hines-Hall 3070 Bainbridge Highway, Quincy, FL

Just a suggestion. If tomorrow, the GSS, Inc. Board of Directors meets, and they have resignations if they appoint new members to that board then – I know of six people who are more than willing to join the board, especially in this emergency. If they replace the members that do resign, it is my understanding from Ms. Lisa Bretz that the board has the power to say whether the ED stays or not. Could that new board vote then that the two staff members that the senior citizens are concerned about – could they vote then that those two staff members be removed so that everything can be done tomorrow and we wouldn't have to wait for another process?

Vice-Chair Taylor:

The way the election process works for that board is that those existing members must vote on the new people. So, I don't know who has resigned. All I know is that there are some concerns with the senior services and the reason why there are some concerns is that there has been some negligence. I shouldn't use the term negligence; I will say that the seniors felt that the board was not in support. When I hear that this board is in support, I want to make sure we make the best of it. The history doesn't prove that, and it concerns me with moving forward. I am not saying that it won't be. I am saying that we are here because those words which were echoed just a few minutes ago, according to a lot of the seniors, were unfounded. Not, me. I don't know. I am only speaking from what I have heard from them.

As I said, there is a lot that we need to know. We can take the next 10 minutes and try to get to the bottom of it. Your point is well taken. Thank you so kindly.

Ms. Bouie?

Lori Bouie, 816 Hardin St, Quincy FL

I want to clarify something. The other night I kept saying that I didn't want to give you numbers and figures, but my concern with the current board and with the ED is that the monies that have been received have not been fully used. Monies have been redistributed that could have been servicing Gadsden County because for whatever reason. I was fearful that the current staff was purposely (this is my opinion, it is not fact, it is simply my opinion) I was fearful that the current staff, the current executive director was purposely sabotaging the funding by not using it, by not recruiting funds. I became gravely concerned, although the seniors did have personality issues with the current staff. I was like, It is o.k., you brought some attention to some larger issues.

Why would Gadsden County be granted \$540,000 and only \$200,000 plus would be used? So,

when I stood the other night and said, “ I would have taken the grant funds from you a long time ago, it was because, in the granting process, you are supposed to give a plan for how you intend to use the money. Then you are to use those dollars explicitly as you say you are going to use it. So, why would money be sent back if we asked for it? It was granted to us, and it was sent back.

I have been told that it was said that the money is on hold. The granting process is once you have been allocated funding from the State of Florida or from whatever agency funds you, that money is available. Then it is the grantee’s responsibility to submit a plan based on that grant process to say, “I am ready to use this portion of funding.” So, the only time that it is not available to you is when you haven’t done your portion to say how you are going to use the funding. So, if you are saying that the current board is operating with good intentions for the seniors of this county, It has not. Not only is it this year that hasn’t used all the funding, I don’t have my notes with me, but, I understand that it has been for a much longer period that they have not been using the funding.

My attitude now is for Gadsden County to intervene. I am asking the county commission to offer your services. I know that you have no authority, but I figured as a grave emergency measure to have the county act on behalf of the senior citizens and the dollars that have been granted and allocated to this county.

I don’t know the executive director. She may be a wonderful person. God may have sent her here for this day, but she is not the person for this job. I am asking you to offer your services not to take over. I am asking Ms. Liza; I don’t know you personally. I haven’t had a chance to talk to anybody, so I am going public, but this is just my opinion.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you very much.

Will there be any other comments?

Yes, Ms. Lisa?

Lisa Bretz:

I feel I need to clarify how we fund our providers.

They have an allocation that they draw down based on the units of service that they produce. They do not have the money in the coffers until they earn it. So, I want to be sure that the point is clear. The money is in the state’s hands until the money is drawn down and earned.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Totally understood. Totally understood. It is o.k.

Anyone else?

Commissioner Holt:

I want a little clarity.

The board of directors meets tomorrow. The board members resign as requested. Are they able to elect new board members that day? Can anyone answer that? I am directing my question to Ms. Kemp.

If you have a quorum, Under your by-laws, is your board able to go ahead and elect new members that day?

Ms. Berta Kemp:

I do not believe that board members will be elected that day because those board members have to be interviewed and gone over to make sure that they are suitable for that position and that person is qualified to serve. People don't just come on the board just because they want to.

Commissioner Holt:

I have other questions. I understand what you are saying, but the people here need to know that.

Ms. Berta Kemp:

I don't think that will be an issue. I don't believe it, and I can ask the other three of them, but I don't think that is where we will be headed tomorrow as far as electing new board members. Now, the persons who applied early on, they were invited to the workshop the other day so they could be a view of what was going on. Once they are talked to or whatever, whoever the board members that are left – they will make that decision. I can answer for myself – I will be putting in a written notice as far as resigning.

As I said, the ones of us who are there, it has been because, if you knew of some of the issues that led us to this point, then you would understand the board members.

Commissioner Holt:

Ms. Kemp, the reason I was asking is not necessarily to prolong this conversation. The reason I am asking is that it was a question that came up. I needed a little bit of clarity, and the audience wants some clarity on that.

So, there will not be new board members looked at tomorrow. What you are saying is you are having a meeting just for those to resign. There is nothing else on the agenda for tomorrow.

Ms. Berta Kemp:

Right. As I said, once the resignations are in for the ones, I think that board will be considerate enough to follow the policy as far as electing new board members. We have always done it with recommendations from others. Also, it will be in the best interest of the seniors.

Commissioner Holt:

I just had some short questions.

The only thing that is going to happen tomorrow is that those board members will resign or not resign. That is the only thing that is going to happen.

The other thing that I need to know is how many will be left on the board when those members

resign?

Ms. Berta Kemp:

O.k. If I am right, no matter how many are left, they will still have a majority because who is left there. The others won't be on the board. Even if you don't have but three there, they've got a majority.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Excuse me for just a second. Just hold on, Commissioner. Just a second.

Let's hold it down for just a moment. You are going in the right direction. May I just put one statement in while you are talking so you can have this as part of your question there?

According to the by-laws, they have eight members. But, if there are only three remaining after the others resign, then you won't have a quorum.

Ms. Berta Kemp:

According to our by-laws, we have a minimum set.

Vice-Chair Taylor

Excuse me, ma'am, not in this building, may you start talking out of turn.

Ms. Berta Kemp:

O.K. I thought I was invited up.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Just hold on. I am talking with my board members and the attorney at this time. No disrespect, but, we follow the rules. O.K.

I am asking Commissioner Holt, Mr. Attorney, if there is a set of eight, then you have five to resign. Now you have three left. Do you have a quorum?

Attorney Weiss:

Yes, ma'am. Now your current members will be three. A quorum is a majority of the current members. So, if you have three members, you need two to have a quorum.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I get it.

So, Commissioner Holt, the question then begins to state - the by-laws, is there really – these people have lawyered up – we had better make sure that the bases are covered. The by-laws that are in place now is your mandate number that must get into place before it can be considered a quorum. That is my only question.

Commissioner Holt:

Ladies and gentlemen, that is where I was going with this conversation. When I said, "Will there

be enough for a majority?" Now, do your by-laws state that?

Ms. Berta Kemp:

Am I to speak now?

Commissioner Holt:

Yes, I am asking you to speak now.

Ms. Berta Kemp

Our by-laws carry a minimum and a maximum if that clarifies your question.

Commissioner Holt:

Let me say this. If three of them are left, then that is a majority, so says our attorney according to your by-laws.

Ms. Berta Kemp:

It does.

Commissioner Holt:

So, if three show up, that is a majority because there are only three on the board. So, if you have three members, if two show up, that is a majority. A requirement for a quorum can change from time to time.

Before we leave here, people need to know what is going to happen at that meeting tomorrow as far as the agenda. We can't always say what may happen because some things change. So, we are good to go with that.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are invited to the meeting. You can come to the meeting and have some input.

The other thing that we need to consider at this time is the seniors returning to the building. They are looking to come back into the building regardless of this process. So, how do we ensure that the seniors are comfortable there when they decide to come back? That is more a general question, not just for you. The seniors need to be comfortable enough to make plans for what they want to do after today.

Ms. Berta Kemp

I am sure that Ms. Lisa Bretz, who is sitting back here, has considered the continuity. They will be there to ensure that the delivery of services and the doors are open every day. They are unlocked to come in. The vans have been authorized to go back out every day. The only time they stopped going out was when they were informed by the seniors not to pick them up.

Commissioner Holt:

I understand that. I just wanted to make sure that as of today, they would know.

Ms. Berta Kemp

Now, there is not a supervisor in that department as of right now. But, I am sure that Ms. Bretz knows and will take care of that.

Commissioner Holt:

Thank you.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Commissioner Hinson, you are recognized unless you want to yield to Mr. Scott.

Commissioner Hinson:

I would love to yield to Mr. Scott. No other choice.

Mr. Willie Scott, 26 Shore Lane, Quincy, FL

We could have solved the issue that we have here today long ago. I have to go back to the board members. There are two commissioners up there that know what happened in 2008. In 2008, we had a problem – not a situation like this, but we had a problem. It was solved very easily. I was on the board of directors. Eugene Lamb appointed me to the board. I was on the board when we had this problem.

Area Agency came in and deleted everything. I was the only one that was sitting on the board because I was also a part of the Senior Citizens Center. The county came in and made the corrections — everything we had to do. We didn't have to walk out.

Thornton Williams was the attorney for the County Commission. He is a lawyer. He asked me, "Mr. Scott, you have to have a meeting with the board of directors." I asked, "What board? I am the only one." He said, "You have a meeting with yourself." I could not understand that, and I don't understand it now. I called the board members who had scattered – all of them, even my good friend Clarence Jackson. He was the president of the board, and he scattered, too. All of them scattered. I called the members back, but only a few showed up. I called them back. What I had to do for the Gadsden Senior Citizens was to appoint someone to be the president of the board. I appointed Bob Williams to be the president of the board. Then board members started coming back. The county was sending members from their district to the board. Now, board members are supposed to get some training. Janice Wise trained us with six weeks of training. I appointed Bob Williams to be the president. I asked Roberta Kemp to be the Vice-president. I resigned from the board because I wanted to have my freedom of speech. That is what I did. I resigned under Eugene Lamb. I resigned from the board. Since then, that board has been failing. They have been failing ever since then. That is 21 years ago.

The problem right now is we have a problem with the board. I cannot see if you are a volunteer doing something and you are rocking other things on the other side, I can't correct it. Why don't you resign and let somebody come in here and do the work? Simply that. I hate to call names, but you are putting these people here through this for what? For what? Tell me, Rev, for what? You read the Bible, tell me. What is all this? I am sorry. I am sorry. I didn't want to say anything, but I just had to speak.

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Vice-Chair Taylor:

It is o.k, sir. No problem.
You point well taken. Well taken.

Commissioner Hinson, go ahead, sir.

Commissioner Hinson:

Why do I have to follow behind Mr. Scott? That is unfair. He is a World War II Vet. I must give him respect based on that alone.

Mr. Willie Scott:

I am 92 years old.

Commissioner Hinson:

92 years old. My granddaddy was in World War II as well. I respect people that serve our country in any capacity. Every board member of the Gadsden County Commission respects all of you as well. We value your time and efforts.

Again, it has been very difficult to get to a point to make a motion on this because of a couple of things. I know we talked about their budget, Havana, Quincy, and Chattahoochee. It may be in here, but I want to make sure they get the proper funding.

Whatever happens tomorrow, I want what is right. Whatever happens tomorrow, I hope that if you guys keep the same executive director or if you move into a new direction, hopefully, we can find somebody who can reach the maximum amount of at least that funding source – That \$500,000 funding source so we can serve the people in Gadsden County. It is unacceptable for us not to receive that money. We talked about that briefly.

To me, I still think that is small change for senior citizens, in my humble opinion. That is why I lobbied to increase that funding as well. You shouldn't have to plug them – the people that sacrificed for us to be where we are right now. That funding source is still small. I think that if we had to take over, I think we should meet in a workshop – even if we don't take over – we should meet and put something in place so that if we had to take over, we would have something in place anyway. For now, we don't have anything in place that can meet their needs. We don't have a plan in place. Whatever happens, I would like to ensure that we could do that. We need to make sure that whatever happens tomorrow, just in case, we don't let our seniors down.

I want to thank the seniors for being proactive. I want to thank everybody on the board. When I look back on the storm, I think it is a blessing. A rainbow comes out after the storms. That is my humble opinion. Sometimes we have believers, sometimes we have fake believers, but I do believe. God brought us here for a reason.

I remember in 1994; I did an internship with Dr. (inaudible) As one of my jobs, I had to go to a Gadsden County Senior Citizens Center. However, many people you see right now, in 1994, that is how many people were in that senior citizen's building then. The food was delicious. They didn't have regular food; they had food that people were cooking in 1994.

About the storm -when things like that happen, things get exposed. You can see things that you never before saw. Some people got the blame for this situation. I look at it as if we should blame nobody. It is God's work exposing things to us. I am not going to say "this person or that person" I am not letting the devil take the blame for this. I am putting it in God's hand, and I can see things better now. The next time ya'll come before us for funding, guess what is going to happen? We have to either put up or shut up.

If we want to help you guys out, we have to put the money where our mouth is. So, again you guys, when I brought this up a couple of weeks ago, commissioners, even though you are my friend, now, remember what you said? Everybody said, "No, that is too bold." "it is too drastic." Sometimes you have to do drastic things to get some stuff happening.

Now, guess what, Commissioner Taylor, Ms. Vice-Chairman? You went drastic as well yesterday. Guess what, Commissioner Holt, you went drastic as well. Today you've got to do something drastic. I don't blame anybody personally. I am an optimist. Right? I think that God let this happen. Everybody was here and played a part.

I just posted something on Facebook, and people all over the world see it. They listened. You all effect probably about 12,000 people in Gadsden County. They were looking to see what was going to happen. So, again, you shook up the world. I hope these young folks can do the same thing one day and start organizing and coming together. But not coming together for self-interest or having to increase that one person, but coming for the good of the people.

When Mr. Scott stood up back there and said, "Monday morning, we are going on strike." You know what happened Monday morning. He was out there. He organized it well. I am not saying whether it was good or bad, but guess what? I was out there eating chicken, too.

Again, I don't blame anybody, Madam Chair, for anything. I am so blessed to be here and be a part of greatness. Hopefully, when the budget comes up next time, I want to do my part as a commissioner to put more money into it. That's it.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you, sir.

Please let's respect the order of hearing. Let's not blurt out. That shows total disrespect. I don't want this meeting while I am participating as your chairperson to be strict and be just one way and not allow you to breathe loud. That is not my intent. But I ask you to respect and keep things orderly. We do know that by being orderly, the presence of God is there. Let's monitor the little outbursts because the clerk is recording this meeting. Certainly, we don't want to look like we don't understand our proper mannerisms. We don't want to look like that. I know there are a lot of emotions going on here, but let's keep them in order.

Ms. Bouie, I am going to hear from you, then we are going to make a decision.

Lori Bouie:

I apologize. I got emotional. I offer as a suggestion; there is a need for change. I am suggesting that we have a (for lack of a better word) a mediator to come on board who would have some authority with the executive director and work alongside her. Perhaps someone who knows some of the challenges. Hopefully, Ms. Lisa can recommend someone. I want to volunteer to be a person to make the day better for the seniors so that we can get the center immediately back and still have Ms. Jo until she decides what she wants to do. There is a need for decorum. (speaking of the executive director) Even though you treat me poorly, I will honor you and allow the opportunity to decide what you want to do. I do think there is a need for someone to be there to ensure the seniors' treatment. The opportunity was given to the board to resolve, and they have not, so I am strongly suggesting that we bring in someone.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you.

Yes, Commissioner Hinson.

Commissioner Hinson:

Madam Chair, this is just a small piece of this, but I want to get some folks to be involved. That is my humble opinion. I know there is Crossroads right alongside, down the street, there is East Gadsden High School, Tallavana Christian is right up the road, all the high schools in the area and other places. These young folks, we need to make them do something other than just hanging around. This is just an idea. I am not trying to change policy. I think we could have two seniors plus one high school student in my humble opinion to serve on the board of directors. That is a way that the kids could see what is going on, and they can be more involved.

Mr. Scott said he had a recommendation that one senior citizen should be on that board. You have to have an odd number. Right now you don't have an odd number with eight people. You can always have a tie vote, so you need an odd number. So, what I was suggesting is to have two senior citizens on the board to get their perspective plus one high school student so they can bring in volunteer resources. Those students need to start volunteering in our community. That kid could get the marching orders then we would have all groups coming around. Business leaders in the community are doing some stuff. You got the senior citizen part of it, and they know what is going on, and they can march on and tell other senior citizens. Now, you've got educators and whatever knowing what is going on, but that one high school student can make sure that the young folks know and appreciate what is going on and they can do a little bit more volunteer work for our senior citizens. That is just my little idea. We have got to get these young folks involved. We say a lot about them, but we need to challenge them and see if they can become a part of it. That is just my little humble opinion of it.

I said two senior citizens from here plus one student. He gives his input, and he can help other people do their work.

I remember when I was at Crossroads years ago, we had the students to go down the street and do projects in their community. The kids enjoyed it because they were a part of the community. I am not trying to tell my age, but, that was about 20 years ago. I think it would be great for kids.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Certainly, their board can look into it.

Commissioner Holt, then we are going to wrap it up.

Commissioner Holt:

Commissioner Taylor, I will make a few comments after this, but I think they are getting ready to go. We all need restroom breaks. If we can make a decision, I will make a few comments, and then we will be ready to go.

Mr. Attorney, what would your recommendation be as far as weeks?

Make a motion contingent upon the outcome of that meeting tomorrow, or do we need to address it at our regular meeting on the 19th?

Attorney Weiss:

It honestly depends on how quickly you want it to be effective. As you said, we have a regular meeting on the 19th. We can certainly wait and address this at that time, and it would not have to be a contingent motion. We would certainly know all the facts.

Commissioner Holt:

O.k. Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to meet next week, anyway on Tuesday. We can address it then, and it will allow that group to look at that board at their meeting, and it will give Area Agency an opportunity, and by Tuesday, we are going to be meeting at 6:00 p.m. anyway. So, we can get a report.

Oh, no? (reaction from the audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, the reason I am saying that is that they Gadsden Senior Services, Inc.) meet tomorrow at 9:00. Area Agency is going to make their decision by 5:00 p.m. anyway. That doesn't give us any time to meet anyway. We are going to have a regular meeting on Tuesday. I am not saying you need to wait. I am just saying that it will allow both groups to make their decisions. We cannot supersede the Area Agency because they are the one that has the money. So, it looks like that makes sense that we follow their meetings. We are already set to meet on Tuesday. There is no need to schedule another special meeting when we can add their reports to the agenda for Tuesday.

The other thing is, Mr. Attorney and fellow board members, how do you feel about that suggestion to add their reports to the regular meeting agenda on Tuesday?

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I heard you when you asked a few minutes ago whether or not the board was going to make some comments, but I wanted to have some last comments so continue.

Commissioner Holt:

I don't have another comment; I just wanted to see if I need to put it in motion. I can put that motion out there, and we can end this. We don't need a motion if we are not going to address the lease. We can add that to the agenda and address that on Tuesday.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Based on what I am hearing, we need to have a little bit more information other than the lease. I have a comment about that. I tell you what, let's do it this way. You finish your comments. Then I will hear from the Commissioner, and I will make some comments. These are only comments. After comments, then whatever we need to put on the floor as the motion, we will do it. Let's get feedback from each other first.

I hear you about wanting to put the lease on next meeting. Now, that is in my mind. So, let's hear from all of us and then we will put something out there. Maybe between the three of us, we can get this a little bit closer to what the seniors want as well.

Commissioner Holt:

I am willing to go ahead and let's deal with the lease. Let's go ahead and deal with it.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I don't want to deal with the lease right now. Let me say this to you.

Commissioner Holt:

O.K. we don't have to vote on it. That is all I am saying.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I don't want to vote on the lease right now because you know what? In my opinion, when Commissioner Hinson said something about the lease at that first meeting when we first got here, to me, who settles the most will be the seniors because that is the building that they use for their activities. So, if we take the lease, I know that does push the hand of Area Agency. But, if we take the lease, they could very well go somewhere else and set up in another facility. So, I don't think it is just the lease at which we need to look. A lease is an option.

Commissioner Holt:

Commissioner Taylor, I didn't mean in that sense. What I am saying is if we do not need to address it, let's not address it. What I am saying is that if we need to address it, then let's go ahead. If we discontinue the lease with the non-profit, we can still lease it to anyone we want, which is Area Agency. So, it is not saying that if you take from the one you can't give to the other. What I am saying is let's not address it at all tonight. Let's move it to Tuesday night.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Let's continue to talk.

Commissioner Holt:

But, It is time to go.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I know it is, but if we have not gotten a resolution and that is what we are trying to get.

Commissioner Holt:

It is resolved to that point. There is nothing we can do about it today. Friday is a work day, and Monday is a work day. We are going to meet on Tuesday. So, we don't need to address the lease until we meet on Tuesday. It is not a money issue. It is an issue we can add to the agenda because we are not receiving any money anyway.

The other thing is we can move because that is the only thing we needed to address today. Everything else has been pretty much hammered out.

Commissioner Hinson:

I think somebody brought some food back there somewhere. You know a pastor never wants to get between the food and the people. So, I think that I am finished for the day.

Vice- Chair Taylor:

Let me sum it up so we can do this.

Mr. Attorney, I am going to ask some questions.

Lisa, if you don't mind, I am going to ask you to come back to the podium and let's sum this up, so that we can move.

I have one question, and then we are going to sum this thing up. One question

Number one. I did hear that there were a minimum and a maximum of board members that need to be on that board. What is the minimum number?

Attorney Weiss:

I have read the by-laws. I do not see a minimum. I see a maximum of eleven (11.)

Vice-Chair Taylor:

There is not a minimum.

Lisa Bretz:

It is up to eleven members.

Vice –Chair Taylor:

So, there is no minimum.

Lisa Bretz:

The only specifics are representatives from certain districts and up to eleven members.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you very much. I wanted to make sure.

O.K. Now, the reason I asked you to come back up is that I want clarity and I want the seniors to hear these words.

In the morning, the worst case scenario in trying to meet their goals and objectives is what? What is the worst case scenario of trying to satisfy what these seniors want? What can happen in the morning that could hinder that from moving forward?

Lisa Bretz:

In my humble opinion, nothing. I still have the responsibility to your citizens.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you very much.

So, whatever comes out of that board, we still move forward with the termination of this lease.

Lisa Bretz:

You have the privilege to do what you feel you need to do.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

No, no, no. Not the lease with us. Not our lease.

Lisa Bretz:

Our contract will terminate at 5:00 p.m. if they, at a minimum, address what I have asked them to consider. There are four board members that I specifically asked for letters of resignation. Since we have been meeting, I have received emails.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

So, who are the board members that have resigned? Or is that not public information yet?

Lisa Bretz:

The board has not had a chance to address it, so I would prefer not to mention them.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

I am comfortable. When it is time to re-write the by-laws, could this board have a little more input in the by-laws? We wrote the first set. Would that help the new incoming board?

Lisa Bretz:

There still needs to be contingencies upon moving forward with a provider. The contingencies are that they work in tandem with the county commission, with my agency and with their citizens. 100%, I stand behind supporting this board to be successful.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Very good. And we stand 110% behind the Gadsden Senior Services, Inc.' new board and Area Agency of them being successful. We do lend you our support, however, to sit and hold your lease puts us in a conundrum. Here we are being asked by our constituents to have more hands-

on to have more abilities to go in and make changes, and we cannot. You have clearly stated what our limitations are. You have clearly stated them, and there is truth in what you said. But, we want to be able to go forward having some input.

You made a statement that you want to minimize government involvement. Well, Lisa, the government funds your agency. So, the government is already involved. And if the government chose to pull your organization because you are a non-profit organization, they can very well do that.

Lisa Bretz:

Absolutely.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

So, I do want to see some level of participation from this county commission. That is important because it is our citizens that they are serving.

Now, the other thing as far as this lease is concerned, I don't want to pull the lease. I believe that is something that will hurt the citizens. We should look at some other avenue and have some more involvement.

Board, can we look at taking part in writing the by-laws? Can we look at that? Can we have a liaison from this board to work with your board? Can we look at that so that in going forward, there will be a little bit more buy-in that we can have some say-so whenever or if ever a situation comes up again? When the seniors raise issues, we want to deal with it in a manner more to their liking. When they went on strike, the staff closed the doors; they called the police. Now, we are saying, "Let's close the doors," too. If they didn't like it then, why would they like it when we do it?

So, I think we need a little bit more of a buy-in to what is going on with those services. It can be done through the by-laws. We can have some participation when they are ready to be rewritten. I think that is where your strength is.

The funding: If we take away the funding, again, those boards are not affected by it. The seniors are. So, everything that you are looking at taking away does not have an impact on the people who are causing the disarray; it has an impact on the people who need the services. We end up hurting them by telling them we are going to take away the \$60,000 and it kills you being able to go to Longhorns. That is all I heard last night down there -being able to go to Longhorns. So, if we take those dollars and we close the doors, who gets hurt? It is our seniors. The only way we can have some real impact is to get into the by-laws. We wrote to them; we can re-write them. They re-wrote them in January to be able to stay on that board longer. That is what they did. That is what I would have done if I had wanted to stay on.

That is what I am trying to do now to have some impact when they come to us and ask for help. That is how you are going to do it.

So, what is in front of us today, Mr. Attorney is a resolution to dissolve the lease?

Commissioner Hinson:

Motion to deny.

(inaudible remarks)

Laughter

I'm good. I'm good.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Don't you say another word like that. (said in jest)

(Laughter)

Let me finish. I heard what you are saying.

What else can we do other than take the money and take the building? I don't want to do that.

I want to get involved.

Lisa Bretz:

Madam Commissioner, I would like to recall that several years ago under your prior county administrator, Mr. Robert Presnell, that our board worked with Gadsden Senior Services Inc and the commission to appoint a representative from the commission whether it be a commissioner or a staff person to serve as a consultant. I am not sure if they were a board member.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

They were because I served on it and they kicked me out from down there. They got mad at me because I didn't understand. Like Lori came up here just a moment ago, and I could hear from what she was saying, that I didn't understand how the allocations worked. I thought you were giving our money to people who were predominately white. That is what I thought was happening. So, I came up here, and I raised heck. So, my commissioners got mad at me for raising heck and kicked me out from down there. So, it was me. I was the liaison.

Lisa Bretz:

I would like to consider addressing that idea the board.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Now, that is some energy. That is some energy.

Can that person be on the board?

Lisa Bretz:

They could probably be an ex-officio member. If we are talking about only in instances where county money might be in, this is where you would need to consult your attorney for a conflict of

interest. If any of the decisions of the GSC were to be made that impacted county funding, that individual would probably have to recuse themselves from a vote, but that is something.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

The only time you need to recuse yourself from voting is when it is going to benefit you personally.

Lisa Bretz:

As I said, it depends on how the conflict of interest policy is written. I don't know what their content is.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

We won't get into the logistics of all of that. We will wait until the issues come. But, to hold the lease, to hold the money, I think it is counterproductive for the seniors. To be a part of the conglomerate is how I would prefer it to go. O.K.

Seniors, listen carefully. Here is where we are.

(Thank you, Holy Ghost, Thank you, Thank you. I feel you. I feel you.)

We have already heard that there is probably going to be some resignations in the morning. I think there will be. I think you won. I think what you wanted is going to happen regardless of what happens at 9:00 a.m. You have won. The battle is not yours anymore. You have taken the first step, and that is all He ever asked you to do – take the first step, and He will do the rest. Not only did you take the first step, but there was more than one of you. We all know what happens when two or more gather. You gathered. You have taken the first step. You did what you were supposed to do in order. Now, all of it has been done. Regardless of what happens at 9:00 a.m., you won. Regardless of what happens next Tuesday, it is over as of right now. We drilled Ms. Lisa Bretz to get to what we needed to know. That lady said in a public forum that has been recorded, "As of 5:00 p.m. tomorrow, it is over regardless of what happens at 9:00 a.m. So, you have won.

The goal now is to move forward positively. Please, when a new set of people comes down there, don't make your treats. Be humble. Be grateful. Help them. All you have done to this point is to make a joyful noise, and this community has heard you. Now they are ready to lend beside you and move on. Don't delay your Long Horn trips anymore. Don't delay going to Disney World, don't delay it anymore. When the new person comes in, and they are coming, help them. Embrace them. When you see your board member, help them, and embrace them.

Now the reason why Lori that the money is not here and is down here, the reason that money is not at the level it should be is because we have not made a connection to the community and started telling these people about the services that are down there and that it is available. The best selling tool that you have is those seniors. They get on the telephone, and they talk. They don't do facebook; they don't do Twitter. They don't do any of that mess. They get on the telephone, and they talk. They can sell your services. This is the people you need to employ – the people who are right here. That man right there gathered all of them. He knows how to get them. Each one of them got 10-15 right now if they need to. Start a phone tree selling your services. The only way they can do that, Mr. Hinson, if we educate them as to what is available to be sold.

You should always have meetings with the senior citizens and tell them what you need and let them tell you what they need. Did you know that when Michael came, and the wires got pulled from the houses that you had money in the budget to pay for that? You could have put those senior citizens wiring back up because there was money available. Did you know that the young man that is sitting at home right now with his Momma can get \$209 a month? Did you know that washing machines and dryers can be paid for and replaced? You need to tell your seniors what is available so they can help you sell your services.

To Board Member Katrine McSwain, I admire and respect you, young lady. What you did the other night was telling the truth. To Board Member Robert Youman, I felt your heart and spirit. I looked at you scratch your head the other night in disbelief. Probably one of the finest fundraiser there is. He hit me up for \$250.00 for just saying hello. And then, Board Member James Hinson, he is good at it. You have the ingredients. Ms. Berta Kemp has a good heart. I believe it. I believe that. Intentions were good. I believe Jo's intentions were good. But as someone so eloquently put it, "Sometimes there isn't time." I have no disrespect for anybody on that board for serving their time and did it for free.

Commissioner Holt:

Commissioner Taylor, I need to comment right quick I have to go.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Excuse me, excuse me. Just a second. Excuse me just a second. We will do better.

Commissioner Holt:

That is better.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Just a second.

So, what I am saying to you is though we may not give an exact approval of what is on here because I don't approve of taking your money and I don't approve of closing those doors. I am going to say to you one that is based on what that lady has said, and if that lady doesn't keep true to what she has said, then I am going to get an attorney. I don't think that is going to be necessary.

One question to you, Ms. Lisa. Can they come back Monday morning regardless of what happens tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. Can you open up those doors and let me come down there and feed them the lunch that I was talking about feeding them on Monday? I want to know if I can come there on Monday and feed them?

Lisa Bretz:

Yes, ma'am. All they need to do is let us know if they need transportation getting there.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Yes, they do. Yes, they do.

Lisa Bretz:

Then we will make sure that they are here.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Mr. Scott, may they please come back on Monday?

Willie Scott:

Yes.

Thank you very much.

Let me hear from Commissioner Holt, and then I am going to tell you what I always tell you at my fish fries. I am going to tell you

Go ahead, Commissioner Holt.

Commissioner Holt:

You asked one question, and I was about to make sure of, and that was about Monday. That is one thing that I wanted to know because I am going to be back on Monday. That is one thing.

The other thing is, and I have to go. One thing I must say and I said it to some of you seniors. The economic base of the county determines how much money we can give you and other groups. You need to come back and pull together at budget time and make us accountable for bringing jobs and economic development here.

What is happening is you are pulling together right now, but we don't pull together during election time and say, "Give me your agenda for economic development for young people." Young people generate money. When they generate the money, then we can give it out. They are the ones that work.

I have to go. I don't want to break the quorum, but when I leave the meeting, the quorum is broken, and the meeting is over. We only have three people. So, I need to let you know that I need to ease on out the door.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

We are getting ready to adjourn so you can go on. Let me say this to you all. When she walks out that door, the meeting is officially over. If you want to stay and chat a little bit, we can stay and chat just a little bit. Stay and chat with me cause I want to chat just a little bit. The meeting is officially ended when she walks out that door. Let's do this legal. It won't be official when she walks out that door, but I don't want you to leave because I want to chat. Is that O.K?

Commissioner Holt:

Do you have to beat the gavel in the meeting before they can stay? Is that what we have to do officially?

Attorney Weiss:

Once there is no quorum, you can't have multiple commissioners having a conversation about this issue.

Commissioner Holt:

Two commissioners can't have a conversation about it.

Commissioner Hinson:

She can talk, and I won't say anything.

Attorney Weiss:

Well, no.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Listen, we are fine. Thank you. I've got it.

I've got it.

Thank you. Have a nice day. We are fine.

She is still here, so I will say what I want to say.

Ms. Berta, did you have your finger up? Did you want to say something? You may.

Berta Kemp:

I am speaking this time as a senior citizen of Gadsden County, not as chair of the board of directors.

I have heard a lot of statements and all being made during this time. Some of them are incorrect statements. Some were not true at all. I just want to make sure that when you are doing something, do your homework. I have heard it said that we have \$400,000 and that we only pulled down \$250,000. That is not a true statement. We pulled down over \$400,000. I heard people say certain things about what we did out there – that the blacks were being fired and whites hired. There has not been one black fired. There has not been one white that replaced a black. But, my interest tonight is that you make sure, as a citizen, that you get some correct information. Like you were talking about the lease, I think that should have been aside until after you get with Ms. Bretz concerning what is going on as far as the senior citizens. I am speaking as a senior citizen and not as chair of the board.

Vice-Chair Taylor:

Thank you. That is exactly what we are doing right now. We are not going to move on the lease. Your suggestion has been taken.

Berta Kemp

Y'all can't meet any longer, but, I will be talking to my commissioner.

Commissioner Holt left the meeting chamber at this juncture. A quorum was lost, and the meeting ceased. Commissioner Hinson left as well.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners

March 14, 2019 Special Meeting

The only remaining commissioner remaining in the chamber was Vice-Chair Taylor along with the county administrator, and the attorney.

Commissioner Taylor lingered and visited with the seniors who were present.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Vice-Chair Taylor declared the meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m. upon the loss of a quorum when Commissioner Holt and Commissioner Hinson left the meeting.

Gadsden County, Florida



ATTEST:

Nicholas Thomas, Clerk

Anthony Viegoesie, Chair
Board of County Commissioners