

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY,
FLORIDA HELD ON MAY 14, 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
Brenda Holt, District 4
Dee Jackson, County Administrator
David Weiss, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

WELCOME

1. Anthony O. Viegbesie, Ph.D, Chair

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone to the Special Meeting Hearing for consideration of removal and termination of the current County Administrator and Appointment of an Interim County Administrator.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pastor Roosevelt Rogers, Old Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church appeared before the Board and gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Taylor appeared at 4:28 p.m.

Chair Viegbesie then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at 4:29 p.m.

Chair Viegbesie asked if there was anyone who wished to speak on any non-agendaed items and there was no-one.

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD

Pastor Roosevelt Rogers III, 9260 FL/GA Highway, Havana, FL 32333

Sam Palmer, 1225 Berry Street, Quincy, FL 32351

GENERAL BUSINESS

2. Consideration of Removal and Termination of the current County Administrator and Appointment of an Interim County Administrator

Mr. Weiss introduced the above item and said this was for consideration of removal and termination of Mrs. Jackson, the County Administrator.

Commissioner Morgan returned at 4:31 p.m.

and to provide her with thirty days written notice of termination under the contract and authorizes the Chair to execute the thirty days' notice as well as appointment of an Interim County Administrator, which would be effective on the date of termination if that was the will of the Board.

Chair Viegbesie said he had a letter of support from Sheriff Young, who asked it be read into the record. Commissioner Morgan asked if they had also received a copy of the letter and the Chair stated it was in the envelope that was before them and he questioned it being received so late.

Chair Viegbesie read the letter into the record.

Dee Jackson said she was grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as the Administrator to the County. She said she was proud of the job she had been able to do working alongside the Commissioners and Staff and together they had accomplished some wonderful things that have been overshadowed by questions of her uncertain future as County Administrator. She said she was proud of the work they have accomplished but most proud that her termination had nothing to do with her job performance. She added that she had never been reprimanded by any of the Commissioners and even at the April 16th meeting where it was voted that she be terminated, Commissioner Taylor applauded her efforts and bragged on her intelligence, skill sets and what she has been able to do. She said the question was if her termination was not about her job performance then what was it about. She said she has heard in the community she accepted overtime pay that totaled \$11,500, which was calculated by the equivalent of her hourly wage. She said it has been told that she stole money and that she did not deserve the money, neither of things was true if they did not also implicate every Commissioner on this Board because she could not have received any money that was not approved by the Board. She said on two occasions this matter was discussed, voted on and approved. She said if there were any problems with her receiving the overtime pay, she wished with everything in her that it would not have been approved. In hindsight, if she had known that her accepting this, she would have rejected it. She said if she had not been approved for the overtime check, nothing would have changed in her life. She said her monthly bills are a total amount that she could have become a McDonald's manager or a teacher and they could afford to live like they live because she and her husband have been good stewards over what God has blessed them with. She said if she had known that accepting a check that the Commissioners voted on twice would have placed her in this position, she would have never accepted it. She said tonight, if what she accepted that the Board approved twice and did not think she deserved it, if it would change their minds she would give it back because she valued the work she has done and the sacrifices made. She added that she has given the County the best she had and had done it while facing the most challenging times of her life. She said she did this job knowing she was leaving a child with State 4 cancer in a hospital with her father. She said the question she asked herself over the past few weeks was, if the majority of the Board said she has done a good job, and if she was able to do so under pressure of having gone through Stage 4 cancer diagnosis of her daughter and what she has gone through, for everyone to think about what kind of job she could have done when her child finished this process in July. She said she was at peace and had no fight left in her with the issue and no matter what the decision was, she would never lose her fight for what was best for the County. She said she was leaving the County Government better than the way she found it. When she accepted this job, she knew at

any moment without any cause, she could be terminated but did not know that her professional skills and success would be overshadowed by her lack of political skills. She said she was torn to mention but the discrepancy was too great to not, she respects the County Attorney and have worked with him in past and will continue to work with him if she remains as County Administrator. In the same meeting this Board voted to terminate her after a majority of the Commissioners said she had done good job; the County Attorney's job also was at stake. What was interesting to her, the majority of the Commissioners expressed displeasure with his job but there was no vote to terminate him. Instead the Board voted for probation. She said she would have appreciated it if she had been offered the same courtesy as the attorney with being put on probation. She said if it was the Board's pleasure that she leave this position, she will lose her job but would leave with her head high and hold her integrity. She said records do not lie and was thankful that a simple public records request by anyone could prove everything she said to be true.

Sam Palmer, 1225 Berry Street, Quincy, FL appeared before the Board. He was here to support the County. He said the Manager has to make sure she works with all the Commissioners and adhere to them. He said they understood that documentation was important. The County Manager is an at-will employee. He said if it was based on the money, was it really was about the money, he thought she should return the money. He stated with the Commissioners, In prior years, they had an Emergency Room that they call a hospital. The Commissioners fired Ajax and hired another firm and they lost thousands of dollars to the County and he saw no Commissioners get fired. They then brought someone in from Alabama to make the County "whiter" and a lot of discrimination took place, never saw any Commissioners get fired then either. If it was about something else, deal with that something else; if it was about money, he did not think it was enough to talk about when talking about money. The Commissioners have cost the County much more than \$20,000.

For the record, Mrs. Jackson said there was a check being passed around but that was her payroll check added with the overtime check. IT was not a \$20,000 overtime check and was purposely misleading.

Pastor Roosevelt Rogers III, 9260 FL/GA Highway, Havana, FL 32333 appeared before the Board. He said he was speaking personally as a citizen, not as a Pastor. In the April 2nd meeting, Commissioner Hinson made the statement to do what was best for the County. When he said that, he said as Commissioners because they did not take the time to read the request that was placed before them in a timely manner it was a lesson learned and they wanted to move forward. He said it believed it was a 4-1 vote in regards to not having her pay the overtime back. In that meeting, Commissioner Taylor made the comment if it was not paid back; it would cost her more in the long run and seemed a retaliatory statement. After that meeting was over, the Board went into the regular meeting and Commissioner Morgan made a recommendation to discuss the County Administrator's position. To him it seemed retaliatory because of a vote that allowed her to keep it and because she did not have to give it back, it came across to him that they were retaliating against her with the removal of her office position. He said he was then bothered that he received a text from a County Commissioner that had several emails with County officials and in that text was a copy of her personal financial information regarding the Administrator that he did not ask for and felt that was messy and unprofessional as a Commissioner. He said he called Chair Viegbesie and expressed concerns with regards to that matter. He added if this was not personal and political, he did not believe he would have received the text. He asked that they

move forward with allowing Mrs. Jackson to continue as the County Administrator in what she was trying to do to help all of the County along with the Commissioners move this County in the right direction. He said if they gave one employee the option to be placed on probation, make it for other employees as well.

Janice Simmons, 220 Slash Circle, Midway, FL, appeared before the Board. She said she could not understand and what hurt her, was she read the list of accomplishments that has been accomplished and could not understand the reason for termination. She wished they would go on record as to why they felt she should be terminated. BOCC voted for the overtime, why vote for it and then fire her. She said she could not understand why the Commissioners would divide the County in the way they have.

Rolanda Jackson, 2480 Bainbridge Highway, Quincy, FL appeared before the board. She thanked the Administrator and said she was an example of a superwoman. She said the Board was elected to protect the integrity of the County, not to use their position for anything other than what they were voted and elected to do. She asked the Commissioners if anything on the sheet (that was provided on seats in the audience) was a lie. She said they had to give folks a chance and opportunity and asked them to rethink their decision to reconsider. She said this should not be personal and to put pettiness aside. She said other counties rewarded their top officials for their actions during Hurricane Michael.

Rev. O'Hara Black, 274 Forest Circle N. Havana, FL appeared before the Board. He said the Chair said the Board works for the citizens and that is true. He wondered tonight if they wanted to say to their constituents they were reactive leaders. He said they voted twice and now feel they did not do their due diligence and they want to codify and clarify after the fact and that was reactive. He said the County needed proactive leaders that would do right things the right way. He said he had received the same text message that Pastor Rogers mentioned. He found it disturbing he would be sent information by a Commissioner without it being requested and thought he knew that there were people in the room and in the County that has the ear of their constituents and reelection was coming. He said the Administrator was not the only one whose job was on the line tonight.

Emanuel Sapp, 821 2nd Street, Quincy, FL appeared before the Board. He said he has seen things change in the last few months. He said she chose to stay during a difficult time in her life. He added that she was here for one reason only, she was human. Her success lies with the Commissioners. If she violated any procedures that were not in place, this Board should take the first approach, when her child was sick, she served the community. He asked that they give her the opportunity to continue to serve.

Donny Young, 934 W. Crawford Street, Quincy, FL appeared before the Board. He said he also received a text from a County Commissioner and did not like it. If this was not about the money, what was it about? He said she was the first black female County Administrator in the history of the County. The Board expressed displeasure in the County Attorney but there was no vote rendered for termination but instead gave him probation. He said for them to learn from it and make sure there was something in place. He asked for reconsideration on termination of the Administrator. He said if they voted to terminate her, they would see him in 2020.

Nancy Mejia-Romero, 1020 S. Magnolia Drive, Quincy, FL appeared before the Board. She said

she was sad that a lot of people she looked up to have let her down. She said she was a dispatcher and thanks to Mrs. Jackson, they will have a new dispatch center soon. She said she went 36 hours with no sleep and she witnessed her sleeping on the floor. She said she did not see her leave until that Sunday.

Robin Jackson, 815 Selman Road, Quincy, FL appeared before the Board. She challenged them to follow the motto of the County to “do something original”.

Commissioner Holt stepped out at 5:21 p.m.

She asked that they not do what people have predicted them to do and not to be bitter about decisions made already. She said the track record spoke for itself.

Commissioner Holt returned at 5:23 p.m.

She said they wanted a vote for the County.

Commissioner Holt said she did not want to talk about what may have been or what they may do; she wanted to talk about what they have done. She said she did not vote to get rid of Ms. Jackson nor the attorney. Since she’s been here since 2002, there was only one manager that left that she did not put in a motion to get rid of, and then she said two because other people wanted him gone. She said she has spoken with Ms. Jackson and asked her what she wanted. She said during hurricane they stayed together and they slept on the floor at the Emergency Center. She said they had an emergency where someone was killed in the house.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at 5:28 p.m.

She said everything went down and they had no way to communicate. They got Road and Bridge workers, deputies, paramedics and a heavy vehicle and only made it two blocks because of the bad weather. She said they stayed day and night; had people that could not get to dialysis. She said she put them in her car because the ambulance could not get down Highway 267 to them. She said they had people there that they had signed the agreement with in case of the hurricane but the contract had to be signed.

Commissioner Morgan returned at 5:30 p.m.

She asked what the clean-up could cost and was told could be \$60 Million. She told them they did not have that kind of money. She said you could not sign an agreement unless they could deliver on the funds.

Chair Viegbesie stepped out at 5:31 p.m.

She said there was a problem and concern with everyone that worked overtime. She said the Sheriff paid his people and he was right to pay them. She said come left to check on their families, but the ones that stayed got paid double time. Then there was a problem with the Clerk’s Office because he said they should not get paid. The Sheriff paid his people and when we tried to pay our people, that was when the problem jumped up and was what she has a problem with to this day. She said he knew it and others knew it too.

Chair Viegbesie returned at 5:34 p.m.

She said there was no right or wrong in this necessarily, it was what your conscience told you to do and sometimes you have to fix things. She said you could not change government from the outside.

Commissioner Hinson said he wanted to clear some things up. When he sees his friends in high places, high positions post something or do something, or if they were a friend of his, he gives them information so they can be aware. He said he added nothing to the list. He said his integrity was pretty good and wanted them to see what was going on. He said once he received the letter he saw a few things that were not consistent. He said it was not \$11,000, but was \$14,900 in 9 days for overtime. The reason he sent the check stub, in December he asked her and out of \$120,000, she received \$20,000 of it. He asked her if it was true and she said no. He said it was public records and could be looked at. She said no staff had received close to \$20,000. He said they could look at the December Minutes. He said it made no sense, why would the Clerk send it in a letter. He called the Clerk and asked for the stubs and anything sent out was public records. He sent the check stub as well as the time sheet. When looking at the timesheet, she put 32 hours on for 3 days on her timesheet. He said he saw a lot of discrepancies that he wanted to clear up. He came to her before they hired her and said he would give her 3-6 months. He said he was going to vote on what was best for Gadsden County.

Commissioner Taylor said she wanted to share some things. She heard her name mentioned tonight. She said most that know her, knew that she cared about the community and she takes it seriously. She said she had been in situations like this before. She said they live in a democracy where everyone has a right to their opinion. Whatever decision was made, they have to look down the road and could not make decisions from the hip. She said she had never been and never would be disrespectful. She added that she has said she has done a good job, but it did not change her opinion. She added that she strongly believed two things; everyone has their season and she was not a black/white woman; she was raised on what was right or wrong. She said the statement she made the other night was not said being vindictive. She added that six years ago a prominent family called her and asked her to testify for a lady in Court and she went because she wanted to help. She spoke trying to save the young lady. Rick Combs was prosecuting. He said it was not what you know about the person, it was what you did not know that could be very devastating and he listed things that she did not know. She said she believed in what she was going to do tonight 100%. She also added that she has reached out and talked with the Administrator. She said for several meetings she would not vote to put this on the Agenda. She said they asked to be specific as to what the concerns and issues were. She said they needed to understand that when in a position like this, it was imperative that the comments stay generic and to not put themselves in a box. She also added that everything was a public record, for them to get them, read and learn what was going on. She further stated the only thing she wanted to do tonight was move the agenda. She heard comments, "I will see you in 2020". She said with every ounce of her body, her God put her in this seat and when time comes, her God will remove her.

Commissioner Morgan thanked the ones that came to speak on behalf of Mrs. Jackson and to hear their concerns. He said he wished they could fill the room at every meeting. He said he has told Mrs. Jackson that during the hurricane, he felt, as many did, that she went beyond the call of

duty during that time. He said even though it was their job to do that as elected officials, all Commissioners have been very proactive in dealing with the aftermath of the storm. He also said he thought it was important to understand in the role as their Commissioner, the Administrator and the Chair at that time, Commissioner Holt, was in the middle of the storm and was their job. He said it has been mentioned, they hire two people, the attorney and the administrator and no one takes it lightly. He said he did not support Mrs. Jackson being put in this position initially and did not support getting rid of the former Administrator because he was experienced, currently enrolled in the DROP system and felt he was doing a good job and felt because of the fact they did not have an experienced staff in regards to Department Heads and assistance, he did not agree with removing him or not renewing his contract. He felt they should have kept him and let him groom someone to take over the position. He added this was not a personal thing and was not about politics. Someone mentioned to learn from their mistakes and he agreed and learned from one, do not support something he had not read. He said something was put on his desk at the last minute asking him to support it because it was critical that they vote on it that evening so that FEMA would reimburse what they were approving and he supported it. He said the Administrator did a good job of telling them what it was about but they did not hear the entire story and was not intentional on her part. He never felt that she "stole" money, hadn't heard that and never thought it was her intention to do that. He felt she deserved the money but not in way it happened; he felt she should have been awarded a bonus from the Board for her outstanding efforts that she did. He said efforts made with the Clerk and with Dee was agreed on and then something changed. He added that he had the upmost respect for her and her family and her efforts to do the job. She was put in an unfair position because she did not have key personnel in place to support her. He said there were some pretty major capital projects that have been ongoing for two years that have yet to be completed and that was a problem and an issue. He invited everyone to come back to meetings because it was important what they do.

Mr. Rogers reappeared before the Board. He said he wanted to make sure he understood public records, if he did not ask for records; he should not be privy to it.

Chair Viegbesie deferred the response to the County Attorney

Mr. Weiss said it was accurate to say, a public entity does not have an obligation to provide public records until requested however there was no prohibition in sharing public records when they have not been requested.

Chair Viegbesie said it was the mission of the Board of County commissioners was to build a better community by offering efficient sustainable services encouraging economic development and providing safety to improve the quality of life for the citizens of the County. He said his question was "Can a Community progress, grow and prosper if its people insist on continuing with a culture of self-cannibalism due to individual narcissistic personalities and idiosyncrasies? I declare not". He urged them, as a Community that they must stop being an army that shoot at their own soldiers and expect to win the battles of economic growth and improving the quality of life. From his point of view, the State of the County is great. They have begun to turn the corner; the appropriate personnel were being put in place; projects were moving forward. He said there was a clock on the Courthouse that has not worked in a long time and was about to start working. He said there were Capital projects in the County that now have the right personnel in place.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE MADE A MOTION TO NOT REMOVE AND TERMINATE DEE JACKSON, OPTION 2

AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. CHAIR VIEGBESIE ASKED FOR A ROLL CALL VOTE.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN	NO
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	NO
COMMISSIONER HINSON	NO
COMMISSIONER HOLT	YES
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	YES

THE BOARD VOTED 2-3 BY VOICE VOTE. MOTION FAILED.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO TERMINATE MRS. JACKSON WITHOUT CAUSE, PLACE HER ON IMMEDIATE ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE FOR THIRTY DAYS AND HIRE FORMER ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR ARTHUR LAWSON AS INTERIM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR AND COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE THE SECOND WITH A QUESTION.

Commissioner Hinson said would like to give Lonyell Black a chance.

Commissioner Holt said she also wanted to nominate someone who would be interim manager.

Chair Viegbesie said there was a motion on the floor for Interim with a second with a question and they needed to carry that vote.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN RESTATED HIS MOTION THAT THEY TERMINATE WITHOUT CAUSE, PLACE HER ON IMMEDIATE ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE FOR THIRTY DAYS AND HIRE FORMER ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR ARTHUR LAWSON AS INTERIM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR AND COMMISSIONER HINSOM MADE THE SECOND.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE ASKED FOR A ROLL CALL VOTE.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN	YES
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	YES
COMMISSIONER HINSON	YES
COMMISSIONER HOLT	NO
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	NO

CHAIR VIEGBESIE SAID THE VOTE CARRIED WITH A 3-2 VOTE. COMMISSIONER HOLT AND CHAIR VIEGBESIE OPPOSED.

Chair Viegbesie said the Interim would be Arthur Lawson.

Commissioner Holt asked how they could vote on someone without them accepting the position.

Commissioner Morgan said he has had a direct conversation with him and he was willing to serve on a temporary basis.

Commissioner Holt said there might be others that may be willing to serve on an Interim basis that has experience that they have not spoken with.

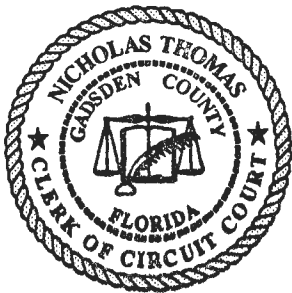
Commissioner Morgan said this motion passed with a second.

Mr. Weiss said his comments were not related to and he had no issues with way the vote occurred. He said obviously Mr. Lawson would have to officially accept in order for the vote to carry. He wanted to say and waited until the vote was taken; it was not his role in any way, shape or form to influence the decision of this Board on this matter or any other matter. He said there have been statements made at this meeting that suggested he had done so and wanted to say for the record, he has never tried to influence this Board on this decision or any other decision. He said that was not his role and he knew what his role was.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR VIEGBESIE DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:19 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA



ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk

ANTHONY VIEGBESIE, Chair
Board of County Commissioners