

AT AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON OCTOBER 23, 2020 AT 1:00 P.M.,
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: Dr. Anthony "Dr. V" Viegbesie, Chair, District 2
Brenda Holt, Vice Chair, District 4 – arrived late
Eric Hinson, District 1-appeared remotely
Gene Morgan, District 3-appeared remotely
Sherrie Taylor, District 5
Dr. Henry Grant, Interim County Administrator
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

****THIS MEETING WAS HELD BY ZOOM****

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm. He explained the attorney was joining by Zoom because of attending the Canvassing Board. He asked everyone to bow their heads for a moment of silence and then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD (3-Minute Limit)

Due to COVID-19 and the efforts of the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners to continue the practice of social distancing, Commissioners want to continue to hear from citizens under the Citizens Requesting to be Heard section of the agenda.

If citizens have any questions, comments, or concerns, please email

CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov and anticipate receiving a response within 48 hours.

The Board of County Commissioners would like to thank everyone for their patience and flexibility during this time.

Chair Viegbesie read aloud the COVID statement.

Approval of Agenda

UPON MOTION BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER VIEGBESIE THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Approval of COVID-19 Resolution 2020-62

Dr. Grant introduced the above referenced Resolution.

Mr. Knowles presented the board with two options for the Resolution, one that had a curfew and one that did not.

Commissioner Holt appeared at 1:08 p.m.

COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION WITHOUT THE CURFEW AND TO TAKE AWAY THE MASK MANDATE AND REPLACE WITH LANGUAGE THAT SAID “STRONG RECOMMENDATION”. MOTION DIED FOR LACK OF SECOND.

Mr. Knowles stated to remove the curfew would be the only revision.

Commissioner Holt said she had no problem with lifting the curfew if the Sheriff agreed and to keep the mask mandate.

Commissioner Taylor disagreed with the removal of the curfew.

Commissioner Taylor arrived at 1:12 p.m.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the idea to drop the curfew came from law enforcement? Chair Viegbesie said that came from a conversation held earlier with the Sheriff.

Commissioner Taylor said she could not vote to support no curfew, she knew the numbers were coming down, but her vote was for the curfew and for the mask language to stay in.

Commissioner Hinson said he was perplexed with the number of shootings that have recently happened and with the Sheriff agreeing to no curfew.

Chair Viegbesie asked if Col. Collins was on the line and was told no. Ms. Steele contacted Col. Collins and he joined by Zoom.

Chair Viegbesie asked if it was appropriate to move on to the next item and come back to this? Mr. Knowles said that would be fine, just vote to table and come back.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO TABLE THIS MATTER AND COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-1 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE TO TABLE THIS ITEM. COMMISSIONER HINSON OPPOSED.

Col. Collins joined by Zoom.

Chair Viegbesie asked why and how law enforcement came up with the decision regarding the curfew. Col. Collins said they could not enforce the curfew as it puts them in conflict with the Governor’s State of Emergency Order.

Commissioner Hinson said that was understandable, but there were a lot of respectable citizens that would do what the law said.

Chair Viegbesie said he understood but whatever the Governor says preempts local law.

Commissioner Morgan said he had no idea what commissioner Hinson said maybe because of the bad connection.

Commissioner Holt said she agreed to keep the mask and if law enforcement feels they could not enforce the curfew, they should drop it.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO KEEP THE MASK IN PLACE AND DROP THE CURFEW AND CHAIR VIEGBESIE MADE THE SECOND.

Commissioner Hinson said he understood all the Commissioners, but this County was different, we were the only County that had the minority as a majority. There were a lot of elders with health risks.

Commissioner Taylor said term “home rule” not being interpreted correctly. The County has the right to adopt what was best for this County. They could not have one without the other. She would rather have something on the books so they have support of this County.

Commissioner Holt said the citizens and people on Board will have to realize they have to protect themselves, the government won’t, if people do not wear masks, they were in trouble. If law enforcement has something they cannot legally enforce, they have a problem.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE CALLED FOR THE VOTE.

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

Commissioner Taylor went on record saying she did not support the curfew being lifted.

2. Approval of the Citizen Education and Prayer Vigil Scheduled for October 24, 2020 on the Gadsden County Courthouse

Dr. Grant introduced the above item and stated this was for board approval of the Citizen Education and Prayer Vigil event scheduled for October 24, 2020 on the Courthouse grounds.

COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED BY ROLL CALL VOTE AS FOLLOWS:

COMMISSIONER HINSON	YES
COMMISSIONER TAYLOR	YES
COMMISSIONER MORGAN	YES
COMMISSIONER HOLT	YES
CHAIR VIEGBESIE	YES

3. Approval of the Souls to the Polls Event Scheduled for October 31, 2020 on the Gadsden County Courthouse Grounds

Dr. Grant introduced the above item and said it was for board approval of the Souls to the Polls event scheduled for October 31, 2020 on the courthouse grounds.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE AND CHAIR VIEGBESIE MADE THE SECOND. COMMISSIONER TAYLOR HAD A QUESTION.

Commissioner Taylor asked if this was for political rallies.

Commissioner Holt said this was just to encourage people to go to the polls and vote.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE CALLED FOR THE VOTE.

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

4. Approval of the Employee Agreement for the Gadsden County Administrator

Dr. Grant introduced the above item and stated it was presented to the board for approval of the employee agreement for the Gadsden County administrator.

Chair Viegbesie said a wealth of information came last night as Mr. Elias presented a counter-offer.

- 1) \$125K per year for 2 years, the rest of the contract remains as presented;
- 2) \$120K per year for 2 years; \$500 monthly vehicle allowance; the rest of contract remains as presented;
- 3) \$135K for 1 year; the rest of the contract remains as presented.

Mr. Knowles said if they looked on the second page, a spreadsheet was done that included all of the information that data was received from, from different counties. He added that the average of the 16 counties was \$91,615.56 per year and that did not include benefits. The chart also listed the entire fiscal impact with benefits.

There were two things, the car allowance was monthly, not yearly and \$125,000, not \$125 as was stated.

Chair Viegbesie asked if they would be voting for each item or on the contract as presented.

Mr. Knowles said just vote it up or down and if they had another counter-proposal, he could present that.

Mr. Knowles said they could approve any of the offers.
Commissioner Hinson asked if the lowest offer was \$120,000.

Mr. Knowles suggested one could make a motion for what they want, and they could vote it up or down.

Commissioner Holt said in looking at the list of counties, none of ones in the area are that high, Jefferson was at \$82,500 and Jackson was at \$81,000. She did not feel they were off for offering \$105,000. She was not in favor of 5 years for the contract.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION FOR THE PREVIOUS OFFER THAT WAS MADE OF \$105,000 FOR FIVE YEARS AND COMMISSIONER MORGAN MADE THE SECOND.

Commissioner Morgan agreed with the comments of Commissioner Holt, Mr. Elias has zero experience as a county administrator and needs to consider the fact that the 5-year contract includes everything he was asking for. There was no reason to add a monthly vehicle allowance as a vehicle would be provided. As he gains experience, they can reward him with an appropriate review and raise as he moves through the 5-year agreement and he could bring in someone to groom. He added for them not to screw this up like they did three years ago. He said they have been paying the price ever since and to get it right the first time.

Chair Viegbesie repeated Commissioner Holt's motion was to keep the contract at \$105,000 and that Commissioner Morgan made the second. Commissioner Holt stated that was her motion and Commissioner Morgan stated if Mr. Elias did not want to accept that offer, maybe they should start over. They could not afford the salaries because of a limited tax base.

Commissioner Hinson said he did not know Mr. Elias, fair was fair and right was right. By looking at his resume, he was chairman of Transportation Disadvantage Board and spent years as a City Commissioner. He understood when things go bad, he remains calm. He wants someone that understands what comes with the job. With being a Commissioner, it gives him more than enough experience to understand County government and would be more than worth it. He agreed with everything said.

Chair Viegbesie said personally, he hoped he comes to work with the County and they can compromise on a contractual arrangement. The amount he was asking for was concerning.

Commissioner Hinson said to think about it and Chair Viegbesie interrupted and said he would do his own thinking.

Commissioner Hinson said out of all the Constitutional officers, he would make more; it was about being fair.

CHAIR VIEGBESIE CALLED FOR THE VOTE.

Commissioner Taylor concurred with Commissioner Morgan, she asked if the attorney could put language in the agreement that said in this amount of time he would make this amount if he received certain rankings in his evaluation. She agreed they should maintain a base salary based on a history that was collected but she understood when you were trying to get a salary comparable to the ability. She agreed with the compromise of \$105,000 but something in the agreement to show after training he's given an increase. She added they did not want to lose this man and start the process all over.

Chair Viegbesie said to be aware, Mr. Elias rejected the \$105,000 salary and made a counter of \$120,000.

COMMISSIONER HOLT CALLED THE QUESTION.

THE BOARD VOTED BY ROLL CALL VOTE AS FOLLOWS:

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

MOTION PASSED 4-1.

Commissioner Morgan said for the Board to keep in mind, he did not accept the counter, he could accept or not the original offer.

Commissioner Holt said in the contract, if they put a range, the retainer is based on the evaluation anyway. But before doing that they must have goals and objectives in place.

Commissioner Taylor left the meeting at 2:10 pm.

Commissioner Holt said any applicant has to have the opportunity to see what the goals and objectives are.

Mr. Knowles asked if there was a specified time period as to the number of years. Commissioner Morgan said same terms, take it or not.

Lonyell Butler appeared before the Board. She said she needed clarity as far as the terms and also direction that this offer is to be presented to Mr. Elias and he accepts or not and asked when it should be brought back? The board said as soon as possible. Chair Viegbesie said he would not be available until the next meeting on November 17th.

Commissioner Holt asked if any other issues come up, how would it be handled?

Commissioner Morgan pointed out effective date should be December 1st.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR VIEGBESIE DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 2:15 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

ANTHONY VIEGBESIE, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk