

AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN  
COUNTY, FL ON JUNE 22, 2022 AT 5:00 P.M.,  
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

**Present:** Ronterious "Ron" Green, Chair, District 5  
Kimblin NeSmith, Vice Chair, District 3  
Dr. Anthony "Dr. V" Viegbesie, District 2  
Eric Hinson, District 1  
Brenda Holt, Chair, District 4  
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator  
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney  
Crystal Jimenez, Deputy Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Green welcomed everyone to the workshop. Jennifer gave the invocation. Then led to the Pledge of Allegiance of the U.S. Flag.

**CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD (3-Minute Limit)**

***Anyone wishing to speak on agenda items or non-agenda items should schedule or notify the County Administrator's Office before attending the meeting and will be asked to follow the Gadsden County Public Meetings Citizens Access Guidelines. Also, public comment for Commission meetings can be submitted via email to [CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov](mailto:CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov) until noon on June 22, 2022. Comments submitted after the deadline but prior to the meeting will be added to the official record, but the County cannot guarantee that Commissioners and staff will have adequate time to review comments prior to the meeting.***

Commissioner Nesmith read the above item.

Chair Green said to allow those to give presentation on workshop. He asked Commissioner Viegbesie to help him. He asked everyone to introduce themselves at the table.

Reginald Cunningham thanked the Board for allowing them to come and present something regards the Senior Citizens Center. He went through a brief history. He said the Board changed after the Senior's initial walk on. Since that time, they had 5 different executive directors. They went through financial concerns with board members leaving and the overhead being hot. They are just starting to gain ground again to get some money in the bank. He had someone in fiscal office resign after the executive director resigned and the fiscal assistance resigned as well. Before that all happened, they were already talking to the County Administrator and the Chairman because at the last meeting, they talked about a partnership. It was suggested by Dr. Viegbesie to get with the County Administrator and the City Attorney to come up with a process model to figure out how they could create a stronger partnership. Before the executive director left, they sent a letter to the Area Agency about the change that took place and what they were planning to do. The plan that was submitted to them was that they were going to try to create a small partnership thinking they could get a bigger pool of applicants if they create that strong partnership with the County. They advertised for a coordinator to get oversight of the operation. In June, they received a letter from the Area Agency saying they were going to cut funding and they were going to award the remainder of their contract to another provider. They sent over the process of mediation. When they got to the meeting, they asked for the mediator, and the person that issued the letter said she was the mediator. He said to himself that it

was already planned. He said it was strange because everything in her findings were in 2014. They wanted to correct what was going on. They had an auditor come to train and advised them that the office was improving. The County is starting to grow due to professionalism. After the mediation meeting, his impression was that the decision was already made. Its hard to mediate something they don't know anything about. The Seniors received a letter about the introduction of the new caregivers. He said yes, it is a county building, yes, GSS would like to figure out a way they can transition. It's time for the County to step in and create something of their own, whether non-profit for themselves. He thought they had similar goals to grow but it's hard to grow when they don't have the additional funds.

Chair Green said he got in the tail end of some of the conversations to see what the Board can do. He hopes they can be as transparent as they can be. He was glad to see them came out last night and to hear the untrue statements. It lets them know they have work to do and so that they can let them know that those things are not true and see what they can do to build their trust and their faith back into the board. He believes every Commissioner is there to support the Senior Services. They want the best option for them. He said the Board is here for them, not against them.

Mr. Cunningham said when they started their meeting with the County Administrator talking about non-profits, after analyzing this particular non-profit for a couple of years, out of all the non- profits they may know, this is the only one not owned by anybody. It rotates from Board member's term. If you don't have a strong foundation when that process is going on, it can become very confusing and can become a problem. They want to create a partnership they can transition this out if the County develops its own non-profit. There is only one other County in the whole state of Florida that handles their Senior Services, which is Citrus County.

Commissioner Viegbesie said he has been a part of this situation for the longest. He was the one that forced to create the Aging and Elderly Affairs program. The County Administrator wrote the job description for the coordinator of Elderly Affairs. When Mr. Dixon came, he hired Ms. Blackshear right after she retired from Riverchase. The purpose of creating the Elderly Affair program was to take the services that came out of the frustrations that the seniors had when the seniors walked out, they were left outside in the field and were not allowed in the county building, even to use the restroom. He found out that the seniors in Chattahoochee don't know the seniors in Quincy. If they get them together, they will be involved with activities with one another. That was why the program was created and when the word got out about the program, there came the fear factor that the County is coming to take over the senior's program. From his point of view, yesterday when the seniors came, the comments were a lie. He could not stomach them and was frustrated. Mr. Cunningham came, he said he is not the Board just the Chair. He would like for the GSS board and this Board to have a workshop. He said if this was done in February, he believes that Triple A would see what's going on. They are doing what they would have done earlier. He asked if this model is something their Board has approved. He said Mr. Cunningham told him that he is the Board. That is how they got where they are now. He hopes the work will generate something to take care of Gadsden County seniors.

Mr. Cunningham clarified when he said he is the Board, every time he came to the County since 2021, the Board knew it was the direction of the Board to come talk to them.

Chair Green said it is irrelevant to have that type of discussion in reference to who said what, as long as he is the mouthpiece for that Board. He said they are in this together, for the purpose of the seniors.

Commissioner Holt said they need to have a hierarchy coming down on the agencies. The Department of Elder Affairs is the one that provides a funding for the state and federal government. After that, Area Agency is a contractor under them, then it comes to the senior citizens center. The part of the contract they are talking about, the center is one. That's going to be moved. It's Area Agency's opinion that its being moved. She asked for the name of the group. Mr. Cunningham said it's the OAA piece. Commissioner Holt asked who the OAA piece is being given to? Mr. Cunningham said Gadsden Wellness Our Future. Commissioner Holt asked who the other part is being given to? Mr. Cunningham said to Elder Care in Tallahassee. Commissioner Holt asked what they are providing? Mr. Cunningham said they are providing in home care. Commissioner Holt said she is doing this because they are throwing names and acronyms so people would understand which one they are talking about. She asked for the lady's name from the Area Agency. Mr. Cunningham said Lisa Bretz. She asked who represented the Wellness Group. Mr. Cunningham said Sherrie Taylor. She asked for the other that's going to be in home. Mr. Cunningham said Joyslyn Clerks. Commissioner Holt said she was in the mediation meeting and called Congressman Lawson before she got there. She wanted to know if he knew anything about the situation. She said he had concerns with the person over Gadsden Wellness. He said there was some concerns and she mentioned that to Lisa. The concerns dealt with food production. She said they need to be sure about this before they make these agreements and contracts. She said if Area Agency saw an emergency, she asked what is the protocol for emergencies? At the main meeting, Robert Presnell and Sherri Taylor were there. She asked why didn't they inform the county so they could have someone there. She said they didn't have to inform them. With the partnership, she thought they needed to be informed. She said no matter what, if there is a disruption, they need to know about it. Another thing was what was the emergency that was going on in May that was not going on in January and February. She asked for a chronological list of complaints against Board at the center. She gave them her e-mail and haven't received anything. When it comes to math things have to line up. She needs to know what are the real complaints and they have not seen them. The allegations were there was money that the Board could've got and didn't go after it. She said they can't make decisions on something they do not have. There was a problem with in home care. What is it? She called the Department of Elder Affairs and asked if they could help. They need to meet with Department of Elder Affairs. She asked Lisa, if they are opposing side, how are you the mediator? Lisa said this was informal and Commissioner Holt said to get the informal paperwork ready. She said she doesn't have a problem with the county being over the senior citizens center. She was very interested to see that Area Agency was a contractor of Department of Elder Affairs. She did not see why there was a disruption all of a sudden. She said what was the emergency and they have to have some consistency. The County can't make progress if they keep repeating the same thing. They should have been notified by the agency. She said the money has to flow where the people are.

Commissioner Green said a date has been set to meet with Senator Ausley.

Commissioner Hinson said he was coming to the meeting to listen. He said is always too passionate about the seniors. He said there's no such things as being nice and it's about transparency first. He said someone from the meeting last night said someone from the Board of County Commissioners

said they weren't trying to fund them. He said whatever Board member said that should be bold enough to say that now.

Commissioner Green said he's not sure which Board they were speaking of when they said it. He said he didn't recall the individual stating that it was a Board member who told them. Commissioner Hinson said it was 2 or 3 people that said it last night. Mr. Cunningham said they didn't say it was a Board member. Commissioner Green said it was told they were in charge of the center. Commissioner Hinson said if so, he apologizes but he could look at the meeting again and swore they said they heard it from someone about the Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Hinson deferred to Commissioner Viegbesie. Chair Green said he can't defer to him and as soon as he finishes speaking then he will allow him the opportunity to speak. Commissioner Hinson said that's not the proper procedure as a chairman to say that. As a commissioner, he can say that he defers to him. Commissioner Hinson said where he was coming from was that if that's the case, anyone who represents that organization, that said that, was the reason for the heartburn last night. He said why would Commissioner Viegbesie be upset right now, if that wasn't said? Commissioner Green said they all heard the information but he didn't hear them say it was someone from the Board of County Commissioners. Commissioner Hinson said not from the Board of County Commissioners, if that's the case, they need to get it straight.

Commissioner Viegbesie said yes, he is uptight based on what was said last night. They spewed a lot of lies. He said based on their age, he doesn't think it would be made up. The program manager said she went and told them but left it for the workshop. He said the Board of County Commissioners were accused from statements, that is the reason why they are in this situation. The seniors heard those lies from someone. That person needs to tell them the truth so that they don't hold the wrong group of persons accountable.

Commissioner Green wanted to be clear with Commissioner Hinson. He wanted to find the clarity from which Board he was talking about.

Commissioner Hinson said he can't recall saying a commissioner, there are two Boards present. He said in the future, they need to have Area Agency come to the meeting. They don't have to but it would be great for the agency to come. He said a non-profit is a corporation. The board members control the non-profit. Some people start a non-profit but nobody owns it. He said they need to have more dialogue. They need to make sure they find the "why". They all want what's best for the citizens. He said someone asked how the \$60,000 are being used. The Board of County Commissioners started GCDC. GCDC is a non-profit organization. The Board of County Commissioners don't know what's going on with the GCDC because they have their own board. He wanted to make sure they are transparent.

Mr. Cunningham said he doesn't think everyone on the GSS Board understands the structure of this organization. Over the past, since 1978, it's always been a secret that the county was over that. Even in the transparency with Triple A, when the seniors walked out, they called the county then. He wanted to refer to a document with the tab and it was submitted in April. They put it on corrective action. He said in two years he has seen 3 different corrective actions. He said somethings you can't control. The overall structure of the senior program has always been a hidden secret that's why they call the commissioners to resolve the issues.

Ms. Williams has been on the board for a short period of time. She was in the meeting that Ms. Holt was talking about. She didn't know anything about the corrective action. As Lisa was talking, she thought about the meeting in Quincy. She had her board members with her. She said she was going to work with them. All of the information brought to them last week was the first time she saw any of that. When they called her to ask if they could send some members over to be trained properly, the answer was that her members don't have time to train anybody. She doesn't think she gave them a fair share and it was preplanned. Yes, they had a couple of directors left with different reason but what could they do about it. It is what it is. By sitting here saying he said, she said is not resolving any issues. They need to move quickly because they are on a time limit. She doesn't care where they move anybody, everybody isn't going to be satisfied. They need to concentrate on what they are going to do, how they are going to do it and move forward.

Ms. Aguilera said she is new to the Board since 2020. She noticed they had several issues in the past and been working very hard to resolve those issues. As of now, they have the right staff and fixed most of the issues. Lisa never informed them of any emergency issues. She had a meeting but they were not invited. She strongly believes it was a decision already made for whatever reason. Mr. Cunningham and the board has been working hard. The board has a job and that's why they decided to have Mr. Cunningham to represent them. She heard Mr. Cunningham is controlling the Board and doing whatever he wants to do but that is not the case. She said they had a very good fiscal manager and they didn't train during the pandemic. As treasurer, she noticed the new fiscal manager was not the correct one, but now they have a very good fiscal. The case manager is doing an excellent job. Now that everything is fixed, the crown was taken away. If for some reason the county decided not to come aboard, they are tired and their time is very valuable. She loves to serve people, she has a non-profit back home, it is her passion. The seniors see her very often. If they decided not to continue with the programs its ok but they are willing to work.

Commissioner Hinson said the Board of County Commissioners supports the senior citizens. If they ask questions, it doesn't mean they disagree. They can't listen to what someone says. Some people go to school just to persuade others. Words and actions can be two different things. Things are in line for what they're looking for. He has to ask tough questions as a Board member. He believes the Board members agree.

Commissioner Holt said the application process, the bid process of the subcontracts, need to know the dates and when to be bided. It may be bided in 6 months. They need something definite. Area Agency contract comes up July 1<sup>st</sup> and that's a problem. They may bid the other subcontracts home care and general fund or may decide not to bid anything. They need a definite from the Department of Elder Affairs because they control all the money. Any of the things that the Area Agency said needs to be corrected was the end of 2019 to now. They couldn't look at recruitment due to pandemic. She asked what spurred emergency meetings? She said Elder Affairs is where you start at.

Commissioner Viegbesie said they have heard enough conversation if they want to hear from the seniors. Where he stands is what should they do to move forward to find a resolution.

*Commissioner Holt stepped out at 6:12 pm*

He had a conversation with the administrator about a CIA model and cities having a non-profit. They could create a non-profit from the CRA and have that non-profit be the one who runs the county senior center and keep the same services. Those ideas have been tossed around. Mr. Cunningham has a model and they have a thought process. He said why can't both boards see what can be done with that model. Then, the Board adopts or whichever process. What matters is making sure citizens are treated with regard, respect and needs are met. On June 30<sup>th</sup> he will no longer be a commissioner. He is about doing the job. They need to work up a model to provide services for GSS.

Commissioner Green said the purpose was to inform them of what's going on. They don't have control over the senior center and this information is new. He wants to find a solution with the help of both boards on how they can gain control.

Commissioner Hinson said he is curious. This organization is a non-profit. Starting a non-profit through the county. It's in partnership with the county. They don't have any legal binding other than granting money. Chair Green said they would not be able to rectify situation tonight. Commissioner Hinson said the Board of County Commissioners, 20 years ago, started a non-profit called GCDC. He doesn't know what funding they are getting. If non-profits want to move away from the board, they can do that. He said it would be great if they know the budget. People that come before us show the budget. They want to be an advocate.

Chair Green said it is a starter but won't know until they see the format.

Commissioner Nesmith said this entity has a lot of moving parts and is complicated. He is ready for solutions because he talked to the stakeholders of the board. He knew it was urgent when Ms. Brown called him and asked how she can get on the board. He explained they do not manage the operations of GSS. He asked the GSS board what they would like for them to do. They are in control. Chair Green said they should hear from the seniors.

Mr. Dixon said they have concluded there is no evil intent. They are ready to figure the situation out. The situation is not only immediate, it is something they need to prepare for. First understanding is that they are going down the road together. What is the immediate need? His perspective is to have a meeting with Senator Ausley and then apply for formal review. Thirdly, as it relates to seniors, what are the immediate needs? Can they make payroll? Is there enough savings to continue? If so, how long can GSS continue based on the financial model it is experiencing right now? He said he doesn't know exactly where the money comes from. How can they plug some holes? If they are in a fight? He suspects they are in a fight for the souls and lives of seniors. What they need to do intermediately? How can they prepare for the RFP? The reality is they might not want to see GSS anymore. They won't let that stop them because they are all committed to seniors. They will do what they need to do collectively to accomplish the goals. So, they don't walk away with the wrong understanding, they need talk about congregate life. If someone has home care, are they able to do something along those lines and does it require Medicaid license? He used to work with AHCA and they can't bill if they don't have a license. He asked for them to have some answers for them so they can get what they need. In terms of overall funding, they need to talk about that. He said numbers are numbers and the best way to get a bad name is to agree to do something and not do it. They can do some things immediately. They will take next couple of days to get information from both boards to see what course of action would be.

Commissioner Nesmith asked Mr. Cunningham about Triple A removing their funding. He asked if there are other streams of revenue available? Mr. Cunningham said yes, with in home care. They contract with Humana and Sunshine and it is handled through case management. Mr. Dixon asked how is it different from what was given to the other group? Mr. Cunningham said that's totally different. They have the in-home piece and they also contract with in home carrier. He doesn't think they can grow it in the magnitude on both sides.

Chair Green said they will need to have a special meeting. He suggested they want to hear from the seniors. They are here to help. If the administrator and the chair can get numbers so they can see what they can do to assure they are able to sustain throughout this process. They don't know how long the process will take. They need to be able to have something to work with.

Commissioner Viegbesie said he suggest what they are going to do. He passed the microphone around to the seniors.

Commissioner Holt said Mr. Cunningham produced a flow chart. It lets you know the positions. She said she would love it if he could do it with the providers. Those programs for in home care could be part of it but it may not be. She said they are asking questions because she doesn't know what those funding agencies are and what they're funding.

**Agnus Powell** said she has been going to the Senior center for 3 years. She said regarding Commissioner Hinson about the statement made that they accused a Board member. They were underhandedly misused a few weeks ago from Lisa. They sent letters about the other organization for them. It started when Sherrie Taylor got them from the center under false pretenses that they are going to have a funding but it was a campaign.

Chair Green interjected and said not to call names. He said transparency is good, but when they call names and that person isn't there, they can't defend themselves. Ms. Powell continued and said that's where it came that the Board was stopping them. They wouldn't let them speak. This organization has done a lot for the seniors. They feel that they don't want to go to the other organization if they are satisfied. Why did the Area Agency come before them and was saying their board was the reason they weren't going further? They wanted to ask questions but they wouldn't let them. They wanted them there to brainwash them. She knows the ins and outs of business because she has had a business. She didn't like the comments made but they are not going to stand for it. Some seniors are illiterate but those that don't understand can be brainwashed. Another thing she wants to know is where did they get their names from to send them information about the other organization. She said they were the only ones there from Gadsden County.

Ms. Aguilera said if they could hear the seniors that go to the center. Commissioner Hinson said it is for everyone. **Latoya Moody** said she wasn't going to attend meeting but she heard her name mentioned. She called Mr. Dixon a liar and Mr. Cunningham is a liar. Chair Green said he wants to hear the issues from the seniors. Ms. Moody continued and said hen she was the director, she served for 5 years and she stabilized the facility. She has seen the ups and downs of Gadsden Senior Services. She said this is not the first time Gadsden has had their contracts pulled. She said it saddens her that it has happened again to this magnitude because people are not being honest. The word transparent is only being utilized when it benefits that person not when it benefits the whole. When she left, September 1<sup>st</sup>, there was over \$200,000 was in the board account. She said to ask how much is there

now. Information is not being shared. She said there are reasons why things are happening the way they are happening but people need to be open and honest about why. She heard she was being unprofessional and did not want to work with anybody. When that is said, it does impact someone but wants to be clear everything she has done for Gadsden Senior Services has always been for the benefit for the seniors.

**Frida Houston** said this was her first commissioners meeting. She is familiar with their programs. She commended everyone and said everyone is doing good. She loves the elderly. She has interest in processes being done right. She asked Mr. Cunningham what services have been taken from them and given to the new vendor? Mr. Cunningham said the in-home piece and the congregate site piece. Which is funding for senior activities. She asked as of what date? Mr. Cunningham said as of June 30<sup>th</sup> and there is a transition process. Ms. Houston said she wanted people to be mindful and to make sure they look at everything legally before they make any kind of action.

**Regina Davis** said she has a non-profit and partnered with city of Tallahassee. They were their fiscal agent and they provided them with social services funds for the CDBG process. She said that is something they should perhaps consider because they don't have to recreate the wheel. If they become the fiscal agent for the non-profit, that would be beneficial for when the agencies look at that. She is unclear as to which they are seeking, if they want both of the contracts or the congregate? They need to prioritize which one or if they are going to go after both, how will they do it. If Elder Care now has those contracts, it reduces their liability. They need to focus on coming together, finding funds and getting the contract back. They could change from a nonprofit to a foundation. She said don't reinvent the wheel, the seniors are a priority.

(Did not get the speakers name) She said sometimes things happen and it looks really bad. She said they need to be honest with themselves. There has to be a gap somewhere and the good will outweigh the bad. Everyone is at fault at some areas.

Commissioner Viegbesie said they have had a productive dialogue. He thanked Regina for her input. They have a template to work with. The quantity of words you use does not determine the quality of the statement you made. The GSS board and the BOCC have something to work with. Money is the life blood of every organization. They should not allow ego or money grievance and desire for power to obstruct the purpose. As long as they have unity of purpose they will go forward. He suggests to bring the meeting to a close.

Commissioner Hinson thanked everyone for their input. He said they have to agree to disagree.

*Commissioner Viegbesie stepped out at 6:57 p.m.*

Everyone needs to know who they are. Once they have the information they know where they're going and coming and it's good to be transparent to make it work. He thinks everyone's heart is for the seniors. They need to figure out what the problem is. There are two sides to every story.

**Kathy Brown** said she knows it will take time to make decision but the new weather center is opening July 5<sup>th</sup>. She asked if there will be enough funding?

*Commissioner Viegbesie entered at 7:01 p.m.*

Mr. Cunningham said they are still operating until they give them that data. He hasn't received anything back. He said they were still instructed to operate as usual.

Commissioner Holt said she was going to ask the same thing. She wants to know the dates when contracts are coming out and email them to them. She asked if they have a sign in sheet for the people that are there? So that they can all be on the same page. She told the board they are working hard and they need to communicate better. She said the seniors are getting information that the commissioners are not getting.

Chair Green thanked everyone and echoed the other commissioners. He thanked the seniors for voicing their opinions. They have enlightened them as a board and they will do everything they can to make sure they are standing beside them in all their efforts.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**1. History**

**2. Current Situation with Funding**

**3. Outlook**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**WITH NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR GREEN ADJOURNED THE WORKSHOP AT 7:06 P.M.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**RONTERIOUS GREEN, Chair**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**