

**AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FL ON AUGUST 24, 2022  
AT 4:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:**       **Ronterious “Ron” Green, Chair, District 5**  
                  **Kimblin NeSmith, Vice-Chair, District 3**  
                  **Eric Hinson, District 1**  
                  **Jeffery Moore, District 2**  
                  **Brenda Holt, District 4**  
                  **Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator**  
                  **Clayton Knowles, County Attorney**  
                  **Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk**  
                  **Crystal Jimenez, Deputy Clerk**

**Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Green welcomed everyone to the workshop at 4:02 p.m. He followed with saying an invocation and then led to the Pledge of Allegiance of the U.S. Flag.

**Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (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 11:00 a.m. on August 24, 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.

Chair Green read the above statement out loud.

**Julie Baroody, 910 Sunset Dr. Quincy, FL – Main Street**

Ms. Baroody came before the board and thanked them for letting her speak. She is speaking on behalf of Quincy Main Street, Inc. She read out loud the letter presented from the Board President, Crystle May, in regards to their mission and funding proposal.

**Debra Wilson, 315 McArthur St Quincy, FL 32351**

Ms. Wilson stated she is present as a member of the Sherrie Taylor Gadsden Wellness Senior Services. She was diagnosed with severe depression years ago and takes high doses of medications. Since she has attended the center, her doctor has noticed a change in her demeanor. She said it is because of the classes and the center that made the change in her. The programs keep her calm and she has cut down on her dosage of medication. She asks that they keep the program intact and don't do away with it.

**James Hinson, 265 Hayward Dupont Rd Midway, FL**

Mr. Hinson thanked the board. He said they are present because they want to make sure they are included in the budget with the Gadsden Wellness Center. They don't want to be left out. Before finalizing the budget, he wants them to keep them in mind. There are a lot of things that go on at the center and he would like to invite them to come by and look at what's going on. He said he is learning Spanish and learning how to type. They are taxpaying citizens and voting citizens. Chair Green said he was able to go by the center today and was impressed. He encouraged the other commissioners to also visit.

**Gary Michael, 6942 Havana Hwy – Wellness Center**

Mr. Michael said he loves this county and has been here 6 years. He asked commissioners to come by and talk to them to get the truth. He said they do have classes and they learn about health and nutrition. He said because of their ages, they need to be alerted to certain things. The center is significant in fellowship. There is no color barrier. He wants them to remember them in the budget because everything requires money. Chair Green said they are hearing their concerns and will follow through.

**General Business**

1. Introduction (Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator)

Mr. Dixon said they are here to talk about the budget. He said they have looked at every fund. Due to raising the minimum wage to \$15, they are going to have to discuss EMS who has a pay plan. They have looked at Animal Control. They have looked at that and realized some savings. They tried to be more precise about the budget. He understands they have laid out some big plans.

2. Summary Highlights/FY 2022-2023 Budget Enhancements/Reduction Summary  
(Georgette Daniels, Assistant County Administrator)

Ms. Daniels said they have had their budget document for about 2 weeks. She has met with almost all of the commissioners. She wanted to look at some of the highlights so she drafted a document with the highlights. She has two ladies that have been working with her on the budget. They have done an exceptional job, which is Vivian Howard and Silvia Numan. She wanted to give them their flowers now and thank them. She said it takes a lot to put those numbers together.

She continued with the budget document. She went over the general fund for the enhancements/reductions. The first item is an increase of \$155,000 in the county commissioners' budget, which is for events. They wanted to memorialize it and the citizens have enjoyed the events. She said everything costs money. They have a mandate with the elevator code to bring the elevators up to a new standard by December 31, 2023. They have 4 elevators they need to upgrade. This takes care of two elevators this fiscal year and two elevators next fiscal year. They are setting aside \$10,000 as a donation for the humane society. Mr. Dixon said they have done 129 different animals that have been moved over to the humane society this year. Ms. Daniels continued with the new administration assistance position for \$41,200.00.

*Commissioner Holt entered at 4:28 p.m.*

Ms. Daniels continued with the vehicle enhancement which is for \$33,000.00.

Commissioner Hinson had a question about extension services. He was curious why the County was taking over that responsibility. Ms. Daniels said they have several agents with extension services that their salary is shared with the universities. An agent is shared with FAMU and UF. FAMU provides their agent with a vehicle. She doesn't believe any other university provides vehicles. Commissioner Hinson said every employee works with FAMU and UF. So, he was curious. Mr. Dixon said they will check it out. Ms. Daniels said they do provide extension agents but not all of the support staff and vehicles are provided by the universities. Commissioner Hinson said he doesn't mind the partnership. Ms. Daniels said they have a greenhouse and they looked at replacing it. It would have been significantly more. The structure itself is intact and the \$25,000 is to replace the panels so that it is operational. Mr. Dixon said there are some contracts that lay out what they are responsible for.

Mr. Jones said the MIU contract with UF and the county, and FAMU extension in the county is that the county provides administrative staff.

Ms. Daniels continued with the Live Where You Live campaign. It is a \$50,000 allocation. There was some funding in the budget for parks & recreation for a large grant match. They were not allocated that funding. They are in the process of applying for grants that don't require that match. The next one is an enhancement for a permit tech position for planning and zoning. Mr. Dixon said every permit they see is a very different permit. They really need a person to get into them and not just pass them and say yes or no. The next one is a reduction in the fuel system management. They were going to put the fuel tanks underground at public works but they are anticipating building a new public works. So, it didn't make sense to spend \$400,00.00 for the tanks. The next item is new funding for the county's youth initiative. It is for the Just Read program, which is \$150,000.00. The next item is to increase the funding for the BGC. It is a \$181,699.00 increase, making it now to \$275,000.00.

Commissioner Hinson asked how the money will be dispersed with the Boys and Girls Club? He asked how many areas will it go to? Mr. Dixon said it is \$75,000 for each site. He expects that the Boys and Girls Club will become more important to them as they begin to look at the crisis that our children are in.

Ms. Daniels said the next item is for the general fund for interfund transfers. There are several other funds that the general fund supports when there is not enough revenue. It is also for when they transfer funding to the constitutional officers. The \$958,000.00 is interfund transfers including the constitutional officers and transfers to the library fund. The biggest transfer was for the sheriff. The last item is the living wage increase for \$66,532.00 is the general funds portion of the increase from the current salary to the minimum \$15 per hour. That includes different facilities. The general fund total is \$1,274,379.00. She continued with the county transportation. This is an increase because that is where majority of the employees work that were below the \$15.00 minimum wage. The library fund is about \$87,000. Building inspection has requested a new vehicle. The vehicles get unsafe so they have to replace them. Mr. Dixon said they have different kinds of vehicles. While looking at a fleet program, they weren't sure what kind of vehicles they could get. They can get 4-wheel drives. They are attempting to find some commonality and savings in their fleets. Ms. Daniels said they have looked at a leasing program. The EMS have some new mandates related to Medicaid so they put a place holder to get them where they need to be. Mr. Dixon said the legislation that was passed had a line that if they deal with that money, they must be paid \$15. Mr. Knowles said in that law, if they don't increase it, the employees can come back and sue them.

Ms. Daniels concluded with the health insurance increase. It affects various funds. Mr. Dixon said the big assumptions is that they understand the revenue streams coming in are super limited. He doesn't think they should pull back on seeking new revenues. It's an investment.

Chair Green said it is an investment. They have to spend more money to make money. He asked about the Just Read program and if they have reached out to the school district to see what funding they can contribute towards this program. Mr. Dixon said their funding comes with a lot of caveats. While they are at 9% Ad Valorem, they are at 3%. When you get a lot of state money, that state money has a lot of caveats. The Board's money is able to get directly the point.

Commissioner Nesmith said he saw the chairman of the school board, Mr. McMillan, and he asked for a joint meeting. That way, between the County Administrator and the superintendent, they can put together an agenda. Commissioner Hinson said he seconds that. Commissioner Nesmith said between the school boards resources and the commissioner's resources, they can put together a plan.

3. Board of County Commissioners Priorities and Direction

Commissioner Nesmith had a question about the increase for the County Commissioners regarding all the events. He asked if they included the 200-year celebration. Mr. Dixon said that is separate. Commissioner Nesmith asked about the elevator maintenance. He asked if the other two will last until next year. Ms. Daniels said it's nothing they are at risk for, it's that the code has changed. They have until December of 2023 to meet that code requirement. He asked about the vehicles, if they have a maintenance plan. Mr. Dixon said yes, they are maintained on a schedule. Commissioner Nesmith said the budget is the most significant job they have because it drives everything else. He said he googled the responsibilities of a County Commissioner and he read it out loud. He said they need to spend time going through the budget. They decided they needed an economic developer in house. He said the reason we are in the condition that we are in is because they have not been the guiding light for economic development. He said there was a certain amount going to one of the outside organizations and he asked that they zeroed that amount and put it into their economic development office. He asked that the person they hire responds to the board. He said he attended the Opportunity Florida Board meeting and there is a myriad amount of money out there. They had a presentation by Dr. Parrish who is the Chief Economist and director of state and local policy analysis for the John Scott daily Florida Institute of Government at FSU. He has been by the board before and would like to come by again. He said he googled the best counties for families in the state of Florida and the #1 was St. Johns County. He explained why St. Johns has the best economic development and healthcare from his research. He said they need to create their own health department.

*Commissioner Holt stepped out at 5:17 p.m.*

*Commissioner Holt entered at 5:24 p.m.*

Commissioner Hinson said somethings Commissioner Nesmith said that they need to address. They need to strengthen the infrastructures first. He wants to put money into a sewer system. His pet peeve is the senior citizens. They have to meet their needs. He heard someone tonight talk about health and mental health. They have to figure out ways to help the seniors throughout Gadsden County. He wants to talk about how they can strengthen the parks and recreation. They need to identify land throughout the county. Chair Green said he would like to see areas for pets in the parks.

Commissioner Nesmith said senior citizens is one of the departments in St. Johns County. They have divisions and one of them is the Family Integrity Program, Social Services, Housing and Community Development, Veterans Services Affairs, and the Health and Human Services Advisory Counsel. They have a fully staffed department that manages all health and human services and they partner with outside entities.

Commissioner Holt said a pet area is fine as long as they are cleaning up behind their pets. The parks need to be renovated and they need to grant another grant writer. Everything they are talking about requires money. The reason St. Johns County can do all those things is because they have money and they have major investors come in. They have to look at how they market themselves. In order to have a healthy County, they need to have a hospital and good healthcare. They have to have someone to go after those funds and they have to have an economic development director. Economic development is the only thing that slows them down. They need to become a certified provider under the Department of Aging. **So far**, the Senior Citizens Center was funded under Area Agency which is a contractor. They also provide services at home. They have to have some consistency. On the superintendent, he is

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bringing an economic development person which has some success stories. They have so many projects. There is no gap between there because there are deadline dates. They need to have a chart and the progress in between those two dates. Chair Green thought they had agreed to have an economic development director. Mr. Dixon said they did. Chair Green asked if they have advertised for those positions. Mr. Dixon said they have. Commissioner Holt said if they aren't getting the type of people they need, they need to sweep the pot and get the people they need.

Commissioner Hinson said he will talk to Mr. Dixon about some of the things they need in this County. He would like for the board to consider implementing emergency housing programs. Each district set aside some money. They need to vote soon on how they can put money for emergency housing program to help seniors.

Commissioner Moore said he would like to address the economic development department. He agrees that they need a plan. He wants to make sure there are some measurable deliverables included. If not, they will be right back where they are, giving money to outside entities and not getting any results. He said they don't need to create a department just to create a department. They need to be held just as accountable and produce what they need. He said if a permit tech in planning and zoning will expedite the process for local contractors and business men to get their projects moving faster, that will benefit the county and the economy. He said Love Where You Live is great because they have to have a positive clean county. They will have to stay on top of it and hire the right people.

Commissioner Nesmith said Dr. Parrish did talk about infrastructure. He also said they haven't had a workshop on what they expect from the person for the two positions. He hasn't seen the job description. They have not had a strategic planning meeting since early 2021. Mr. Dixon said they just had a meeting with Mr. Jackson about economic development and what their positions were. He has been with the county before and presented information to the county. They are working to close that gap and they pulled back the position because he wanted to redefine some things that he thought were more appropriate.

Commissioner Hinson said if they are going to invest that money, that person needs to answer to the board. Commissioner Nesmith wanted to clarify if they are not advertising for the position just yet. Mr. Dixon said it was out there then they pulled it back. Chair Green said they want to close it out.

Commissioner Holt asked if there was something for a budget director. Mr. Dixon said yes. Commissioner Holt said they are pushing for projects to be done and completed. Commissioner Nesmith asked about the amount for the hospital in the budget. Commissioner Nesmith asked if there was a certain amount of money set aside for the hospital. Mr. Dixon said yes and there were contracts in place before they got there. Commissioner Holt said the contract runs until 2034 and it is awful. Commissioner Nesmith asked if they could please have the attorney can go through the contract letter by letter.

Commissioner Moore asked about the other health care facility. He asked if they purchase their own land or they want land provided by the county? Commissioner Holt said they could not get commissioners to agree. She said it may be that they provide land or it may be that they purchase land. Commissioner Nesmith asked if they would want to do a virtual meeting. Commissioner Holt said they need to contact them first.

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**Motion to Adjourn**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR GREEN DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 6:13 P.M.**

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RONTERIOUS GREEN, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

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NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk