

**AT A WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON AUGUST 8, 2023 AT 2:00 P.M.,
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

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

****DUE TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES, THERE IS NO VIDEO****

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair NeSmith called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m., asked 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)

The Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners welcomes and encourages public participation at all meetings of the Board. Citizens are free to speak for up to three (3) minutes on non-agenda items. Public comments and participation are also encouraged for items on the agenda. Additionally, if you are unable to attend a meeting in person, comments from the Public can also be submitted via email to CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until noon on the date of the meeting. 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. Citizens are further encouraged to participate via Zoom using the credentials on the County’s website. The Board’s meetings are also broadcast live on the Board’s Facebook page.

Commissioner Green read the above statement aloud.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Discussion and direction regarding the County Administrator’s Contract

Chair NeSmith said they were here to discuss the County Administrator’s contract. He said Commissioner Holt was the Chair at the time the contract was initiated.

Chair NeSmith asked if there was anything in the contract preventing the Administrator from having second employment and Commissioner Holt said there was never a discussion regarding same. Commissioner Holt stated she thought it was really what the Board wanted to do and that it could mean if you had an LLC or your own business, you could still have that.

Commissioner Green said that was where it could be complicated. They needed to make sure they had the correct language. He said they wanted a manager that would give them their undivided attention.

Mr. Knowles said there was only a conflict when it became a contractual issue.

Commissioner Holt said when Howard McKinnon was County Administrator, he also worked on the Gadsden County Health Council.

Commissioner Hinson said Howard McKinnon worked voluntarily for a non-profit. He also said the County Administrator’s job was a 24-hour job.

Commissioner Simpkins said she thought they were trying to make a distinction between having your own business and being employed. Because it happened in the past did not make it right. When talking about employment, they needed to make sure there was no conflict of interest.

Commissioner Green said sometimes it has to be specified exactly where the conflict may be.

Chair NeSmith said he had an opportunity to meet with Ms. Maas, Director of Human Relations Services, because he had some HR questions.

Commissioner Green had questions for Ms. Maas. Commissioner Green said he was glad to see how the Chair was approaching this as a position and not the person in the position. He had questions concerning the compensation. Chair NeSmith said that was a question he had also for Ms. Maas.

Ms. Maas said the FAC conducts salary surveys every other year and the last time it was done was 2021. That information is measured by the County’s budget. She asked to have an opportunity to ask around like counties for their information. Commissioner Green asked if she could give the highest salary for a City Administrator in the County and she said \$120,000.

Commissioner Simpkins asked if she had information for Jackson County or a county around the same size. She asked Mr. Knowles if he was aware of the information being available.

Commissioner Holt said this position was a base salary.

Commissioner Green said he understood Commissioner Hinson but to get to the point of having an applicant, they have to have a range of salary.

Chair NeSmith asked about the 90-day notification prior to the expiration of the initial term.

Commissioner Hinson said all contracts should come back to the Board.

Commissioner Simpkins said she brought this matter up in June, the fact that there was a 90-day expiration in the contract.

Commissioner Holt said there was nothing in Policy and Procedures that stated who was to bring this back. The Board makes policies and if they want this in there, they need to vote to put it in place.

Commissioner Hinson said it was good faith that the County Administrator would bring back all contracts, including his own, to the Board.

Commissioner Simpkins said the County attorney and the County Administrator by that work for the Board and when she started, she asked for a copy of the contract so she could review it. When she reviewed it, she saw if they did not do anything, the county administrator’s contract would automatically renew.

Commissioner Holt said they were the highest-level policy makers in the county. It is their job to put policies in place.

Chair NeSmith said they would now move to phase II. He said the discussion was if they were pleased with the person they had in place now.

Commissioner Green said not all of them would be perfect and he hoped they would learn from the errors they make. His personal opinion was if they kept changing hands, nothing would ever get accomplished. He said he has told Mr. Dixon he would have liked to have seen some projects completed before now. He felt they had a good manager, while there might be room for growth. He also would like to see some brick and mortar in the County. He also has met with the Administrator concerning staff morals.

Commissioner Holt said they have so many projects on the table and she wanted to see a project finished.

Commissioner Green stepped out at 3:01 pm.

She said they did better when Marlon Brown was here, they did not have to debate a contract, housing, or worry about any departments. She said money was coming in and it was time to move. She said they needed to see things done. It was not time to change in the middle of the race.

Commissioner Green returned at 3:03 pm

She did not think it was time to change and things were going well. They have to look at performance.

Commissioner Hinson said if there had been an Economic Development person, Amazon and other businesses would have been here and citizens would have had the chance to make \$20-\$30 dollars an hour.

Commissioner Holt said they were not able to fill those positions with the last 4 Administrators. They need a grant writer to push things through. She said when they advertised this position, the most qualified person was a young lady from Atlanta, the second most qualified was from South Florida. They need to finish the projects they have.

Commissioner Holt stepped out at 3:17 pm

Commissioner Simpkins said she liked to be frank, she believed they needed to be more transparent.

Commissioner Holt returned at 3:20 pm

She did not want to feel there were emergencies, such as the property being purchased and now there is still no plan for it. She wanted things planned out, did not want contracts coming to her and this was a first to get something 10 days in advance. She said she was big on staff morale; people did not need to be job scared. There should not be a situation where an employee feels threatened when they are called into an office. They need to make sure they are using people that they have and the people being put into the position, they can do the job. She said there were some positions where their tax-payer dollars could be used a little better. She also wanted them to be smart on their spending, they did not have a big budget. They need to be good stewards of the citizens money.

Commissioner Hinson said the sense of urgency did not need to be urgent, just have a deadline.

Chair NeSmith said Commissioners Holt and Green had alluded to the fact that the County Administrator had a lot of moving parts. When he first arrived in 2020, he was excited to have a notional search for a County Administrator. He said the County was coming off a very lucrative budget cycle and had a lot of projects on the table. He said the Administrator had assembled a very great team and the County was moving in a great direction.

Commissioner Hinson said in 2025, they will not have a \$60 Million budget because the ARPA money will be gone.

Commissioner Simpkins said they needed to be clear it was nothing personal, she was about the business. The main goal should be to move Gadsden County forward.

Chair NeSmith said he had a general consensus they would move forward.

Commissioner Green said based on what he saw, he believed it was on the agenda it was on the agenda for the Administrator’s contract. He asked when they will have accurate budget information.

Commissioner Simpkins said the contract stated if they did nothing, the contract would automatically renew.

Mr. Knowles said it was an additional two years extension. if they were going to renew the contract, he would advise the board to enter into a notice of renewal.

Commissioner Hinson said he thought they could do it now, but if not, table this until next Thursday. He hoped they could have the information by Friday and have the workshop next Thursday.

Commissioner Holt said she agreed with the attorney and was in favor of leaving it the way it was and discuss salary with negotiations.

Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners
August 8, 2023 – County Administrator’s Contract

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR NESMITH DECLARED THE WORKSHOP ADJOURNED AT 4:04 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**KIMBLIN NESMITH, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk