

**AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN  
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON OCTOBER 1, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M.,  
THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:** Ronterious Green, Chair, District 5  
Alonzetta Simpkins, Vice-Chair, District 2  
Eric F. Hinson, District 1  
Kimblin E. NeSmith, J.D., District 3  
Brenda A. Holt, District 4  
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator  
Thornton Williams, Interim County Attorney  
Adriana Quijada, Deputy Clerk  
Leann Jinks, Clerk Secretary to the Board

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

Chair Green called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. Chair Green led into the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

**4. Amendments and Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Dixon stated the below amendments:

Add item 10.a.1, Approval to Extend the Emergency Resolution 2025-001 Resolution No. 2025-001

*Request to be added under General Business:*

10e – Approval to Dismiss the Pending Bid Protest

Commissioner Simpkins requested modification on item 10e. She stated the item needs to take place before item 10b. Mr. Williams stated item 10b needs to be before 10e. Commissioner Simpkins stated two contracts were being addressed in item 10b.

Commissioner Hinson asked if the item was advertised. Mr. Dixon stated this was general government and was put forth as such. The item was not advertised because it was not required.

Mr. Williams stated that the policy states notice has to be put out 10 days prior. The board can add and/or take away items until meeting time, with the exception of a public hearing where you have the quasi-judicial forum.

Ms. Steele stated that the added-on items were placed on the website as soon as they were received.

Commissioner Simpkins stated these items were not advertised on the website until yesterday September 30; it was not 10 days prior. Commissioner Holt stated the meeting was properly

advertised and they should move on. Commissioner Hinson stated the agenda was sent to him on September 29, which was only 2 days prior.

Commissioner Simpkins asked Mr. Dixon why they put item 10e on the agenda. Mr. Dixon stated they have been months without legal services, and recommends to move forward because documents and contracts are hanging to be completed.

Commissioner Simpkins asked why item 10.e was added. She stated it was a conflict of interest for Mr. Williams to advise on item 10.e, as he is a part of the bid and legal contract. Mr. Dixon stated the protestor was not ready to be the county attorney. Mr. Williams stated he did not have conflict of interest, as it was about the commission having choices. It would be a conflict of interest if their wants were not in line. They could choose not to do what I recommended to Mr. Dixon.

*Commissioner Holt stepped out at 6:21 p.m.*

*Commissioner Holt returned at 6:22 p.m.*

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 3-2 TO APPROVE. COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS AND COMMISSIONER HINSON OPPOSED.**

## **5. Awards, Presentations and Appearances**

5a – Library Services Presentation

Tabitha Washington, Director of Library Services, appeared before the board and provided updates on the library. Ms. Washington presented a power point presentation.

## **6. Consent**

Commissioner Hinson asked Mr. Dixon for an overview on item 6c. Ms. Fryson, Director of Elder Affairs, appeared to give an overview on item 6c.

Commissioner Nesmith asked if there was a yearly renewal, and Ms. Fryson stated yes.

**COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

## **6a. Ratification Memo**

## **6b. BOCC Meeting/Workshop Minutes**

### **1. September 3, 2024, Regular BOCC Meeting**

**2. September 10, 2024, 1st Budget Public Hearing**

**6c. Approval to Renew the Annual MIP Fund Accounting Software**

**7. Items Pulled for Discussion**

**8. CITIZENS REQUESTING TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

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.org](mailto:CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.org) 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.

Chair Green read aloud the above statement.

**Rev. Charles Flowers, 799 Friday Road Quincy, FL 32352**

Charles Flowers appeared. He came to speak on behalf of the community park in St. Hebron/St. Matthew. Mr. Flowers is asking for support on developing the park in St. Hebron/St. Matthew community.

Mr. Dixon stated they were just talking this morning and someone was looking at the trees to be taken down in that area.

**Richelle Robinson, 335 Sparkleberry Blvd**

Richelle Robinson appeared. Ms. Robinson shared her concerns regarding dismissal of the last county attorney. She stated she has read the protest submitted by Mr. Knowles. She wanted commissioners to go through the budget line by line, and amend it if necessary.

Ms. Robinson also mentioned roads being riddled with potholes.

**Ethelyn Cunningham, 390 Grace Cunningham Road**

Ms. Cunningham appeared to speak on behalf of the community park in St. Hebron/St. Matthew community.

**Terry Mitchell, 6360 Old Bainbridge Road**

Terry Mitchell appeared to talk about Clifford Johnson Road.

Chair Green stated it was on the agenda and will get back with him when the item comes up for discussion.

**Pamela Reid, #1 Brewington Street**

Pamela Reid appeared to discuss Piney Road Park. She stated the condition of the park is bad, and the equipment is rusting.

**Joshua Keever and Julie Beruti, 104-A N Adams Street**

Julie Beruti with Quincy Main Street appeared before the board to discuss Main Street and stated they were a non-profit organization.

Joshua Keever appeared to talk about upcoming events for Main Street.

**9. Public Hearing**

**10. General Business**

**10a. Approval of Florida Department of Law Enforcement Salary Assistance for Fiscally Constrained Counties Grant**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item. It is presented to the board for approval of the FDLE Law Enforcement Salary Assistance Grant for the Gadsden County Sheriff's Office. Funding from this grant will enhance the recruitment and retention plan of Sworn and Certified Officers. The amount provided to Gadsden County on behalf of the Gadsden County Sheriff's Office is \$657,697 as specified in the State budget.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if this is an annual grant, and Mr. Dixon stated yes.

Mr. Williams stated funds were for the Sheriff.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT AMENDED MOTION TO APPROVE ITEM FOR COUNTY TO RECEIVE FUNDING AND AUTHORIZE AGREEMENT WITH SHERRIF'S OFFICE FOR THOSE FUNDS AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

**10.a.1 Approval to Extend the Emergency Resolution 2025-001 Resolution No. 2025-001**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE TO EXTEND THE EMERGENCY RESOLUTION 2025-001 AND COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

**10b. Approval of Legal Services Contract**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item. At the September 17, 2024, Board Meeting, the Board approved Williams Law Group to provide legal services on an interim basis. Since that meeting, a bid protest was filed which stayed the award of the legal services bid to the Williams Law Group. There are two Agreements provided. The first is for an interim basis and the second is for a 4-year term. Each begins on the Effective Date, and may be renewed, extended, or modified only by written agreement executed by both parties. The Interim Agreement is at will and may be terminated by either party for convenience with 180 days written notice. The Agreement for legal services is for a four-year term. Since the County was without legal services since September 17, 2024, the Firm has provided legal services prior to the effective date of this Agreement. In order to pay the Firm, the Board would need to retroactively compensate the Firm. A retroactivity clause has been added to the Agreement.

Derrick Elias appeared before the board. Mr. Elias stated he noticed that the county administrator has a recommendation for option 1 of this item and he asked the board why would they have the county administrator make a recommendation on a position that reports to each of them.

Mr. Elias stated that as he read through the agreement, he was starting to see an interchange of 'county' and 'board'. He would like for someone to point out what is the 'county' and how it was defined. He also had concerns regarding 2(a) where it mentions routine telephonic consultation. It reads that certain fees will be charged but it does not say exactly how much it will be.

Mr. Elias stated under 2(b) of the agreement, it states: in lieu of providing a cellular phone, the County shall provide a monthly cellular phone subsidy of \$75.00, which comes out to be \$900 a month. He asked if that was really necessary.

Mr. Elias mentioned Term of Agreement and stated it reads that the board agrees that the firm shall be the sole source of legal services for the county. Again, he wanted to know how 'county' was defined.

Mr. Elias stated they have two things before them tonight. They need to break it up to have one or the other. Are they voting on the interim contract or are they going to be voting on

the four-year contract. The way they have it coupled was misleading. He wanted to know what was the hurry in voting on this item.

Commissioner Simpkins stated to Mr. Elias that they did not have any representation in the process of reading through the Legal Services Contract. The contract stated 30 days but they did it 'effective immediately'. When they look at the compensation, and they decide to terminate, it would not just cost them their normal fee. The highest of three months of billing is what they will be billed. She stated she was offended by this contract personally.

Commissioner Simpkins stated the contract reflects attorney dictatorship and was not in the best interest of the county.

Chair Green stated some things were inaccurate – they did not fire the attorney; The contract was up in March and they were on a month-to-month basis. He stated that Pittman Law Group sent a very nice exit letter telling them congratulations for their selection of the new law firm and thanked them for the opportunity.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACT AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND WITH DISCUSSION.**

Commissioner Simpkins stated the whole process was not done properly. She stated she did speak with Mr. Dixon about this and will still make her comments in public to let citizens know how she felt.

Mr. Dixon stated there seemed to be a focus on him. He stated he accepted this job at the pay that was offered. Mr. Elias did not accept this job with the money offered; he wanted more money. Mr. Dixon stated every city manager made as much as or more than the county administrator.

Commissioner Hinson asked who gave legal advice on this document and Mr. Dixon stated Attorney Williams did. Commissioner Hinson asked the Attorney if they should get another form of legal advice. Mr. Williams stated he drafted up a general contract; he stated the clause should not be in there and asked for there to be an amendment of that in the contract.

Commissioner Simpkins asked if they could get actual fees in the compensation. She wanted to know the charges for photocopying and charges for the research. Mr. Williams stated the billing will be very detailed. There are two types of billing, fees and costs. Photocopies have been billed at 25 cents a page for quite a while. They typically do not bill for research itself.

Chair Green stated he would like to modify the contract from 4 years to 3 years.

Mr. Williams stated the first correction would be under Compensation; they will add 25 cents a copy where it mentions photocopying. He stated they could take out the research part, they were not charging for research. The next amendment would be to change the term agreement from 4 years to 3 years. He also mentioned eliminating the language that talks about each party conferred with their council.

*Commissioner Holt stepped out at 8:02 p.m.*

*Commissioner Holt returned at 8:03 p.m.*

Commissioner Simpkins asked Commissioner NeSmith if he thought it was fair that they just vote on the interim contract tonight. She asked Commissioner NeSmith wouldn't it be fair for the incoming commissioner to be able to vote on the permanent contract? She stated for them to just look at the interim contract versus trying to do the permanent contract.

Commissioner Hinson wanted clarification on 'eliminating language'. Attorney Williams stated there was language in the agreement that referenced that each party conferred with their council before entering into the agreement. They do not do that for government entities and it should not have been in there.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MODIFIED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACT FOR 3 YEARS, TAKE OUT THE TERM FOR RESEARCH, INCLUDE 25 CENTS A PAGE FOR PHOTOCOPYING, AND ELIMINATE LANGUAGE THAT EACH PARTY CONFERRED WITH THEIR COUNCIL BEFOREHAND. COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 3-2 TO APPROVE. COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS AND COMMISSIONER HINSON OPPOSED.**

**10c. Discussion and Approval of Task Orders with the Integrity Group for Office of Management**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item. This item seeks Board approval of Task Orders 2024-01 and 2024-02 with The Integrity Group for Office of Management and Budget services. The approval is necessary to address the personnel shortage within the OMB and ensure that critical fiscal and budgetary operations continue seamlessly.

Mr. Dixon stated he did not do his due diligence in terms of having task order prepared in advance. He stated it was their state rate prices and not a disaster rate, however it was not the price he intended to pay for these kinds of services. They ceased the services immediately once he realized the price, and brought this to the board's attention.

Chair Green stated services have been provided and they need to pay the bill.

**COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION 1, THE TASK ORDERS WITH THE INTEGRITY GROUP FOR OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND COMMISIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

**10d. Discussion and Approval of City of Gretna Love's Travel Center**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item.

The City of Gretna were requesting temporary access to the property. Mr. Williams gave a historical background.

Terri Mitchell appeared before the board. He was told they had 2 more meetings to discuss this. He owns 4 acres in corner of I-10 and Highway 12. Trucks will be driving by his property every day. Mr. Mitchell wants to have a meeting and sit down with the City of Gretna.

Mr. Dixon asked Mr. Mitchell what is his ask and what would he like to see happen.

Commissioner Simpkins asked if Mr. Mitchell has gone to city commissioner meetings and met with any of the city officials. Mr. Mitchell stated he was new to this, and had not but his wife had gone tonight.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if they must have a public hearing to convey any entity. Mr. Williams stated this would typically go to planning and zoning first.

*Chair Green stepped out at 8:50 p.m.*

Mayor Russ appeared.

Commissioner Simpkins stated she would like to get a timeline on the title search and land survey from the county attorney so it can be addressed in the next meeting.

*Chair Green returned at 8:56 p.m.*

Mayor Protem appeared to provide clarity. Mayor Protem stated he had a very lengthy conversation with Mr. Mitchell about this project.

Mr. Knowles was asking for a letter to DOT that the Board of County Commissioner's do not have a problem with the City of Gretna getting the permit. They were asking to dedicate the road to City of Gretna. Mr. Williams stated giving the letter would be a risk analysis. They talked about the possibility of doing the letter, however he cannot tell the board in this



meeting that the County owns the property. He could work with Mr. Knowles to do the title search.

Mr. Knowles stated he asking the Board of County Commissioners to agree that they will execute an interlocal agreement and agreeing to the letter that satisfied with what the City of Gretna is doing.

*Commissioner Simpkins stepped out at 9:11 p.m.*

Mr. Knowles stated the survey has already been done by engineers, and he can supply it tonight.

*Commissioner Simpkins returned at 9:13 p.m.*

Mr. Dixon stated they should give a driveway permit, as per his recommendations.

COMMISSIONER HOLT WITHDREW HER FIRST MOTION AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH WITHDREW HIS SECOND.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE DRIVEWAY PERMIT CONTINGENT ON THE TITLE SEARCH, SURVEY, AND LETTER TO FDOT AUTHORIZING THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN CONTINGENT THE PROPERTY BELONGS TO GADSDEN COUNTY AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

**10e. Approval to Dismiss the Pending Bid Protest**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item.

Mr. Dixon recommended that the board rejects all proposals pursuant to terms of RFP.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE TO DISMISS THE PENDING BID PROTEST AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND WITH DISCUSSION.**

Commissioner Simpkins stated if this was in good faith, there would be no problem with moving the agenda item up. The bid process was over. She asked Mr. Dixon to give his rationale on this item. Mr. Dixon stated that they were led to believe they had to do an RFP to hire an attorney, but in actuality they never had to do an RFP.

Mr. Williams stated every bid document has language that they can reject the RFP process. Typically, the agency does not provide the reason to the bidder.

Mr. Williams stated RFP 24-05 for legal services should be considered not responsive and therefore cannot bid.

Commissioner Simpkins asked Mr. Williams why this item was not placed prior to his contract. Mr. Williams stated that it was a choice, and the board voted to keep the item where it was on the agenda.

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE OPTION ONE TO DISMISS THE PENDING BID PROTEST AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 3-2 TO APPROVE. COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS AND COMMISSIONER HINSON OPPOSED.**

**11. Clerk of Court**

No updates.

**12. County Administrator**

Mr. Dixon thanked EMS, director Whaley, and all County Employees for their part in the hurricane preparations.

**13. County Attorney**

Mr. Williams thanked the commission for voting him in, and pledged he will work with all Commissioners and keep all commissioners informed going further.

**14. Discussion Items by Commissioners**

**Eric Hinson, District 1**

Commissioner Hinson mentioned issues with generators at schools/shelters.

*Commissioner NeSmith stepped out at 9:39 p.m.*

*Commissioner NeSmith returned at 9:42 p.m.*

*Commissioner Holt stepped out at 9:47 p.m.*

*Commissioner Holt returned at 9:49 p.m.*

Commissioner Hinson stated every school/shelter needs a generator.

**Kimblin E. NeSmith, District 3**

Commissioner NeSmith thanked the County for their hand in the hurricane preparations.

*Commissioner Hinson stepped out at 9:53 p.m.*

Commissioner NeSmith would like for the board to participate in operation green light.

**COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE A MOTION TO PARTICIPATE IN OPERATION GREEN LIGHT AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 TO APPROVE.**

Commissioner NeSmith mentioned parks in St. Hebron.

Commissioner NeSmith asked Mr. Dixon about the severance package for the former County Administrator. Mr. Dixon stated they developed the policy and sent that out.

Commissioner NeSmith mentioned resurfacing on Hardaway Highway and stated it looks great. He asked for the status on Providence Road and Mr. Young stated it was still in design.

Commissioner NeSmith asked about Maple Street and Mr. Young stated he has not heard anything back yet.

Commissioner NeSmith asked about the Economic Development trip. Mr. Lewis stated it will be late October.

Commissioner NeSmith asked about scheduling a workshop for the budget.

Commissioner NeSmith stated that the County Attorney needs to review all contracts, especially the old ones that are coming up for renewal and/or are ending.

Commissioner NeSmith mentioned having our own college in Gadsden County.

Commissioner NeSmith asked Mr. Dixon how quickly we can build our own hospital in Gadsden County.

Commissioner NeSmith mentioned Stevens School and said how proud of that project he is as it is the first project, they actually turned the dirt on.

Commissioner NeSmith mentioned the Summer Youth program and how they are projecting well over 300 plus scholars, and it is going to come with a cost.

**Brenda Holt, District 4**

Commissioner Holt stated her cell number is (850)510-9162, and if anyone has any questions to please give her a call directly.

Commissioner Holt mentioned the Economic Development trip.

**Alonzetta Simpkins, District 2**

Commissioner Simpkins asked the timeline on the road in Reston. Mr. Young stated they put in a request for a truck and should it be there in the morning at 8am; Hopefully will have it done by Tuesday or Wednesday of next week.

Commissioner Simpkins asked about lighting on Shady Rest Road. Mr. Young stated they fixed one and they need to order a part for others and are just waiting for that.

Commissioner Simpkins thanked all staff for hard work during the hurricane.

Commissioner Simpkins wanted the Board to make decisions that are wholistically and fiscally smart for their County.

Commissioner Simpkins stated we need to do exit surveys to find out why employees leave. Also, she wants a survey done with existing employees on their true feelings of the workplace.

Commissioner Simpkins stated she has still not received the organizational chart she requested in the last meeting.

Commissioner Simpkins stated she was passionate about serving and she was fighting for the best interest in Gadsden County.

**Ronterious Green, District 5**

Chair Green thanked all staff for their part in the hurricane preparations, and also thanked those who said a prayer for him for the car accident he was involved in.

Chair Green asked about Spooner Road project. Mr. Young stated they would be back in the following week to finish up the work, and it would take about 2 weeks to get the work completed.

Chair Green mentioned the boys & girls club. He asked what was the process of using the land the County already owns instead of going back and forth with the lease for 30 years with the city for this club. Mr. Dixon stated the lease has not gone forward due to the County not moving forward.

Chair Green requested a motion for a proclamation for Ms. Marley Green-Neely who is turning 85 today.

**CHAIR GREEN MADE A MOTION FOR PROCLAMATION FOR MS. MARLEY GREEN-NEELY AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 TO APPROVE.**

Chair Green provided a greenlight moment.

**15. Motion to Adjourn**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR GREEN DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:24 PM.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**Ronterious Green, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**