

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON JANUARY 7,
2025 AT 6:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING
PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: Eric F. Hinson, Chair, District 1
Ronterious Green, Vice-Chair, District 5
Alonzetta Simpkins, District 2
Shawn Wood, District 3
Brenda Holt, District 4
Roosevelt Morris, Interim County Administrator
Thornton Williams, County Attorney
Adriana Quijada, Deputy Clerk
Leann Jinks, Clerk Secretary to the Boards

1. Call to Order, Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Hinson called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and led into a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Amendments and Approval of Agenda

Mr. Morris asked to pull item 6.a, Economic Development presentation.

Commissioner Green stated he spoke with the Attorney about employees being on suspension and he would like for it to be added to the agenda. Chair Hinson stated to add it as item 11.c.

COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE A MOTION TO ADD ITEM 11.C, DISCUSSION OF EMPLOYEE SUSPENSIONS, AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.

5. Approval of Agenda

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED AND COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

6. Awards, Presentations, and Appearances

Economic Development Presentation – item pulled.

7. Consent

Commissioner Wood asked for item 7.e to be pulled for discussion.

COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA EXCLUDING ITEM 7.E AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

7a. Ratification Memo

7b. BOCC Meeting/Workshop Minutes:

1. December 17, 2024, Regular BOCC Meeting

7c. Approval and Signature(s) for Satisfaction of Special Assessment Lien

7d. Public Officials Bond Review

7e. ~~Approval of Staff to Engage Clemons Rutherford & Associates Inc., (CRA) to Develop a Work Authorization for the Required Professional Architectural Services for the Chattahoochee Library Telehealth and Career Center Grant Funded Project~~

7f. Approval of Older American Act Program III -American Rescue Plan Amended Contract

7g. Approval of the FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget Calendar

7h. Approval of Gadsden County Indigent Burial Service Provider

8. Items pulled for Discussion

7e. Approval of Staff to Engage Clemons Rutherford & Associates Inc., (CRA) to Develop a Work Authorization for the Required Professional Architectural Services for the Chattahoochee Library Telehealth and Career Center Grant Funded Project

Commissioner Wood stated he would like an adjustment. Mr. Morris stated the county received 3 million; they will have an opportunity to construct for hurricane.

COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THIS ITEM AND COMMISSIONER WOOD MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

9. Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (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 on the County's website at www.gadsdencountyfl.gov.

Chair Hinson read aloud the above statement.

Eddie Richardson, 536 Circle Drive

Mr. Richardson appeared before the board to discuss affordable housing.

Jane Dixon, 4204 Grove Park Dr. Tallahassee, FL

Ms. Dixon appeared and stated she works with consulting firm where they assist housing authorities to acquire affordable housing. She stated they could maybe enter in an agreement to utilize property on Strong Road.

Commissioner Simpkins stepped out at 6:14 p.m.

Commissioner Simpkins returned at 6:14 p.m.

10. Public Hearing

11. General Business

11.a Board Approval of the State Division of Emergency Management FEMA Public Assistance Grant Agreement #Z4924 for Hurricane Helene

Mr. Morris presented the above item.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THIS ITEM AND COMMISSIONER WOOD MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.

11.b Board Approval of a Contract with Purvis-Gray in Response to RFP 24-02 Professional Public Officials Bond Review.pdf CRA work Authorization.pdf OAA-III Amended Contract.pdf FY25-26 Proposed Budget Calendar.pdf Indigent Burial Service Provider.pdf 2 Auditing Services

Mr. Morris presented the above item.

COMMISSIONER WOOD MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THIS ITEM AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

11.c Discussion of Employee Suspensions

Commissioner Green stated this situation needed attention. They have employees on leave with pay and he wanted to make a motion to allow staff to continue the administrative investigation to get closure.

Mr. William stated to have an outside law firm do the investigation. He asked to be involved himself since it is a law firm. Commissioner Wood stated he was not sure about the county attorney being involved.

Commissioner Green asked for the cost. Ms. Burroughs appeared and stated the cost was a flat fee of \$9,850.

Mr. Williams stated they need a motion to authorize the County Administrator or the Attorney to secure a law firm for the investigation. Chair Hinson stated it was difficult to go with the County Administrator because he was a part of the situation, and the attorney has relationships. Mr. Williams wanted to be clear that this event happened before he got here. Chair Hinson stated he just wanted to show how others may see them.

Commissioner Simpkins stated for the attorney to look at firms and Chair Hinson decides who to go with for the investigation.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ATTORNEY TO PICK A LAW FIRM TO PRESENT TO THE CHAIRMAN AND TO NOT EXCEED \$9,850. COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE THE SECOND AND THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.

12. Clerk of Court

Mr. Thomas appeared before the board to discuss reports he has sent. He went through the grants report with a total of 55 grants totaling \$52 million dollars. He stated most are reimbursable, they just need to front the money. The Clerk mentioned the Interest earnings report and stated he does not receive any of that money. He also mentioned the half cent tax – a lot of money that is undispersed - 5.1 million dollars.

Clerk stated starting new pay period, they will bring a tax collector for payroll purposes. They need a fund of their own. Commissioner Holt asked what was the purpose for that and the Clerk stated they get audited separately; this was just for payroll.

Clerk mentioned payment of bills – everything they do was an effort to get a clean audit report, which they have always got. Also, to follow the law. When the Clerk questions something, the board should answer. He stated it was frustrating to hear comments about not paying things; they have a duty to fulfill and if they have a question, they could call the finance director.

The Clerk mentioned cybersecurity and stated he requested in the budget on June 1st for funding. It was not funded and he was disappointed. Chair Hinson asked about licensing – Clerk stated it was different from cybersecurity; they needed funds to cover cost of equipment and they still need that money. Chair Hinson stated to bring it back as an agenda item.

Commissioner Holt asked if it was required by finance to put the minutes from the approval of the board to attach to the invoice. Mr. Thomas stated it was a routine thing; the Finance Director may ask for additional information. Commissioner Simpkins asked for the Clerk to submit his request again.

Commissioner Green thanked the Clerk for coming. He was under the impression they already approved this through the general revenue fund. The Clerk stated that the board decided to fund EMS through ARPA and now other projects will be funded through general revenue.

Commissioner Green stepped out at 7:05 p.m.

Commissioner Green returned at 7:07 p.m.

Commissioner Wood stepped out at 7:10 p.m.

13. County Attorney

13.a Request for a Shade Meeting for:

- 1) Jackson vs. Gadsden County
- 2) Gadsden County Republican Party Executive Committee vs. Gadsden County

Mr. Williams requested a shade meeting for the above cases, and stated he had some updates for the Commissioners on these cases.

Commissioner Simpkins asked if Mr. Williams had received the contracts that the staff had requested to be reviewed. Mr. Williams stated they gave him some preliminary information but it was incomplete and there have been some internal staff changes, so he has asked that the staff finish it up.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE SHADE MEETINGS AND COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

Commissioner Wood returned at 7:13 p.m.

14. County Administrator

Mr. Morris stated an email was sent out to each Commissioner in concern with the Legislative request that they need to provide to the house and Senate with the deadline of February 14 to have it turned into the House and Senate. He stated they may need to have a special meeting to finalize that request.

Mr. Morris stated he had spoken to each Commissioner individually about the Project the Sheriff is trying to put together and asked colonel Collins to come forward.

Colonel Collins appeared and provided an overview of the project. He asked for 34k to fund the initial phase of getting the task force put together.

Commissioner Green asked what they were asking from other municipalities, and colonel Collins stated they are not asking them for monetary input, just their commitment and resources as they are also physically constraint counties like Gadsden.

Commissioner Holt stated this a very worthy cause, and asked if there are any other grants, they can apply for to fund this project, and colonel Collins stated there are grants out there.

Commissioner Green asked about the funding source, and Mr. Morris stated he can look at the budget and maybe could move things around without going into the reserve.

Commissioner Wood made a motion to give authority to Mr. Morris to find money and if not found, come back in emergency meeting.

Commissioner Simpkins asked if 2 weeks was too long, and colonel Collins stated it was too long for him because he can't operate on the scale he needs to, as his issue is the funding source.

Commissioner Simpkins requested that Mr. Williams give direction so the correct motion could be made, and Mr. Williams recommends to direct Mr. Morris to find the amendments in the budget to spend within his spending authority and if he cannot find the money, then he will need to bring a budget amendment back to board for the board to vote on.

COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO DIRECT MR. MORRIS TO FIND AMENDMENTS IN THE BUDGET TO SPEND WITHIN HIS THRESHOLD AND IF THE MONEY COULD NOT BE FOUND, BRING A BUDGET AMENDMENT BACK TO THE BOARD. COMMISSIONER GREEN MADE THE SECOND AND THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.

15. Discussion Items by Commissioners

15a. Commissioner Alonzetta Simpkins, District 2

Commissioner Simpkins asked if they plan to come together as a board to discuss their legislative priorities or are they just doing this by email.

Chair Hinson stated he wants a meeting and has always wanted that over an email.

Commissioner Green stepped out at 7:45p.m.

Commissioner Green returned at 7:47p.m.

Commissioner Simpkins stated the 16th would be good for the municipality meeting at 4 p.m.

Commissioner Simpkins asked where they were at with the listing of the escheated property, and Mr. Morris stated he will get with Planning and Zoning as they have been working on this list and get back with the board once the list is finalized.

Commissioner Simpkins mentioned striping and asked where they are with getting bids or finding out which way they are wanting to go. Mr. Morris stated they were trying to find their own equipment to do it themselves.

Curtis Young appeared and stated the equipment Mr. Morris referred to is only for residential roads and not for main roads. He also stated he already had 1 quote for Jameison but was working on a second one.

Commissioner Simpkins stated to look at railroad tracks needing repairs, and Mr. Young stated they will bring list of railroad tracks to the board for approval to get fixed as DOT will not fund the railroad tracks and that the board would have to fund that.

Commissioner Simpkins requested that the HR director advertise the position for the County Administrator position and to have the IT director to create a distribution email so that emails go directly to the Commissioners when someone applies.

Commissioner Simpkins requested a workshop for January 13th for the board to discuss what they want as a board in the new County Administrator.

Commissioner Wood stepped out at 8:00 p.m.

Special meeting scheduled for January 14th at 5 p.m. to discuss what they want as a board in the new County Administrator.

Commissioner Wood returned at 8:02 p.m.

15b. Commissioner Shawn Wood, District 3

Commissioner Wood asked for an update on Cane Creek and Hannah Millpond Road being out.

Commissioner Holt stepped out at 8:05 p.m.

Mr. Young stated they did hear from DOT and they will get funding for temporary repair on Cane Creek, but Hannah Millpond Road they have another agreement for that.

Commissioner Holt returned at 8:07 p.m.

Commissioner Wood stated according to the website he is still listed as the chair for the Public Safety committee, and he's been gone for 3 years. He stated he would like for Chair Hinson to take that up and that it would be a good opportunity.

Commissioner Wood mentioned the agenda item pulled that was to discuss the former county administrator's payout and the item never came back. Mr. Morris stated that was handled according to Mr. Dixon's contract and has been completed for what was necessary for Mr. Dixon. Commissioner Wood then asked so I take that was without cause or with cause, how did that go down, and Mr. Morris stated no sir, that was without cause.

Mr. Williams stated the item was listed as a discussion item, and the issue was the action of terminating Mr. Dixon had already occurred so to bring the issue back up for discussion and vote on it, the Commission would have to somehow un-terminate Mr. Dixon and re-terminate. He stated once the action of terminating Mr. Dixon had already occurred and there was no discussion about cause, it was just a discussion to terminate so the only interpretation was to terminate without cause. The contract that was drafted basically stated that it was a payout after termination without cause. Mr. Williams stated the problem for the board from a legal standpoint was had the board brought it back up for discussion then there could have been issues created unintentionally because the board had already acted by terminated Mr. Dixon.

Commissioner Wood stated in the future he would like for the Commissioners to decide on these items.

Commissioner Holt stated when the motion was made and Mr. Dixon was terminated, there was no cause stated. She said Chair Hinson did not say Mr. Dixon did A, B, C, D or didn't do A, B, C, D so after the motion was taken it was really done without cause.

Commissioner Green stated all of this should have been taken into consideration, the contract when they decided to terminate Mr. Dixon.

Commissioner Wood wanted more attention on buildings in Gadsden County. He also stated he wants Mr. Morris back on buildings. Commissioner Wood stated he was happy that the Clerk came to the meeting and how he was treated by the board.

15c. Commissioner Brenda A. Holt, District 4

Commissioner Holt stated she thinks they need to look at the escheated properties to see what they can do as a board before they get the citizens involved to make them generate revenue. She also stated she wants tax incentives, land, and infrastructure grants.

Commissioner Holt stated grants must be written early in the year, but they don't have a grant writer. She stated she's got a young lady checking on something for the CDBG grants.

Commissioner Holt stated she did eat lunch with some lobbyist the other day, not their lobbyist but some she knows from different counties and was brainstorming about how to get more money for Gadsden County.

Commissioner Simpkins stated they need to have the discussion with their federal lobbyist about their return on their investment.

Commissioner Wood asked if the 7 million that's sitting out there for the hospital, could that be a grant match. Commissioner Holt stated they may match.

Commissioner Holt stated she's concerned about stretching their people thin by having them do other jobs and not bring them back to do their regular job, and if they are doing more projects, they need to hire more people.

Commissioner Holt stated they need the \$750k on the books for the CDBG grants.

Commissioner Wood mentioned Rosedale and it being one of the only minority private owned water systems in the country. He stated they are looking to upgrade and have hydrants.

15d. Commissioner Ronterious Green, District 5

Commissioner Green mentioned Old Federal Road issue with the road being closed due to the maintenance with the pipeline that is required.

Commissioner Green stated would like to name buildings after previous tax collector Mr. Dale Summerford and Ms. Shirley Green-Knight who was the supervisor of elections as they held those positions for 20-30 years.

Commissioner Green stated he is not in agreement with putting a hold on hiring positions, as there is a lot of work that needs to be done in this County.

Commissioner Green had a legislative ask in regard to tiny homes for the homeless, seniors, and veterans. He also mentioned possible update of ordinance in order to build tiny homes in Gadsden County.

Mr. Morris stated there is no new or additional ordinance needed for tiny homes in Florida.

Commissioner Green mentioned signage for Lake Talquin drowning victims, and the board has already approved that.

Mr. Morris stated there will be a dedication for the drowning victims and he is working with the family to respect their wishes, but they do have the signage already.

15e. Commissioner Eric F. Hinson, Chairman, District 1

Chair Hinson mentioned striping and lighting in the county, and they need to have a workshop.

Chair Hinson stated when he looks at things, he looks at the sense of urgency.

Chair Hinson stated he has no problem with Mr. Morris in his capacity, but he wants to get the County Administrator position filled.

Commissioner Wood stated he agrees with Chair Hinson's statement about Mr. Morris.

Commissioner Holt stated she is just waiting on the workshop so they can do what they're going to do.

Commissioner Green stated he just wants them to make sense with what they're doing as a board, and to have a plan.

Commissioner Holt stated they already discussed having a workshop for what they want for the new County Administrator.

16. Motion to Adjourn

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR HINSON
DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:11 PM.**

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**Eric F. Hinson, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk