

**AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN  
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON APRIL 2, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M., THE  
FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:** Ronterious Green, Chair, District 5, appeared through Zoom  
Alonzetta Simpkins, Vice-Chair, District 2  
Eric Hinson, District 1  
Kimblin NeSmith, District 3  
Brenda Holt, District 4  
Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator  
Clayton Knowles, County Attorney  
Adriana Quijada, Deputy Clerk

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

Vice-Chair Simpkins started the meeting at 6:01 pm. Ms. Thomas provided Invocation and led into the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

**Amendments and Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Dixon stated there were no amendments.

**COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED AND CHAIR GREEN MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 TO APPROVE.**

**Awards, Presentations and Appearances**

**1. Recognition of Shontel Rittman**

Commissioner Hinson stated Shontel Rittman was not present.

**2. Recognition of Don White**

Commissioner Hinson presented the recognition to Don White

*Commissioner Holt appeared at 6:09 p.m.*

**3. Recognition of The Pi Psi Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.**

Commissioner Hinson presented the recognition of the Pi Psi Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

**4. Recognition of Ruby Bradley**

Commissioner NeSmith presented the recognition to Ruby Bradley.

**CONSENT**

Vice-Chair Simpkins asked for a motion.

**COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AND  
COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 TO APPROVE.**

5. **Ratification Memo**
6. **BOCC Meeting/Workshop Minutes:**
  - a. **March 5, 2024, Regular BOCC Meeting**
  - b. **March 12, 2024 Havana Fire Services Workshop**
7. **Approval to Sell Surplus Vehicles at Auction**
8. **Approval of Contract Extension with AECOM, Inc.**
9. **Approval and Signature on the E911 2024 Spring Rural County Grant Application for E911 System and MapFlex Annual Support and Maintenance**
10. **Approval of the Johnson Control Planned Service Agreement for Backflow and Hydrant Inspection at the W.A. Woodham Building**

#### **ITEMS PULLED FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **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. Vice-Chair Simpkins read aloud the above statement.

**John Browning, 408 China Berry Lane, Havana, FL 32333**

Concord Volunteer Fire Department Additional Funding.

Letter of Support for Concord VFD to become a Special Fire Control District.

#### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

11. **Board Direction regarding the Interlocal Fire and Rescue Service Agreement Between Gadsden County, Florida, and the Town of Havana, Florida**

Mr. Dixon stated this agenda item seeks Board direction regarding the Interlocal Fire and Rescue Service Agreement Between Gadsden County, Florida, and the Town of Havana, Florida. The Town of Havana has submitted their own proposal to Gadsden County. Attachment A represents the agreement that has been approved for the other municipalities and attachment B represents the agreement presented by the Town of Havana.

*Commissioner Holt returned at 6:48 p.m.*

**Karen Bass, 407 E 9<sup>th</sup> Ave Havana, Florida**

Ms. Bass urged the Commissioners to look at the wording of the contract. She presented a poster that showed there was 248 County fire calls and a total of 289 calls. She did not think the Town was asking for anything other than fair participation by the County.

**Janice Eakin, 474 Timber Run Havana, Florida 32333**

Ms. Eakin appeared before the Board. She stated the vote they take tonight for the Havana contract could be life or death. She stated it sounds dramatic but it was true. The fire department responds to the needs as well as they can. She stated these firefighter's jobs are seven days a week, 365 days a year. They are on call whether they are sleeping or having dinner with their family. When they respond to a call, they need to have the training and the gear. The 25k would help with that.

**Neil Wade, 1259 Timber Run Havana, Florida**

Mr. Wade appeared before the Board. He wanted to reiterate that County government has no greater responsibility than to provide for public protection and safety. He stated that when they are providing funding to the Havana Volunteer Fire Department, they are providing funding for county residents predominantly. He mentioned that there has been a shift of the population to the east side of the county. The contract proposed by the County does not do justice for the citizens of the unincorporated areas of Havana.

**COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION FOR THE BOARD TO APPROVE INTERLOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AGREEMENT ATTACHMENT B, PROVIDED BY THE TOWN OF HAVANA AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE THE SECOND. VICE-CHAIR SIMPKINS STATED IT WAS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION.**

Chair Green asked if anyone from Havana was there, like Council or the Manager. Council Bass appeared. Chair Green asked what legislative act did they ask to assist with any services in Havana. Council Bass stated over the last two years they have asked for support to redo the Havana Public Safety Building and it would be tied in with the fire station. Hopefully the Governor would sign it as it would assist them in improving the fire station a little bit but mainly their police station. Chair Green asked if they applied for any grants for firefighters. Council Bass stated not that he knew of.

Commissioner NeSmith stated he has received several letters regarding this issue. He stated they take first responders very seriously and they have done everything in their power to make sure they have the resources they need. They need to come up with a better process where all

the municipalities will have an opportunity to make presentations. They do not have a system to manage all eleven entities.

Vice-Chair Simpkins stated they were going back and forth about \$25,000; they spend that in one event that does not have an impact on their citizens. They are sitting there saying they do not have a process. They met at Tri-Eagle and that was after the issue came up. She requested a workshop with all the municipalities and the fire departments regarding fire. The dynamics in Gadsden County are so different and they gave instructions for a process, which was to meet with each fire department. Equal is not always fair. Most of the calls are in the unincorporated areas and they are responsible for unincorporated areas. Vice-Chair Simpkins stated they keep talking about county wide fire services but she was trying to figure out how they are going to fund countywide fire services when they have a problem with paying \$25,000.

Commissioner Holt stated she looks at data. She stated there are several other counties that do not have this kind of system and there was a reason for that. If you have a lot of volunteer systems in place, they could withdraw at any time. She was willing to vote for a full-time station in Dogtown and putting in fire hydrants needed. She stated she went to Gretna and asked them to call in a fire. She was standing in front of the fire station. Quincy was coming, Mount Pleasant came, and so did Wetumpka. There are too many variables in this situation. She was not looking at the \$25,000; the system has to be fixed.

**Candice Tremble, 1390 Talavanna Trail Havana, Florida**

Ms. Tremble appeared and mentioned fire insurance. They need to have some kind of fire protection. How are they going to have fire service tomorrow in Havana if all they care about is putting a fire station in Dogtown some nebulous day in the future? They need to take care of each other.

Commissioner Hinson stated he thought he was coming to just approve it and that it would be a no-brainer. They saw that District 1 had almost 30% of the population in the County. He stated this was personal to him because of what he experienced personally.

Vice-Chair Simpkins stated fair is not always equal. They need to do the right thing and they have work to do. Greenshade-Dogtown was her area as well, but that is outside of a 5-mile radius for some of these citizens. Therefore, those that do not have insurance would not be able to get any and those trying to renew their insurance would not be able to. Those that have insurance will have an astronomical amount to pay. She was all for manning Dog-town, that was her area too, but she was also all for funding the Town of Havana because she needs to make sure that all of the citizens are covered.

Chair Green asked to give the real number, not \$25,000. Vice-Chair Simpkins said it was \$25,000 to increase the contract and up to \$25,000 for the Stipend.

Chair Green asked about the cost analysis; wants to be realistic about the numbers. He asked what they were looking at if Havana walked away. Mr. Dixon stated they did not have the cost analysis.

Ms. Eakin appeared again. She stated it takes months to plan a workshop and advertise it. She asked Commissioner Holt when they were going to build that fire station. They have to buy a land, go out for bids, draw the plans, etc. They are talking about 2 years down the road. What about today and tomorrow? Why has there not been a workshop? She could not believe the hesitation to vote for \$25,000.

Chair Green stated he had no issue with funding, it was more of the contract part.

Vice-Chair Simpkins stated the Town Manager did her due diligence as it relates to the contract. There were several emails that went out.

Chair Green asked what did the increase guarantee? Vice-Chair Simpkins stated it allows them to fund what needs to be funded so they could work on that rating going down.

**Lauren Gydis, 132 Small Pond Road Havana, FL**

Ms. Gydis stated they need this influx of funding so they can meet those requirements and call them back out this year to have it reevaluated.

**Councilwoman Tabatha Nelson, Town of Havana 216 Country Club Drive**

Ms. Nelson appeared before the Board and mentioned that Chair Green was asking about the grants. She stated one of the things they applied for was the AFG Grant. The extra money that they are having to put forth for the fire service and cover the budget, is taking away from us being able to buy the equipment that they need. The AFG grant is going to help them get a lot more equipment. The County has written a grant that will exclude theirs. The County does not include them when writing grants. ISO requires them to have \$5,000 set of turnout gear, \$5,000 SCVA tanks, masks, etc. Ms. Nelson asked Commissioner Holt if she had any ideas on how much it is going to cost to do a county wide fire service. Commissioner Holt stated she has looked at number but she was not going to share them tonight. She has looked at numbers from several different counties so she does have some idea about some numbers. That was public information and they could call them.

Commissioner Hinson stated he personally would like to be fair with things. He stated that Chair Green stated that due his family situation, he was mentally not there. If they wanted to take this on another day, they could come back. Chair Green stated he never said anything about his mental capacity, he is very sane and stable.

**COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION FOR THE BOARD TO APPROVE INTERLOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AGREEMENT ATTACHMENT B, PROVIDED BY THE TOWN OF HAVANA AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 2-3 AND THE MOTION FAILED. COMMISSIONER NESMITH, COMMISSIONER HOLT, AND CHAIR GREEN OPPOSED.**

**COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE ATTACHMENT A, COUNTY CONTRACT WITH THE TOWN OF HAVANA AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-1 TO APPROVE. COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS OPPOSED.**

**12. Approval and Implementation of the Compensation Study**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item. He stated Phase 1 of the compensation plan has consisted of three steps:

- **Step 1:** The BOCC increased the minimum starting salary to \$15.00 per hour system-wide.
- **Step 2:** The BOCC authorized the development and implementation of a system-wide Compensation Study.
- **Step 3:** Staff will ensure that ALL employees are at the median pay scale.

The proposed budget set forth for the implementation of a BOCC system-wide Compensation Study is estimated at \$414,627.96. This amount was calculated from an annual salary budget for full-time employees (FTEs).

The Office of Management Budget (OMB) reviewed the proposed salary changes by reviewing actual pay factors. The factors taken into consideration were:

- ✓ GCBOCC is almost halfway through its current fiscal year
- ✓ Vacant Positions
- ✓ Half-Time Positions
- ✓ Supplemental Department Funds

Increasing the base salary to \$15.00 hourly created pay compression, so has bringing position to the median wage. To resolve these pay inequities, with the approval and implementation of the Compensation Study, they will move to Phase 2.

Phase 2 will focus on the following:

1. Developing a 10-step pay plan with a 3-step premium.
2. Meeting with department heads and a sampling of employees from job classes impacted.
3. Analyze individual pay, years of experience, county service time, education, certification, etc.

As it stands, Human Resources anticipates completing Phase 2 of the study within 6 months.

Based on the analysis performed by OMB, the proposed salary changes can be accomplished in FY23-24 with minimal impact on the overall operating budget. The following major funds will be affected by the proposed changes:

1. General Fund – approximately \$67,000 increase
2. Public Works Fund – no change due to vacancy savings
3. EMS Fund – no change due to vacancy savings
4. Library Fund – approximately \$20,000 increase
5. Building Inspection Fund – no change due to vacancy savings

Commissioner Hinson stated when he looks at numbers, he has to compare it with something. He asked to have this more broken down. He asked to bring this back and vote on it to have a workshop first.

**COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION TO TABLE THIS ITEM AND HAVE A WORKSHOP ON ITEMIZED DATA. THE MOTION DIED DUE TO NO SECOND.**

Vice-Chair Simpkins stated she requested a salary analysis for every position and she was comfortable going through with this. Dr. Burroughs explained to her the phases and gave her the answer as it related to each of the increases.

Commissioner Hinson stated they should have a workshop when dealing with money.

Commissioner Holt stated they received the information and they went over it and had the opportunity to discuss it with the Administrator and HR Director. Chair Green stated that was the same comment he was going to make. He spoke with management and worked through his questions.

Dr. Burroughs appeared. She stated initially the Board approved for the county to move forward in increasing the minimum wages. That was the initial step. If this is approved tonight, she will start meeting with the department heads next week. She also wanted to meet with the employees of those departments to have a Q&A. She stated that she had also mentioned creating a 10-step pay schedule with 3 step premiums. If they want to be competitive with surrounding counties, then this compensation plan was necessary.

**CHAIR GREEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THIS ITEM AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

**13. Approval of the Gadsden County Implementation Plan, Health and Human Services Department and Coordinator Position**

Mr. Dixon presented the above item. This agenda item seeks Board approval of the Gadsden County Implementation Plan for the State of Florida opioid settlement. The staff is requesting the creation of a Health and Human Services Department and the position for a Health and Human Services Coordinator.

Commissioner Holt stated she has no problem with the Health Coordinator but she does have a problem with the funding mechanism. She believed the half cent was taxed for a hospital.

Chair Green asked how long would they be looking to utilize the half cent funding to sustain this particular item. Their primary goal is to make sure they have the health care. Mr. Dixon stated in his perspective, it keeps the heat off the general fund. He stated if they wanted to pass the program without any other monies, they could do that.

**CHAIR GREEN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THIS ITEM AND EXCLUDE THE HALF CENT SALES TAX AND COMMISSIONER HOLT MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 TO APPROVE.**

**CLERK OF COURT**

**14. Updates**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

**15. Updates**

Mr. Dixon reminded everyone about bulky items pickup.

**COUNTY ATTORNEY**

**16. Updates**

Mr. Knowles thanked everyone who showed up for his godmother's funeral, Daphne Lewis.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS**

**Commissioner Ronterious Green, Chair, District 5**

Chair Green thanked the Economic Development Director, TJ Lewis, for the meeting with the Appalachian Regional Committee. He also wanted to make it known that it is child abuse awareness month as well as autism awareness month. He asked for the Board to wear the color blue in the next meeting to bring awareness to autism.

**17. Commissioner Eric F. Hinson, District 1**

Commissioner Hinson said District 1 will start bulky items pickup on April 1 in unincorporated areas.

**COMMISSIONER HINSON MADE A MOTION FOR A PROCLAMATION FOR AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH AND COMMISSIONER NESMITH MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 TO APPROVE.**

**Commissioner Brenda A. Holt, District 4**

Commissioner Holt thanked everyone for the proclamation for Ruby Bradley.

Commissioner Holt asked the County Administrator why Housing was moved upstairs. Mr. Dixon stated there were space requirements and privacy requirements to think about.

**Commissioner Kimblin E. NeSmith, J.D., District 3**

Commissioner NeSmith stated the Lake Talquin Open was awesome. Commissioner NeSmith asked the County Administrator about Summer Youth. Ms. Burroughs appeared and stated their timeline was working well. They have determined the dates for the program which will be from



Monday, June 24 to Friday, August 2. They have confirmed 244 available jobs as of today. She wanted to recognize Gadsden Technical College who agreed to offer four different certification programs: principle of teaching, pharmacy technician, barbering, and automotive service technology. They have 15 to 20 slots per program. Ms. Burroughs stated they will also be partnering with CareerSource.

Commissioner NeSmith asked the County Administrator about Providence Road. Mr. Dixon stated they were in the design phase.

**Commissioner Alonzetta Simpkins, District 2**

Commissioner Simpkins stated as a commissioner, her initial goal was to prioritize transparency and fiscal responsibility. She stated it bothered her when she hears people saying they still do not have anything for their citizens. They need to move on tangible things that their citizens can see. Commissioner Simpkins stated they need to make sure that when they leave those seats, that they have a positive lasting effect on this county

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, VICE-CHAIR SIMPKINS DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:35 PM.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**