

# County Attorney Position, Applicant Interviews

## WORKSHOP

Commission Board Room  
Dixie County Courthouse  
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628  
July 21, 2022 – 1:00 PM

*The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1(917)900-1022 and enter code 32628.*

### COMMISSIONERS

Jody Stephenson, District 1  
Mark Hatch, District 3  
Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman  
James Valentine, District 5

### STAFF

Paul Gainey, Asst. County Manager  
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator  
Chana Watson, Interim County Attorney  
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court  
Della Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk

### CALL TO ORDER

The County Attorney Position, Applicant Interview Workshop was called to order at 1:00 PM by Commissioner Storey.

### INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation was led by Commissioner Valentine and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by Commissioner Hatch.

### INTERVIEW APPLICANTS FOR COUNTY ATTORNEY POSITION

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey reminded the Board of funeral services for the wife of Mr. Michael Latson, Director of Solid Waste. He also informed them of funeral services for the son of Ms. Linda Williams, county employee. He informed the Board that today's workshop was only to review resumes and interview applicants for the County Attorney position. He said no decision will be made during the workshop. He also informed the Board that the Interim County Attorney contract will end on August 01, 2022.

The Board and the applicants discussed their willingness to voluntarily appear individually for the interview process, while the other applicants voluntarily wait their turn outside the room. Everyone agreed with these terms and the applicants exited the room.

*The first applicant was called to appear before the Board.*

**APPLICANT**

**Attorney Stanley H. Griffis III**

The Griffis Law Firm, LLC

13 SE 1<sup>st</sup> Ave

Chiefland, FL 32626

Attorney Stan Griffis appeared before the Board and discussed his resume consisting of his current and prior work experience, education, bar admissions, honors and activities as well as the quantity of cases tried as an Attorney and as a former Judge.

He said he grew up in Alachua and currently lives in Bell. He said he started college in the 80's. He said he has previously worked in legislature as a staff member. He said his Stepfather was a former Judge. He said he practiced law for 10 years and then was elected the Eighth Circuit Judge in 2006. He said he has worked all six counties within that circuit and all division of litigation. He has also been a teacher at Judicial College and conferences. He is the attorney for the City of Fanning Springs.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if he would open an office in Dixie County.

Attorney Griffis replied that he has thought of this, however he does have staff to help with the flow of information and can handle things by zoom conference as well.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about continuing education.

Attorney Griffis replied that attorney's in Florida must also do this every few years. He said he has access to several resources and is very familiar with Chapter 119 of the Sunshine Law.

Commissioner Stephenson and Commissioner Storey asked about salary.

Attorney Griffis replied he would request the same fees as the prior attorney had contracted.

The Board discussed that that salary amount was \$76,000.00.

Commissioner Hatch asked about his hourly rate.

Attorney Griffis replied that he charges \$400.00 to \$350.00 per hour.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board needs an attorney that can hold them accountable and make sure everything is handled legally.

Attorney Griffis stated he will adhere to the law and provide sound legal advice and guidance. He said he is a business owner and a public figure as well. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and apply for this position.

*Attorney Griffis exited the Board room voluntarily at 1:25 PM.*

*The second applicant was called to appear before the Board.*

**APPLICANT**

**Attorney Walker W. Bullock, Esq.**

Bullock Law Firm, PLLC

1000 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Blvd

Williston, FL 32696

Attorney Walker Bullock appeared before the Board and discussed his resume consisting of his current and prior work experience and education.

He said he and his family are from Williston and he has the qualifications needed for this type of government work. He said he can offer the advantage of youth and is interested in a long-term position. He said he can also dedicate his practice to Dixie County. He said he feels that he can remain politically neutral while offering legal representation. He said he understands a lot of the rural issues that small towns and counties face and can also help diffuse situations that may arise

Commissioner Stephenson asked if he would open an office in Dixie County.  
Attorney Bullock replied yes.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about continuing education.  
Attorney Bullock replied yes.

Commissioner Hatch asked about his experience with Code Enforcement.  
Attorney Bullock replied he has served as a Magistrate, which acts as a Judge at the hearing.  
Commissioner Hatch said that Dixie County has a huge issue with this matter.  
Attorney Bullock said he has sat in on several cases that Magistrate Lindsey Lander has handled for Dixie County.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about salary.  
Attorney Bullock replied he would request the same as the previous lawyer.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about his hourly rate.  
Attorney Bullock replied he charges \$200.00 per hour and would charge the county a discounted rate of \$100.00 hour.

Commissioner Stephenson asked how long he has been practicing law.  
Attorney Bullock replied since 2017 when he opened an office in Newberry.

Commissioner Hatch pointed out that he would also be expected to deal with the County Manager's office on several matters.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey added this would consist of contract and grant reviews. He said that review of Deeds and Resolutions and Ordinances would also be needed.

Attorney Bullock replied he is experienced in real estate transactions.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board needs an attorney that can hold them accountable and make sure everything is handled legally.

Attorney Bullock replied he can research the matter before he gives a legal opinion. He said he also has legal software to help.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about how last-minute issues would be addressed. Attorney Bullock replied he can research the matter before he gives a legal opinion. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and apply for this position.

*Attorney Bullock exited the Board room voluntarily at 1:40 PM.*

### RECESS

*Commissioner Storey Recessed the Workshop at 1:46 PM*

### RESUME

*Commissioner Storey Resumed the Workshop at 1:55 PM*

*The third applicant was called to appear before the Board.*

### APPLICANT

**Interim County Attorney, Chana M. Watson, P. A.**

152 NE Hwy 351  
Cross City, FL 32628

Attorney Chana Watson appeared before the Board and discussed her resume consisting of her current and prior work experience and education.

She said her family have been residents of Dixie County for several generations. She has been practicing all aspects of law since 2015. She is currently the School Board Attorney and Interim Attorney for the county. She said she would like to retain the School Board Attorney position as well if possible. She thanked the County Manager's office and the Clerk's office for all their help. She said the county has a good team in place. She said her office is local and she would prioritize the county business.

Commissioner Storey asked about her continuing education courses.

Attorney Watson replied she has completed several courses on Sunshine Law and LHAP. She said there is always more to learn. She said she is proactive with training and research to familiarize herself with the subject matter at hand.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about the salary.

Attorney Watson replied she would request the same as the prior contracted attorney.

Commissioner Storey asked about the salary paid to her by the School Board.

Attorney Watson replied it's about 1/3 as much.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about her hourly rate.

Attorney Watson replied \$250.00 per hour.

Commissioner Hatch commented that the former County Attorney, Michael Osteen, has used Attorney Watson in the past with conflicts of interest matters at his own expense.

Attorney Watson replied that is correct, and she also has an attorney who could fill in for her if there is a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board needs an attorney that can hold them accountable and make sure everything is handled legally and provide sound advice and guidance.  
Attorney Watson said she would research the issue and then advise the Board.

Commissioner Hatch pointed out that she would also be expected to deal with the County Manager's office on several matters and possibly department heads.  
Attorney Watson replied that would not be an issue for her.

Commissioner Hatch pointed out that she could no longer represent any Board members on personal matters if hired.  
Attorney Watson agreed.

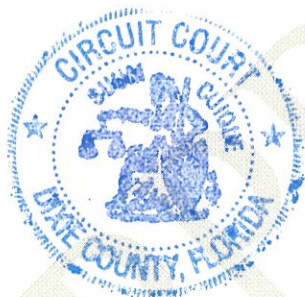
Commissioner Storey requested all the applicants come back into the room at this time. He thanked them all and said the Board may be able to make a decision tonight at the Regular Board Meeting or later on. He said they will be notified of the Board's decision.

Commissioner Stephenson said they are all good candidates.

Commissioner Hatch thanked all the candidates.

**ADJOURN**

***Commissioner Hatch made the motion to adjourn at 2:15 PM. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.***



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jamie Storey, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

**PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/ she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/ she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.**

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***The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.***