

Policies and Procedures Workshop
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
October 17, 2024 – 5:00 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, Vice Chairman
Daniel Wood, District 2
Mark Hatch, District 3
Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, Assistant County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Verna Wilson, Chief Deputy Clerk
Brenda Royal, Chief Financial Officer
Joannie Morse, Deputy Clerk
Angie Crowley, Human Resources Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

The Board Meeting/Workshop was called to order at 5:00 PM by Commissioner Storey.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

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

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REVIEW

Human Resource Administrator Angie Crowley addressed the Board and asked if anybody has come to the County Commissioners with any questions that need to be addressed concerning Policy and Procedures.

Building Official Leon Wright stated that if someone works for Building and Zoning and is running for an office they need to resign. Mrs. Crowley said that the County is not allowed to force them to resign.

Commissioner Osteen stated that we could allow the employee to take a leave of absence.

Attorney Chana Watson stated that the Board needs to be mindful of the election laws and stated that if a county employee is running for office, they cannot be within five hundred feet of the voting precinct. She also stated that if an assistant runs against the incumbent the assistant must resign, but if the incumbent is stepping down the statute reads that the assistant can stay in that position and run for the office while maintaining employment. She added that the Board cannot force an employee to use their vacation time.

Commissioner Osteen stated there must be a leave of absence for the County to maintain integrity.

Attorney Watson stated the County cannot require an employee to use up their leave; however, they can require the employee to take a leave of absence if it is written that way in the Policies and Procedures Handbook. She added that the County must pay them paid leave while on leave of absence.

Attorney Watson said that if the County chooses to make a policy to force the employees to take a leave of absence they can, but the County can't force them to resign.

It was recommended by several members of the Board to postpone this subject for more research.

Director of the Dixie County Public Library Mrs. Cindy Bellot stated that all of this is well defined in the election laws concerning incumbents and she gave an example from 1976 where a Supervisor of Elections son in Tallahassee, Florida ran for Supervisor of Elections, and he already held a job within the office, and he was not required to resign because his mother was retiring and not running again. She said his opponent filed a suit and it was found in favor of the son of the Supervisor of Elections because the mother wasn't running.

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham stated the priority is to make sure the County is legal.

Attorney Watson said the current Policies and Procedures Handbook makes clear the incumbent process but is not clear on some other policies as far as County employees running for office.

Mrs. Higginbotham asked if the County puts new rules in the policies and procedures handbook regarding running for elections and requires new hires to read and sign an agreement, would this make it legal.

Attorney Watson answered yes.

Commissioner Hatch recommended having the Policies and Procedures Handbook updated and signed annually by all County employees. He also suggested department heads have monthly meetings with the County Manager, to stay informed about what is going on in the County.

Commissioner Hatch suggested having an updated version of the Policies and Procedures ready by January 1 of each year and having all employees sign that they received and reviewed a copy by January 20 of each year.

Mrs. Crowley asked how often County employees receive training?

Mr. Wright said they do theirs annually at Building and Zoning.

Administrative Assistant and Grant Coordinator Martha McCaskill said all departments usually have training annually.

Commissioner Hatch recommended educating Department Heads and having monthly staff meetings regarding Policies and Procedures.

Attorney Watson said that it could be set in the County policy if that is desired.

Commissioner Hatch also mentioned having job descriptions and Job Hazard Analysis (JHA's) presented in the Policies and Procedures Handbook.

Attorney Watson stated there are brief job descriptions for department heads, but they are generic, and the County can work on changing those in the Policies and Procedures Handbook if desired.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Pregnancy Workers Fairness Act (PWFA):

Mrs. Crowley recommended setting a timeline for a limit on FMLA. She said currently it is set for twelve (12) weeks for FMLA and nothing really set for the PWFA. She said the last person the County had on PWFA stayed out for 6-8 months and caused an undue hardship on their employer.

Attorney Watson said some of this is addressed in the Policy and Procedures Handbook.

Mrs. Crowley stated that the PWFA is not addressed in the Policy and Procedures Handbook.

Attorney Watson stated it is not specifically addressed, but the Policies and Procedures Handbook addresses some of the issues that fall in line with the PWFA. She said that in regards to the timeframes a pregnant mom with due cause can approach the Board to continue her leave; however, if undue hardship is caused on the department the department doesn't have to retain her position as a vacant position, but can fill it and when the employee comes back to work she is not fired, but may have to take another position of comparable means, as long as the salary doesn't change.

Mrs. Crowley said in the Policies and Procedures Handbook it states that employee benefits be paid for the employee during the FMLA timeframe and then reapproach the Board for extension; however, she brought up the fact that if extended the County still must pay the employees' insurance. She asked for direction on at what point does the County stop paying for insurance. She asked if they set a timeframe or just do it case by case.

Commissioner Storey said this would need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham stated she worries that if conducted on a case-by-case basis there could be a chance of an unfairness lawsuit.

Attorney Watson stated that the County does have to have a standard policy, then they can extend it based on circumstance.

Commissioner Hatch asked what the man expecting a child is entitled to.

Mrs. Crowley said they are eligible for FMLA also.

Unused Leave Time:

Mrs. Crowley asked for clarification on what to do if someone is terminated or resigns and doesn't give their two-week notice. She asked if the Board wanted to keep it where that would cause the employee to forfeit the payout of their unused sick time.

Commissioners said they agree to keep it like that.

Attorney Watson asked for clarification on a question that was posed regarding the Comp Leave Policy. She directed the Board to look at page 54 of the Policies and Procedures Handbook. She said it defines full-time non-shift work and shift work and how many hours are received for each month.

Listed as follows:

Full-time non-shift employees get one (1) day a month (8 hours a month).

Full-time shift employees that have 0-72 months of service get ten hours a month.

Full-time shift employees that have 72-999 months of service get fourteen hours per month.

She said this goes the same for sick leave.

She also added that based on the current policy they are not being discriminated against, they are only getting one day a month.

She said she has also been asked if the County can give regular comp time in place of time and a half. She said that it does state that the County can do this based on the current policy.

Mrs. Crowley advised there is some wording changes that need to be made within the Policy and Procedures Handbook in regard to the employee payout for retiring or resigning employees. She said the current policy states the County can do this in payments, but Florida Retirement System (FRS) says it must be a lump sum payout, or the County can be fined by the state.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if the County has an account set up for these payouts.

Finance Director Brenda Royal stated that generally the County doesn't keep a separate account for this, but if a department has prior knowledge that one of their employees is going to retire then that department would try to budget for that in the budget year.

Commissioner Osteen asked if the sick leave is paid out at 100 %.

Mrs. Crowley said the payout is 240 and 480 other than those that are grandfathered in.

Commissioner Hatch brought up once again about implementing a policy of requiring a County employee in any position to resign from that position if running for an office within the County.

Mrs. Royal stated she thinks this would make it very difficult for people that may be in a situation like she was in after her husband passed and she ran for a county position. She said she would not have been able to resign her position while running because she was a single mom with one income. She recommended that if there is no conflict not to have to resign.

Commissioner Hatch said he thinks it doesn't give a good perception in the County for one to keep their current position and run for office.

Commissioner Hatch also mentioned the County discontinuing the use of a hiring committee.

Commissioner Osteen said he cherishes the opinion of the committee.

Commissioner Hatch said he thinks department heads, managers, assistant managers, attorneys and engineers, should be hired, if the manager isn't running, by the Manager, Assistant Manager and the Chairman of the Board.

Commissioner Osteen stated he feels like the County could hire more qualified people using a hiring panel.

Commissioner Hatch asked where this rule of using a hiring panel originated from.

Mrs. Crowley said it came from the Krisner Group.

Attorney Watson said the Policy and Procedure Handbook does address who the Board hires, Department Heads hire other Department Heads, and how they shouldn't be supervising each other, etc.

Commissioner Stephenson said he wants the most qualified person to be hired.

Mrs. Crowley asked if the Board wants a workshop scheduled to review the County Manager applications and resumes. She said there are thirteen total applications.

Attorney Watson stated that the Board must look at all County Manager applicants anyway. She said the Policy and Procedure states there can be a review of applicants and there can be qualifications set beforehand if the Board desires.

Commissioner Hatch said to interview them all. He said they all deserve an interview.

Mrs. Crowley said there are several out of state.

Commissioner Hatch told her to set the time to interview and if they don't show up that is not on the County.

Mrs. Crowley asked if October 22nd would work for the workshop to review resumes.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board would set the date in the regular Board meeting. He then changed his mind and asked Mrs. Crowley to just give the Commissioners a copy of all thirteen resumes and they can look at them and then meet for interviews after reviewing resumes.

Public Comments:

Mrs. Barbara Cummings asked for clarification as to what was previously discussed as far as reviewing resumes and interviewing for the County Manager position.

Commissioner Hatch answered and said he would make it easy. He said all thirteen applicants should get an interview.


No more public questions or concerns.

ADJOURN

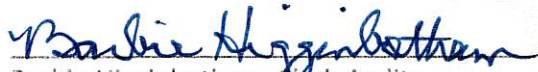
Commissioner Osteen made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Stephenson seconded. Board approved.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA





Jamie Storey, Chairman
Tody Stephenson



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.

"Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771."

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.