

Equity Advisory Council

March 20, 2025

6:00 pm

County Administration Building - Grace Knight Conference Room

12 SE 1 Street, 2nd Floor, Gainesville, FL 32601

Pages

1. Call to Order

Members: Kali Blount, Yvette Carter, Gerie Crawford (Vice Chair), Nancy Dean, Jorelle Degen, Alena Lawson-Bennett, Ronald Rawls (Chair), Maritza Quiroga Arcos and Frank White.

2. Approval of the Agenda

3. Approve the Revised January Minutes and February Minutes

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4. March Communications Presentation

5. October 2025 Annual Work Plan and Accomplishments Report

6. Departmental Orientation

7. Member Comments

8. Public Comment

9. Announcements

10. Adjournment

Equity Advisory Board

Date: February 20, 2025
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: County Administration Building - Grace Knight Conference Room
12 SE 1 Street, 2nd Floor, Gainesville, FL 32601

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Members Present: Kali Blount, Yvette Carter, Gerie Crawford (Vice Chair), Nancy Dean, Jorelle Degen, Alena Lawson-Bennett, Maritza Quiroga Arcos, and Frank White.

Members Absent: Ronald Rawls (Chair)

Staff Present: Heather Akpan, Nephtali Dzubin, Jackie Chung, Courtney Wilson, Latoya Gainey.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Yvette made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; Frank second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Alena Lawson-Bennett nominated Ronald Rawls for Chair in absentia, Kali Blount second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

Jorelle Degen nominated Frank White for Vice Chair, Alena Lawson-Bennett second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

The election results are in effect next meeting.

4. Approval of Minutes

Frank White made a motion to approve the Nov. 21 and Jan. 16 minutes as presented; Yvette Carter second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

5. Departmental Orientation

Presentations provided by Heather Akpan and Jackie Chung from their respective departments.

5.1 Human Resources - Heather Akpan

The **mission** of Human Resources is to provide high quality service to attract, develop, and retain a talented and diverse workforce. We accomplish this through commitment to innovative practices, open communication, and collaborative partnership within a supportive, equitable, and inclusive environment.

There are 15 people on the HR Team that are separated into three main areas: General HR, Employee and Labor Relations, Training and Development.

1. Training and Development: Customized training, development training, and compliance training.
2. Employee and Labor Relations: All employee relations matters, including employer supervisor concerns, policy violations, and performance issues.
3. General HR: Hiring, employee policies, and leave.

Two main **unions**:

1. **LIUNA** - Laborers' International Union of North America, which was decertified March of last year
 - HR evaluated comparisons between policy and the CBA – collective bargaining unit – to consider updating policy for employees that were formerly covered in the CBA. Since March, there have been no complaints of benefits changing.
2. **IAFF** – International Association of Fire Fighters, which is currently active

The following **Hiring Statistics** were shared for last year:

- 3663 applicants
- Hired 357 people
- Currently 1226.75 filled positions
- 9 vacancies and constantly looking to fill those positions
- Public works is perpetually open

Equity based initiatives in the County

- Policies in place to ensure that there is no unintentional bias that benefit exempt employees vs. nonexempt or hourly employees.
- Equity solutions within hiring
- Out of class pay policy
 - When working out of class for two weeks, you can receive out of class pay.
- Language Accessibility: Spanish and Haitian-Creole, among others
- It is part of the county's stance to ban the box on applications that asks if someone has a criminal history.
 - Background checks are run after someone is offered a position for all employees.
 - Only specific positions requiring confidentiality and other sensitive tasks require drug tests to follow the statute of a drug-free workplace.
 - Matrix in place that evaluates criminal offenses detected by background checks, based on the number of years since offense.
- New skills-based pilot program: **Skills First Hiring Pilot**
 - Human Resources will be undertaking the project to evaluate all positions and determine what minimum experience and education is necessary for a position and instead favor evaluating what skills and competencies are required for a position.
 - For example, Animal Resources Tech positions will be removing education and experience minimums and asking for skills and competencies related to the role.
 - The aim is to open the hiring pool to more people.

5.2 Equal Opportunity - Jackie Chung

Equal Employment Opportunity involves the recruiting and monitoring of the hiring process.

The **Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEOP)** includes the Expanded Recruitment Efforts among professional associations and diverse organizations.

Hire Approvals involves reviewing the documentation of the hiring process, such as screening criteria, interview, and selection comments. The documentation needs to be elaborate, reasonable, and justifiable. Those who meet screening criteria and are interviewed but not selected must be explained why.

There must be one diversity question asked in an interview while the rest of the questions can be chosen on different competencies.

Human Rights are supported through the enforcement of county human rights ordinances, which prohibit discrimination in areas of employment, housing, and places of accommodation.

Wage Recovery Ordinance prohibits the non-payment or under-payment of wages owed for work performed in Alachua County, including when the employer is located or headquartered outside of Alachua County.

The County's **Accessible Program and Services** include **Public Notices** that follow the Non-discrimination Policy/ADA, posted in County Buildings and on Website. For our **Language Access Plan**, there are translation and interpreting services. Disability Access is available through 711 FI Relay, Reasonable Accommodation, and permission for service animals and mobility devices.

The **Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Certification** allows small business, if meeting eligibility criteria, to have Bid Price Preference to compete with larger business.

6. **Jan. 16 Listening Session Review and Feedback**

Members commented positively on the listening session last January, appreciating the level of feedback they received from the community. They were

pleased about the high level of attendance and organization of this listening session.

Nancy Dean shared the idea of creating a listening session for the immigrant community.

Gerie Crawford requested that future listening sessions be held in an alternative place for residents of unincorporated towns to attend.

It was shared by staff that there are various county facilities in the unincorporated county, such as Veteran's Park, Newberry, Freedom Center, among others with technology like microphones.

7. Youth Member on Equity Advisory Board

Kali Blount motioned that EAB communicate with BoCC that EAB favors a youth member but wants more discussion of member selection process, Alena second; unanimous approval, motion carried.

8. Member Comments

Kali Blount advertised a free jazz event on Friday (2/21/2025) evening on Cypress and Grove.

9. Public Comment

None.

10. Announcements

None.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM.

Equity Advisory Board

Date: January 16, 2025
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: Greater Bethel AME Church
701 SE 43rd Street Gainesville, FL 32641

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM.

Members Present: Yvette Carter, Gerie Crawford (Vice Chair), Nancy Dean, Alena Lawson-Bennett, Ronald Rawls (Chair), Maritza Quiroga Arcos, and Frank White.

Members Absent: Jorelle Degen, Kali Blount.

Staff Present: Heather Akpan, Jeffrey Hays as well as various County employees.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Yvette Carter made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; Nancy Dean second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

3. Listening Session

A listening session is one where the board and county staff want to hear from the community. In adherence to the function of the Equity Advisory board, the aim is to ensure that equity is involved in listening discussions.

3.1 Zoning

Growth Management Director Jeffrey Hays presented on Zoning. The long-range planning document that is approximately 20 years old, which expresses community overarching vision, goals, objectives, policies, and strategies, is called the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a living document, meaning it is one that continuously receives community feedback, but the goal is to receive more feedback during meetings such as this one and to do a major update that starts with an evaluation and appraisal report, then bringing their plans back to groups such as the EAB to see if they are meeting current strategies and goals. The process they are about to embark on is one where they follow that vision, and it

includes the EAB and Equity Audit. Future Land Use is part of the Comprehensive Plan, and zoning must be consistent with the future land use map designation pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan.

3.2 Enterprise Zone Designation

As part of his presentation, Jeffrey Hays discussed the Gainesville Enterprise Zone. Although the State of Florida program that helped encourage economic development was sunset several years ago, the City of Gainesville Enterprise Zones still exist. The city offers discounts to development while Alachua County has fee incentives for development in the form of a 50% reduction in application fees for building permits, zoning, and development plans within the eastern portion of the Urban Cluster. The intent is to encourage development in unincorporated East Gainesville.

A Q&A Session was held at the end of the presentation between members of the board, the public, and the presenter. The goal was to listen to their feedback and provide clarification on terms and questions about zoning and enterprise zoning.

4. Member Comments

Board member Aletha Lawson-Bennett wanted clarification on what areas are designated for business and what areas were wetlands and to know if developers know where to develop. Growth Management work on developing on land that are partially not wetland; for example, properties along Hawthorne Road are designated commercial. Meanwhile, everything in the activity center is a mixed-use piece of property, meaning that it includes residential and commercial.

Board members were also pleased about the public attendance during this listening session and wanted to know what methods were effective in contributing towards high attendance.

Board member Yvette Carter expressed the desire to get in touch with the city and county and clarified that there are no enterprise zones in the city but there are activity centers in the city. Yvette Carter thanked Jeffrey Hays for presenting and expressed the desire to reach more of the community and to be equitable to people across all age groups who have different access to communication in 2025.

5. Public Comment

Various members of the community provided public comment.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.