

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 Fl 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.