

Equity Advisory Board

Date: March 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 6:00PM after meeting quorum.

Members Present: Kali Blount, Yvette Carter, Nancy Dean, Jorelle Degen, Ronald Rawls (Chair), and Frank White (Vice Chair).

Members Absent: Alena Lawson-Bennett, Gerie Crawford, Maritza Quiroga Arcos

Members present: Heather Akpan, Nephtali Dzubin, Mark Sexton, Courtney Wilson

2. Approval of the Agenda

Yvette Carter made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; Jorelle Degen second. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

3. Approve the Revised January Minutes and February Minutes

Nancy Dean made a motion to approve the revised January 2025 minutes as presented; Frank White second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

Jorelle Degen made a motion to approve the February 2025 minutes as presented; Frank White second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

4. March Communications Presentation

Mark Sexton, the Communications Director, presented on the Discover 200 celebration of the founding of Alachua County since 1824. The celebration was kicked off during an event on January 11, 2025 at Depot Park. Videos of the January 11th event are available on the website: alachua200.com.

More on Discover 200 can be found on alachua200.com, including a proclamation that was created by the Communications team that would combine

all aspects of Alachua County's history, including the influence of the native Timucua on the Alachua name, African American history, and other key eras.

In support of language translation services, the Communications department has hired Gracia Fernandez, who is in charge of immediate Spanish translation for emergency communications when Alachua is in a state of emergency. Her role will expand to translation of all Alachua county services into Spanish, the second most spoken language in Alachua County.

There is a formal truth and reconciliation process on the truth.alachuacounty.us website, on the Truth and Reconciliation page. It shows the history of the process and the committees involved. The Communications team has participated in capturing services and creating feature videos each year for the past 20 years in commemoration of Black History Month. The archival of Black History in Alachua County exists on the alachua200.com website.

The website also provides the events that Alachua County is sponsoring. Most events are sponsored through Visit Gainesville Alachua County bed tax and through arts, nature, culture, and sponsorship grants. The Communication department is also using their resources and sponsoring Discover 200 events specifically to shine a light on matters of history, arts, and culture. This includes the 5th Avenue arts festival.

There are 200,000 media followers for the various Alachua County social media pages: Facebook, X, NextDoor, Instagram. These social media accounts allow for analytics where the Communications department can see the reach of each post, the interaction data, among other information like the amount of time people are watching or reacting to the content.

The Communications team used a software called ZenCity, which was one of the premier trackers of social media and the digital landscape in general. From the analytics, they are finding that they are gaining followers, particularly during states of emergency, such as hurricane season due to the effectiveness of social media in communication with citizens.

Demographics are unavailable through these analytics for user privacy. However, the Communications department is aware of the digital divide between older and younger populations. To address this, they still operate Channel 12, which is a popular way to communicate with our elderly population. Press releases that rise to the level of importance are also on our bulletin board. More feature videos are produced, including Alachua County Talks and the interview show, where both these air on Channel 12 and YouTube.

Members expressed concern for reaching the elderly population and suggested that physical copies of newsletters be sent out to the population that is 70 and above. Mark Sexton suggested sending out one postage paid postcard to ask if citizens would like to continue to receive a hard copy of the news letter and continuing based on the response. Chairman Ronald Rawls recommended that the Communications department works with community organizations to coordinate responses from the community.

5. October 2025 Annual Work Plan and Accomplishments Report

Another workplan and accomplishment report is due in October 2025. The 2024 Workplan was presented to the Board of County Commissioners in May 2024.

The members want the previous workplan sent to them. Chairman Ron Rawls noted that the goals in the previous years' workplan were collaborating with the equity and outreach manager, using the Equity Advisory Tool, looking at other departments with the Equity Advisory Tool, and making recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. Currently, the role of Equity and Outreach Manager is on hold, as well as the name for the Equity Advisory Tool. However, the work can still be done as planned to use a tool to create a comprehensive plan.

The discussion of renaming the Equity Advisory Board was tabled to the next meeting.

6. Equity Advisory Board - Diversity Recommendations and Action Plan

The Board of County Commissioners is interested in the ideas the Equity Advisory Board has on filling vacancies and promoting diversity on other boards.

The Equity Advisory Board suggested that the matter of vacancies is related to the current attendance policy. Staff clarified the legal requirements and guidelines for boards and committees regarding attendance and meeting quorum.

7. Member Comments

Chairman Rawls reintroduced the question of adding a youth member to the Equity Advisory Board.

Members supported a youth member as long as they do not have to move the meeting time and that the youth member would experience the same requirements as everyone else on the board.

8. Public Comment

N/A

9. Announcements

Kali Blount advertised a free Jazz event for all ages at Cypress and Grove Friday (3/21/2025) evening.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM.