

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY ATTORNEY INTERVIEWS
AND SELCTION PROCESS
SPECIAL MEETING
October 29, 2019**

The Board of County Commissioners of Leon County, Florida met in special session at 12:30 p.m. with Chairman Jimbo Jackson presiding. Present were Vice-Chairman Bryan Desloge and Commissioners Nick Maddox, Bill Proctor, Kristin Dozier, Mary Ann Lindley, and Rick Minor. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Herb Thiele, Human Resource Director, Candice Wilson, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood.

Chairman Jackson called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed Ms. Cynthia Everett as the first candidate to begin the interview process. He explained that each candidate would have a list of questions. The candidate was seated in the round table facing the Commission for the interview process in the Commissioner's Boardroom. They were each kept in a separate office area until it was their time to come before the Board.

County Attorney Thiele noted this was a Special Meeting and briefly gave the background. As approved by the Board at the October 15, 2019 meeting, this Special Meeting is scheduled to conduct interviews with candidates for the position of County Attorney. Following the interview, the Board will determine if there is a candidate (or candidates) in which the Commission may have an interest in extending an offer of employment. If so, a ranking process will be used to determine the Board's preferred candidate (s). Following the ranking process, the Board may authorize the Chairman to negotiate an employment agreement with the highest-ranked candidate (and possibly a second-highest ranked candidate) which would be brought back to the Board for final approval.

Should the Special Meeting not result in a preferred candidate(s), the Board may direct the screening committee to extend the recruitment process.

Each Commissioner was provided a list of scripted questions that would be asked randomly by them to candidates. Below are the following questions:

1. Tell us a little about yourself and your interest in this opportunity.
2. Tell us about your legal experience.
3. Share with us your experience in making legal recommendations to an elected body.
4. Describe your experience working on mediated settlement agreements including involving community groups and constituents to resolve matters and avoid litigation.
5. Describe your attorney style including experience in managing a legal office.
6. Tell us about a time when you have experienced as potential professional ethical challenge and how you addressed it.
7. Describe your attorney style including experience, including drafting development agreements, working on land use/comprehensive plan issues, environmental issues, etc.
8. Describe your experience working on statewide legal issues related to Counties, such as preemption, home rule, etc.
9. Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it or be directed to fix it.
10. What do you consider to be your area(s) of professional strength and weakness?
11. Describe your litigation experience.
 - a. How many jury trials, bench trials, or DOAH proceedings have you handled yourself?

- b. What were the subject matters, if you can recall?
 - c. Have you litigated any matters in federal district courts?
 - d. Discuss any experience you have handling any appellate matters at the state and federal level.
12. Is there anything you wish to share with us regarding the details of your separation from previous employers?

The Board began their interviewing start time at 12:40 pm with the first candidate. Each candidate was asked an array of questions and they were allowed to answer.

1. Cynthia Everett:

37 years of experience practicing law, including 7 years of experience serving as the City Attorney for Opa-Locka and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. 14 additional years of experience practicing local government law in private practice including serving as the Village Attorney for Pinecrest, Florida on a contract basis. Also served for 6 years as Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of Florida and 7 years as Assistant State Attorney in the Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office. Member of the Florida Bar in good standing with Board certification in Labor and Employment Law.

Chairman Jackson thanked Attorney Everett for her professional demeanor and asked her to give closing remarks.

Attorney Everett gave her closing remarks. She reminded the Board of her willingness to serve and that she was ready, energetic, and loyal to serve in the position of County Attorney.

2. Mark Moriarty:

23 years of experience as in-house legal counsel for three Florida municipalities. Served as Assistant City Attorney for Fort Myers, Florida from 1996 to 2014; City Attorney of North Port, Florida from 2014 to 2017; and Assistant City Attorney for Cape Coral, Florida from 2017 to present. Member of the Florida Bar in good standing and is a Board-Certified Specialist in City, County, and Local Government Law. Served as Past Chair of the City, County, and Local Government Law Section of the Florida Bar.

Chairman Jackson thanked Attorney Moriarty for his professionalism and asked if he would give closing remarks.

Attorney Moriarty responded how much he admired Leon County and spoke of the professionalism displayed during the interview process and stated he would love to have the opportunity to work for them.

3. Chasity O'Steen:

16 years of experience practicing law, including 5 years of experience serving as General Counsel or Deputy General Counsel for the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Florida Department of Financial Services, and the Florida Department of Management Services. 10 years of experience practicing local government law in private practice with Sniffen & Spellman, P.A., Rose, Sundstrom & Bentley, LLP (now Sundstrom & Mindlin, LLP), and Hopping Green & Sams, P.A. Member of the Florida Bar in good standing. Board-Certified in City, County and Local Government Law, 2012-2016.

Chairman Jackson thanked Attorney O'Steen for her professional demeanor and asked her for closing remarks.

Attorney O'Steen remarked how she would like the opportunity to expound on why she was choosing to return to local government. She closed by wishing the best for the Board.

4. LaShawn Riggans:

13 years of experience practicing law, including 8 plus years of legal experience with Leon County Government. Served as Assistant County Attorney beginning in 2011 and was promoted in 2017 to Deputy County Attorney. 5 years of experience serving as Assistant State Attorney in Florida's First Judicial Circuit. Member of the Florida Bar in good standing.

Chairman Jackson thanked Attorney Riggans for her professionalism and interest in interviewing for the position and asked for closing remarks.

Attorney Riggans gave her final remarks by thanking the Board for the opportunity to interview and that it would be a pleasure serving under their leadership.

Board Response:

Commissioner Minor thanked Mrs. Candice Wilson, Human Resource Director and staff for ensuring a smooth process was had.

County Administrator Long shared that the Board would now move to deliberation and explained the ranking process with the number 4 being the highest ranking and 1 being the lowest. He shared after they had finished, and all ranking sheets had been collected they would be given to Deputy County Administrator Allen Rosenzweig and Assistant County Administrator Andrew Johnson for final totaling.

Results:

- Chasity O'Steen - 19 points
- LaShawn Riggans -18 points
- Mark Moriarty -17 points
- Cynthia Everett-16 points

Chairman Jackson presented options 1-4.

Options:

1. *Select a highest-ranked candidate for the position of County Attorney and authorize the Chairman to negotiate an employment agreement and present a negotiated agreement to the Board for final approval.*
2. *Select a second-highest ranked candidate to whom the Board wishes to extend an employment offer in the event that an agreement with the highest-ranked candidate cannot be reached.*
3. *Direct the County Attorney Screening Committee to continue the recruitment process by engaging and executive recruitment firm.*
4. *Board Direction*

Commissioner Desloge moved, duly seconded by Commissioner Dozier, for Option 1 and 2: Option 1: Select a highest ranked candidate for the position of County Attorney and authorize the

Chairman to negotiate an employment agreement and present a negotiated agreement to the Board for final approval. Option 2: Select a second-highest ranked candidate to whom the Board wishes to extend an employment offer in the event that an agreement with the highest ranked candidate cannot be reached. The motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Desloge commented on the expertise of each of the candidates.

Commissioner Dozier offered her appreciation for the accomplishments and professionalism of each candidate along with their willingness to serve.

Commissioner Minor commented on the great candidates and excellent skills they all possessed. He wished them all the best in their future endeavors.

Chairman Jackson commented on the process and that it had been transparent with much validity across the board.

Commissioner Maddox inquired what would be the next phase of the process.

County Administrator Long discussed the timeline and that they would engage in an employment contract with Attorney Chasity O'Steen as the Board's primary choice and in the event if they are unable to reach an agreement, they would offer to the Board's second choice, Attorney LaShawn Riggins.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

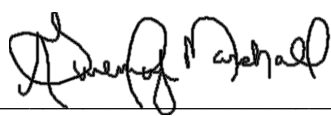
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Bryan Desloge", written over a horizontal line.

BY: _____
Bryan Desloge, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

BY: 
Gwendolyn Marshall, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida