

**Charter Review Commission  
Board of County Commissioners  
Subcommittee Meeting  
September 22, 2021**

A meeting of the Charter Review Commission Board of County Commissioners Subcommittee was held at Charlotte County Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Room B-106, Port Charlotte, Florida at 11:00 A.M. on September 22, 2021.

**Roll Call:**

**The following members were present:**

William Abbatematteo, Chair  
Richard Pitz  
Donna Peterman  
Jeffrey Anlauf

**Absent Members:** None.

**Citizens Present:** None.

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m. by Chairman William Abbatematteo.

**Agenda Items:**

I. Approval of Minutes.

**MOTION WAS MADE BY RICHARD PITZ AND SECONDED BY DONNA PETERMAN TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 18, 2021 MINUTES**

**MOTION CARRIED: 3:00**

II. Citizens Input – None

**MOTION WAS MADE BY RICHARD PITZ AND SECONDED BY JEFFREY ANLAUF TO CLOSE CITIZEN INPUT.**

**MOTION CARRIED: 3:0**

III. Old Business:

a. Review of Scheduled Interviews – The proposed scheduled was reviewed and approved. The next meeting is October 20 at 11:00 for interviews with Hector Flores and Roger Eaton. The Five Commissioners have appointments scheduled in December. Chair Abbatematteo asked for input as to additional persons to interview. Member Pitz recommended that Dave Gammon be invited to suggest other County personnel to interview during his interview if he felt someone more appropriate could answer any questions the committee might raise.

#### IV. New Business:

a. 11:00 a.m. Interview with Dave Gammon, Economic Development Director.

Chair Abbatematteo explained the reason that Director Gammon was invited to speak with this committee (after having spoke with another committee) was because this committee's purview is regarding the Board of County Commissioners and the Economic Development Director works directly with the Commissioners.

**Introduction by Dave Gammon:** The Economic Development Office (EDO) is tasked with bringing jobs to the County. We are trying to make things happen and are aggressive in our endeavors. We work well with the rest of the Staff in the County and we report directly to the Board of County Commissioners so we can get direction directly from them, their ideas on what is or is not important. We work closely with Legal and Community Development and depending on what project we are working on, we work closely with all departments. We are excited in doing our work; we are our own entity across the street which is a different feel for the business world. We can bring people in to be interviewed in another building and they do not have to go through the DMV line. It is important to be located where we are. **What was your background before coming here?** I have always been involved in real estate – my dad was a developer in Colorado. I've purchased a bunch of land in southern California, I've purchased commercial buildings all over the country. My background is transaction orientated which is why I was hired here. We don't have a lot of people in the County with a real estate background so my background fits in well. **What about the Commissioners?** I am just talking about staff as our Commissioners are well-versed in real estate, so it is a good mix all around.

#### **1. Regarding recent programs spearheaded by the Economic Development Office (Airframe and Power) explain how did this idea and others for the County are generated?**

The Chamber has a Leadership Charlotte program for 20-25 seniors in high school. At the end there is a luncheon that we attend every year. The students are asked how many of you are coming back to Charlotte County after school. Not a hand goes up. We are trying to bring jobs here for these kids and it is scary that they do not plan to stick around. The Airframe and Power (A & P ) program has just begun – that's a great economic development start -we wrote the grant for that after only two us believed in it – me and Delyn Bennett at Charlotte Technical. We had to work with the School Board to get that going. Seventy-one kids are involved in the program. **Did the nexus for the whole thing came from something you were familiar with?** Yes, there was a job growth grant funds – so we went to Charlotte Technical asking if they would do this with us – we would raise the money. We had to keep pushing staff – they are not in the business of taking risks. The School Board is in a risk adverse business and so is the County. That makes Economic Development unique because we take risks and look at different ideas and push the boundaries. **Does the Technical college have advisors for the program as the School Board is not qualified?** – Yes, we hired a staff person for them, Steven Dual, before the School Board was ready to hire. He is the expert in airframe and power.

**2. What are your thoughts on Term Limits for the Commissioners?** It would be a shame to lose some of our Commissioners due to term limits. Not a lot of people are running for that position – what if no one ran for Commissioner or City Council? I would hate to handicap the County by term limiting these positions. **Would changes on the Commission affect or change how you perform your job?** I have a good relationship with all Commissioners. To lose that knowledge would be difficult. Bringing someone new in is not an issue nor is keeping someone with experience

an issue.

**3. On a practical level how do you manage five bosses?** It is a timely question as my review comes up on Tuesday and it is in Public. You can't always please five people, so you work on a consensus basis and go with the majority. It is challenging and fun. **Would it be easier if you reported to the County Administrator?** Absolutely not – it would be awful. This was done before my time and it caused all sorts of issues and was the reason it was changed back in 2010. I meet with the Commissioners to get their feel and input on issues. There is a lot of massaging of projects before they get to a Public Hearing. We do things that are very different than what Administration does (maintaining risk free programs). It would get too filtered if it ran through Administration. The Commissioners find it exciting to talk about all the new possibilities. **You can have access without hardline reporting.** I would not change it because of reporting to five bosses – I like reporting to 5 bosses.

Chair Abbatematteo commented that every single Florida Charter has a separation of power clause. We are the only Charter to have the EDO reporting to the Legislative Branch (Commissioners).

Chair Abbatematteo raised the issue of the Economic Development Partnership (EDP) using the county's address for tax filings in the past and the negative perception it creates. Mr. Gammon reported that this has been changed and the EDP is a separate entity. The EDP is currently getting ready to hire their own support staff. EDP supports what we do in our office and funds things we do in our office.

**4. What does EDP do?** The sole purpose is to support economic development in Charlotte County. Membership consists of businesspeople, much like a Chamber. Their funds go to support our endeavors– they advocated for sales tax because the County could not, telling the citizens they thought it was a good idea. If we need to entertain potential clients – showing them Charlotte County – EDP will pick up the tab for us. We are separate but I can submit a report to them telling what I did to entertain, submit a bill and they will reimburse us.

**5. You meet with the EDP staff and they perform stuff you can't legally do like travel and entertainment.** I, as a county employee can't give recommendations while members of the EDP can. They can talk to potential clients about recommending things like real estate contacts and contractors to hire. Whether or not I report to Hector Flores, the EDP would continue to meet with the Commissioners once a month. They are valuable people to have in our community.

**6. With the success of the Airframe Power plant, is there anything else you are working on?** Mr. Gammon commented on the various Aviation and Distribution companies that are contacting us for relocation to Charlotte County and how that is our focus now – attracting a workforce. Only 42% of our population is in the workforce. We are a retirement community. If we have the workforce, we can attract these distribution companies.

**7. How do you feel about reporting to six bosses?** Adding another Commissioner? Makes no difference to me except for getting four to agree and not just three.

**8. Is there anything you can think of that would make your job easier or give you the ability to work better?** No, we are flexible, but I can always ask the Commissioners or Administrator Hector Flores about whatever we need to do. We have a well-oiled machine, and I don't want to muck things up right now. **Should Hector Flores retire, do you see landmines**

**down the road?** That's life. It happened when Ray Sandrock retired and we still moved on. You have to find a way to work with everyone.

**9. Tourism is supported by the bed tax which would sort of make them independent, but they do not report to the five commissioners. Why not?** They are not supported by the bed tax, it's a county expense; the money comes in and they get to use it for advertising. Tourism, Budget and EDP are all a bit different from the other County departments.

Chair Abbatematteo read the following from the Charter:

*F. Director of Economic Development. There shall be a director of the economic development office selected by the board of county commissioners who shall serve at the pleasure of the board.*

**Is there anything you would like to change about that?** No. It wasn't a fun interview but that is just the way it is.

*The director of the economic development office shall not be under the direction and control of the county administrator but shall, instead, be responsible directly to the board of county commissioners."*

**Is there anything you would like to change with that language?** No – that is the same language used for the County Attorney.

**End of Interview:**

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V. Discussion:

- a. The committee decided to raise the same issues with the County Commissioners.
- b. The committee discussed the perception of the EDP running out of the EDO.
- c. The committee discussed asking about a Memo or policy regarding the use of County facilities. This will be a question to address with Administrator Hector Flores.

VI. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned by consensus at 12:25 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 20th at 11:00 a.m.


12/9/2024  
 William Abbatematteo, Chairman Date  
 Board of County Commissioners Sub-committee