

Below is a list of issues that resulted in the ratings given.

## **Professional Skills and Expertise, Citizen and Public Relations and Intergovernmental Relations Ratings**

### **School Resource Officer Funding**

It's my belief that you did not have authorization or an official majority vote by the Board of County Commissioners to send the letter to the School Board that directed you to tell them, that the board had made "an important decision regarding our ongoing financial commitment to the school district", Furthermore, your letter reads: "However, after careful review and consideration, we have concluded that we can no longer sustain annual legacy expenditures that are not directly aligned with our strategic plan or mandated by state statute, while at the same time achieving our responsibility as county government." It Concludes, "Therefore, it is necessary for us to establish a transition plan to gradually transfer the financial responsibility for these legacy expenditures to the school district".

The words chosen were, in my opinion, misleading and inaccurate concerning the board's true and obvious intentions. The Administration should have known that this letter would cause unnecessary difficulties in our partnerships with other government entities and significant community outrage, and they were, in fact, not the direction given by the board.

This issue is similar to sending the letter in June 2023 to our government partners regarding the sales tax. I don't recall an official consensus or an on the record majority vote directing you to send that particular letter. It caused unnecessary controversy and distrust of our government peers and the community. As I recall, it also had misinformation about the funding of that particular tax, vastly overstating the percentage of the tax that would be paid by non-residents.

### **Ragga Surf/River to Sea Preserve**

The County Administrator walking this matter on the agenda during a meeting, which was not the best decision to make on behalf of the board. It was an uncomfortable matter with little information provided to make a sound decision. As it turns out, the issue exposed that the Administration and staff were not aware of a long-standing agreement with the State and were out of compliance, exposing us to a potential loss in ownership and state funding. We are now in an uncomfortable position with the state on the status of ownership. I also disagree with the decision made to allow them to operate till the end of the year, when it was clear that the state had asked us to cease and desist from this operation several months prior.

I concede that I suggested a temporary permit for events to stop the immediate disruption to their employees and income loss. However, this is a specific example of a matter where had I known about the agreement with the state and the specifics of their

for -profit status, I would never have made the suggestion with which the board agreed. Furthermore, it was portrayed in that meeting that the formal agreement would come back to the board for final approval. To my knowledge, it never did. The administration had multiple opportunities to vet this issue, provide facts and then allow the board to make a good decision that could have avoided the outcome we are now facing.

## **Directives given by the Board rather than those of any one Board Member**

### **Board Consensus and ideas**

On several occasions, the board has proposed suggestions only to be publicly challenged by staff and the Administration. There have been several instances where the suggestions the Board proposed and agreed upon appear to be rejected or slow-walked by staff. The agreed upon items often are not prioritized or acted upon by the staff in a timely and conciseness matter which has led to predictably adverse outcomes.

The Airport zoning ordinance represents a example of this reoccurring problem. In early 2023, the Board of County Commissioners concurred that the state mandated county airport zoning ordinance needed to be implemented. In mid 2024, I brought the previous consensus on this matter up again and staff became short and curt about it and suggested it would eventually be dealt with. Now, it is 2025. It is in the process of being implemented now because of Board direction in the January 2025 meeting that required the matter be forced, because of contractual needs that involve the applicable airport statutes. This could have been avoided had staff and Administration simply followed Board direction previously at the proper time.

### **Community concerns**

We have been plagued with community complaints involving issues like noise, parking and the staff's interpretation of the Land development Code and Comprehensive plan. For example, on several occasions that the Board has discussed their desire to work through the issues in the Hammock; however, it doesn't seem that these issues have been addressed by staff. Instead, we still continue to face the same complaints. I believe we should be strongly working towards these resolutions that the residents want addressed.

### **Staffing and Management**

Another concern this year has been with staff and the reoccurring themes of personal relationships, negative behavior and poor work product.

Below are some examples of concerns I have:

### **Leadership Academy**

It was brought to my attention that the Academy was going to be conducted by a person who may have had a personal relationship with one of our Human Resource employees and did not appear to be adequately qualified for the position. I advised the

Administration of this prior to the academy beginning. However, the Academy went forward with the person, and it's my understanding, based on a conversation with the Administrator, that the personal relationship was confirmed, and the person was not well received by the employees. Had this issue been investigated and dealt with at the right time, this issues could have been avoided.

### **Airport matters**

Previously this year (11/24), the Airport Director made a decision to terminate a lease on property. The decision resulted in a lawsuit against the County that the plaintiff won consuming Legal staff time which costs the taxpayers. The jury findings determined that the Airport Director violated the 1st Amendment rights of the tenant and the County's eviction was invalidated. Court records indicated that the Administrator supported the eviction.

In the press, you were quoted as saying: "I and the commissioners have full confidence in Mr. Sieger's operation of the Airport," Petito wrote Abend last December. "I don't typically involve myself in his daily affairs or any other department heads for that matter." However, supervising this Director is your responsibility.

Not soon after, the Airport Director was accused of the following: "Sieger was "very belligerent, yelling and screaming that by landing I had 'infringed on his authority,' according to the written account of the incident by the pilot, Bill Culberson.

In our County meeting "I know these people don't agree with me, but at the end of the day, you bought a house next to an airport. Unfortunately, you bought a house next to an airport. We did not build an airport next to your house."

There were also comments by tenants on the survey recently presented to the board that spoke of difficult behavior from the Airport Director.

First, I'm concerned with the comment that you don't involve yourself in the daily affairs of any department heads. We have many unresolved issues, and its absolutely necessary to involve yourself in the day to day within several of the departments we are seeing issues and potential lawsuits arise from.

Most importantly, the airport is a highly regulated, high-risk operation that has drawn serious criticism in the past several years. It's also what the county considers to be an area where economic development is the desirable outcome. To have these matters in the press often, and to see various comments from tenants that echo the same concerns about behavior, should be concerning to you. It is to me as a board member. It's important to know that you are formally addressing this issues presented.

### **Legislative Delegation Error**

Its my understanding that the 2023 forms were not completed properly by staff, causing an ask to be very specific. Due to the error on the form, we are now working

diligently to fulfill the funding requirements. This has resulted in a delay of almost two years of securing the parcel and at one point, the potential loss of those funds from the state. As a result of all of this, the board was recently subjected to a special meeting and asked to approve a contract that was not in the backup due to time constraints this error by staff has caused. The contract had not even been drafted at the time the special meeting was called. Its not proper to expect the Board to approve contracts they have not reviewed. We should not be in these type of predicaments. However, time and time again, we find ourselves dealing with matters like this.

My concern is that you have been a peer of many of these staff members and now that you are their manager, you may find it difficult to provide coaching or corrective action.

I am concerned that these incidents are indicators that the Administration may not be addressing issues with staff through coaching or corrective action.

I would challenge you to engage with the mid-management staff, listen to their thoughts and seek suggestions and objections to plans as a means of vetting ideas properly. I can see that the same few people seem to be involved in all the decision making and that may not be the best method for solving all county issues.

When I started in this role I was transparent with you that I wanted you to be successful, because your success is my success. I genuinely think that you present well at County events and you want to get things right, but as it stands, we aren't getting there this year. I recognize that our Legal department holds some responsibility in ensuring that the Administration is successful at accomplishing our goals and strategic plan, and I plan to address them. I have been critical this year of performance, and trust me, its difficult to have to address. I recognize that in many ways, staff operates like a family. They appear to love their jobs and each other, but, the negative culture lingers and, at times, feels like a coup is at play against the Board and residents. I want very much to feel confident in what's presented to us; however, I am not there. My desire is for real change so that the residents and the Board can have full confidence that the correct decisions are being made on behalf of all of Flagler County.

I reviewed the highlights provided and am pleased with the work put into maintaining operating reserves, improved bond ratings, and the wonderful work coming out of the drone, emergency management and fire programs. During the hurricane, fire and rescue and Johnathan Lord were outstanding partners and resources and I am grateful for their partnership within our community. The Road and Bridge departments are doing a fantastic job lately and I am glad the Board chose to support funding to help with ditch issues in District 4. I appreciate you working on a solution for my concerns with the ditches near farms. I'm looking forward to positive change this year.