March 20, 2018

MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION

The Mobile County Commission met in regular session in the Government Plaza Multi-Purpose Room, in the City of Mobile, Alabama, on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at 8:45 A.M. The following members of the Commission were present: Connie Hudson, President, Jerry L. Carl, and Merceria Ludgood, Members. President Hudson chaired the meeting.

AGENDA #1

APPROVE CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS/
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR AND COUNTY
ENGINEER POSITIONS

The interviews were conducted: Neal Howard, applying for Public Works Director, Rosemary Sawyer, applying for County Engineer, Matthew Brown, applying for County Engineer, Matthew Barclift, applying for County Engineer and Public Works Director, Richard Spraggin, applying for County Engineer and Public Works Director, and John Dailey, Jr., applying for County Engineer. Court Reporter’s Transcripts (Freedom Court Reporting) attached.

AGENDA #2

COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS
AND/OR COMMENTS

There were no announcements and/or comments.
March 20, 2018

AGENDA #3

ADJOURN

Commissioner Carl moved, seconded by Commissioner Ludgood, that the Board approve a request for motion to adjourn until March 22, 2018.

Motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

Connie Hudson, President

Jerry R. Carl, Member

Mercedia Ludgood, Member

John Pasenbach, County Administrator
MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION
205 GOVERNMENT STREET
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36602

TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2018
8:30 A.M.

IN RE: MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES

INTERVIEWS FOR THE POSITION OF COUNTY ENGINEER
AND/OR PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

CONNIE HUDSON, COMMISSION PRESIDENT
MERCERIA LUDGOOD, DISTRICT 1
JERRY CARL, DISTRICT 3

REPORTED BY: PATRICIA TAYLOR, CCR
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This meeting is now called to order. The purpose of this meeting is to continue interviewing candidates for the positions of County Engineer and Public Works Director, Chief Engineer, Division of Public Works.

MR. CARL: And that's where we start. That's our list.

THE COURT REPORTER: Okay. Thank you.
INTERVIEW OF NEAL HOWARD

MS. HUDSON: Come on in. Have a seat.

MR. HOWARD: Good morning, Commissioners.

MS. HUDSON: Good morning. Our first candidate for today is Neal Howard, who I understand is Robert Neal Howard.

MR. HOWARD: That's correct.

MS. HUDSON: And he is interviewing for the position of public works Director, Chief Engineer, Division of Public Roads.

Welcome. Good morning.

MR. HOWARD: Good morning.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Neal, what we will do initially is to give you an opportunity to just introduce yourself, tell us anything about you that you'd like for us to know. And then we will begin with a series of questions, and it should be not
difficult at all, Okay?
Okay. Sure.
All right.
Well, born and raised here in Mobile County; 45 years old. I grew up in a small town, Grand Bay which was a unique experience, small town life, all eyes on you at all times. So I learned from an early age to be accountable for all of my actions.
I've been working here at Mobile County for the past eight years. Currently I'm the Public Works Engineering Manager, so I manage the entire public works department directly under Ricky Mitchell. And it's been an absolute honor and a privilege. I greatly enjoy my job.
The men and women that serve Mobile County do a fantastic job and it's a -- it's an honor to be associated with them.
So I'm -- you know, I'm very interested in the position and I think I can do a -- a good job representing Mobile County in that capacity.
Okay.
We have a list of questions that we were provided. And what we will do is we will each pick four of them. And if we have the time, we'll ask you the same four we ask the other candidates. If you touch a nerve, we may come up with a different question from one of us. But --

Sure.

-- other than that, everything is pretty much stocked and in line.

How do you describe your leadership style? And give us some examples of that style.

My leadership style. I'm very firm and -- and fair. I treat all of the employees and anyone under my direction the same. I believe in being honest and -- and upfront with everyone. And -- and -- and the rules are the rules. We -- we have a lot of policies and procedures that we follow. And I think once it's in writing, everyone is held to that same standard.

Okay.
Q: Okay. I have a follow-up to that. In your experience -- and I understand the rules are the rules and all of that. Have you had any experience when you thought that the application of a rule to a particular employee might have been unduly harsh given that particular employee? And, if so, how did you navigate that?

A: Well, I think the circumstances around what may have -- have caused the problem would certainly weigh in, in what type of discipline, you know, was was merited out from the event. If -- if someone had some sort of circumstances beyond their control, then it may -- we have to enforce the rule, but the discipline side of things can have some room there to help them out.

For instance, an individual that is chronically tardy, we -- we have that a lot. And -- and we need the employees there at a certain time of the day so that we can get the crews lined out and we can get out and do our job. It might be that -- that they just can't
get up on time. Or we might have another employee that they have one car in their household and very limited funds and income and they're responsible for getting the wife to work and the kids to school and a whole sort of -- you know, a -- a lot of issues there that could been involved.

So maybe it's not on the discipline side of things: Maybe it's more of a counseling and learning what their issues are on a personal level and offering some help and some advice to them. Not so much as, you know, coming down on them just for not really caring about the job.

Q Okay. So I just wanted to get to whether there was room for kind of looking at the circumstances.

A Sure. Sure. That's -- that's -- that's what the -- the hearings are about, the disciplinary hearings are about. It gives us a chance to hear their side of things and -- and why it is that maybe they have a problem with that policy or following that rule.

Q Okay.

MS. LUDGOOD: Was that --
MS. HUDSON: That was a follow-up.

MS. LUDGOOD: So how do you currently develop your key employees, the people who you recognize as really good employees who might make really good supervisor material at some point in their careers? What do you do now to try to develop those people and nurture them and bring them along?

A Well, now in my current capacity working with the Department of Supervisors or DTS is we do -- you know, we do identify those employees that we think would be good supervisors. And we try to encourage them to take some classes, get involved in the paperwork side of things. Kind of shadow some of our existing supervisors on a daily basis.

On those rainy days we encourage those guys to -- to sit with the supervisors and see what they have to do from a paperwork standpoint, all the steps they have to follow over and above the daily activities.

Just like we encourage our younger
laborers that want to be equipment operators: We encourage them to, you know, shadow these equipment operators, go and train with them whenever the opportunity affords itself.

Q Thank you.

BY MR. HUDSON:

Q Neal, I think you'll probably agree that establishing rapport is an important part of the job in any management position, not only with subordinates but also with people that you don't report to.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q What is your style of establishing rapport and building relationships with people?

A Well, the biggest step with -- especially with the employees, the public works employees, is just being visible, being seen.

I -- I have a policy with all of my supervisors that if they're called out in the middle of the night, I get called out in the middle of the night. They know that they're supposed to call me. I -- I don't really care what time of the night or day it is. But they
call me. Because if I've got a crew that's out
there and they're waking up and getting out of bed
and going to fix this problem, I want to be there
for them.

I want them to see me and know that I'm
available and I'm visible and -- and I'm there to
help them get the resources and supplies they need
at whatever time.

I go out to the camps. I ride through
the county on a regular basis and meet with them
and -- and just stop and talk.

Being available, having an open-door
policy in my office, all -- all the employees know
that. They can stop in and talk to me. I may
make sure that their supervisor knows where they
are, but they're welcome to come and talk to me.

Q What about people you don't report to or
other -- I don't know -- department heads,
directors, commissioners, what --

A You know, as -- as time affords itself,
just being able to -- to sit and meet with them,
go to some of the training events, some of the
classes with some of the other department heads.
1 Just a chance to interact and -- and let them
2 know, you know, hey, we're here to help y'all;
3 y'all are here to help us. We can all make the
4 county better together.
5 Q Okay. Thank you.
6 BY MR. CARL:
7 Q Has there ever been a situation when you
8 were less successful as a leader? And what did
9 you do to get yourself there? And what did you
10 learn from the experience?
11 A I would think back in my consulting
12 engineering days when I worked for a smaller
13 private firm. I was a little less successful as a
14 leader simply in that I didn't follow up on some
15 things that I should have. Some particular
16 projects to where I may have taken someone else's
17 word for something instead of putting my eyes on
18 it myself and coming to my own decision.
19 And it put me in a -- in a position to
20 learn very quickly that no matter what position I
21 am in life, it's never too important for me to
22 step away from the desk and get out and see what's
23 going on and form my own decisions.
It's -- it's very hard to see over the phone what's actually going on out there and what someone is really complaining about. And you know with all our constituents in the county, we have to go out and meet with them a lot. And that -- that's very important, to be able to go out and step away from -- from the desk or the phone for a few minutes and get out and -- and see the constituents, hear the problem, and form my own decision.

Q Okay.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Okay.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q In your current role, what strategies do you use to build morale among those you supervise?

A Right. Well, I think, you know, recently we -- we've adopted some new strategies. Certainly, with the report that was issued from our consultant about the morale and keying in on the morale, we've sat back and -- and -- and talked about that.

And, me, personally, I -- I came up with
The idea that we need to make sure the employees know we see when they do something good. Oftentimes they only hear from us when they mess up, and we're quick to recognize that and call that out. But we don't often give them a pat on the back and tell them what a good job they're doing. We take it for granted. We -- I instituted Employee of the Month for all departments, the public works departments, the engineering departments, where the supervisors have to nominate an employee from their department. We may have three or four. And then the department head selects who's going to represent the department for the month. And, so, a very small gesture, but those guys and -- and the ladies, they absolutely light up when they are called out in -- in the morning meeting and handed a little slip of paper that's a certificate recognizing them for what they did. And the supervisor can't just nominate them. They have to include a written statement on why they nominated them. So, it -- it's a big boost of morale for them to stand up in front of
their peers that they work with day in and day out and get recognized for that. And then that's bled over to now the supervisors. They see the effect. They -- you know, they've got preferred parking spots for them now for the month. A couple of supervisors even reach in their own pocket and hand them a gift card for a Subway or something simple. But it's a positive step. And I -- I think it's paying big dividends for us.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q And have you seen a difference in the attitudes and morale?

A We -- we have. We've seen a -- a difference. And we've actually had employees coming to us afterwards or come to their supervisors afterwards and say, man, I'm -- you know, I'm a little upset I didn't get it. But that lets me know I need to do something different this month. I need to step it up a little bit because I -- I want that. I want to get recognized.

So it -- and -- and the big picture, it
does show them that we notice when they do something good. And that was the whole intent of that.

BY MR. CARL:

Q If you'll send us their picture and their names, I'd love to put that in one of our newsletters.

A We can do that. We hope to culminate the year with an Employee of the Year for public works and maybe even have them attend the commission meeting and get recognized and get brought up front. We'll have a plaque for them or something like that.

MS. HUDSON: At the very least, we can make sure we get it on our website.

MR. CARL: Well, that's what I was referring to.

MS. LUDGOOD: You know, we have a Facebook page. It'd be nice to the put it on there.

MS. HUDSON: Yeah.

MR. HOWARD: We can do that.
MR. CARL: Let people in our community learn that these people are getting the job done.

MS. LUDGOOD: And that they really do work, no matter what you --

Well, you know, perception is -- and I've tried to stress that to the employees. We know they work and y'all know they work. And if anyone spends longer than ten seconds driving past a construction site, they realize they work.

But a lot of people, that's the only view they get is the ten seconds when they're passing the job site. And they might see four or five guys leaning on a shovel waiting for the equipment operator to get through with what he's doing so they can jump in the hole.

They don't -- they don't see the other nine and a half hours of the day and they don't see them out there in the middle of the night.

All they get is that ten-second window. So I try to stress to them the importance of that and -- and your perception to the public.
BY MS. HUDSON:

Q That's good. Okay. What traits or qualities do you believe you possess that make you a consensus builder?

A A consensus builder?

Q Working with employees or working with departments, what --

A Well --

Q -- how do you approach trying to get -- if you have a difference of opinion or if you're just trying to reach a decision that you want to build a consensus, how do you go about that?

A I think staying level-headed. Not having a lot of ups and downs in my personality would go a long ways to that.

I -- I tend to just stay pretty nice and even and level-headed about things. I don't get too worked up and I don't get real upset. I -- I think that shows, you know, I'm -- I'm open for discussion and compromise on things. And -- and I am.

I do approach every situation -- if -- if there's a big decision to be made in our
department, we include our department heads and
department supervisors, and we sit down and
discuss it.
Because they're doing it everyday. I
don't want to make a change from the office that
affects them without them having some input in it.
And just being able to sit down and --
and have a nice rational peaceful, you know,
discussion about things goes a long ways to
getting their honest opinion, getting them to open
up.
You could certainly come in and be
heavy-handed about it and kind of push your way
and this is what I think and this is what we're
going to do. But if you're doing that to the
people that have to get it done, they're going to
shut down. And -- and they're not going to help
you make that successful. That's been my
experience.
So the carrot as opposed to the stick?
Yes.
Okay.
BY MR. CARL:

Q  If you woke up tomorrow and you had this

job, what are some of the changes that you're

looking at making? And I'm going off strictly

here.

A  Yeah.

MS. LUDGOOD: I was hoping you

would. I had written it down --

MR. CARL: Well, he kind of

alluded to it a while ago, and that's

what got me thinking about it.

A  Well, you know, there's some -- some

things that we've already implemented that I --

I'd like to keep, you know, in keeping with the

Employee of the Month, with the -- the Chili Cook

off that we had this year. That was small, but it

was a huge success. All of those kind of factor

into the morale and keeping the employees

together.

We've got employees in the north end of

the county that never see the employees in the

south end of the county. They don't even know who

they are. So any time we can bring them together
for a short period of time, it builds a sense of
community and camaraderie between the employees
and, I think, give us an overall better product at
the end of the day.

Another issue that -- that I think needs
some -- some detailed investigation is how we do
things within the public works department.

We've got a -- a large county and we've
got three camps. And I'm not real sure why we
have three camps. Is it because we have three
commissioners or do we have three commissioners
because we have three camps? I wasn't here when
all of that was set up.

But I know that we duplicate a lot of
things in -- in areas just because we have it
split into areas. And it might be we need to look
more at task-related function versus
geographic-related function.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q You think that would be much more
efficient?

A I -- I -- I think there is -- there's
some potential that it could be much more
efficient. Sometimes we have a redundancy factor
in there just because we have three locations.
And -- and it may be we have a --
something in the north end that we hardly ever
use, but we use it a whole lot in the south end or
in the middle.
You know, the -- the -- the demands of --
of each camp are vastly different. Vastly
different. Just in the people that we serve. The
type of job requests and work requests that we get
in vary greatly.

So I think that there might be some --
some investigation that needs to go into that.
There's some things that we're looking at now.
But that's certainly something I would push to
investigate and get down and see, you know, are we
doing things -- we're -- you know, we're a
government entity. We're not in it to make money
but I think there's ways that we can be more
efficient with the money that we do get.

Q Any other ideas for changes or revisions
that you think --

A No, not -- not at this time. I don't --
I don't really have anything. I mean, the -- the way we're operating now is very good. We get a lot accomplished. And that's a huge credit to -- to our employees. They do a lot with -- with a little on a daily basis.

Q: What about staffing?

A: Well, I --

Q: Is that a major issue?

A: Staffing is a -- is an issue. We have -- and that kind of plays hand-in-hand with what I was talking about with -- with the task-related function or task-related jobs versus geographic related.

Because we may have -- for instance, I'll use the Gradall crews as an example. For a Gradall crew to really operate, you have a Gradall, a Gradall operator and then you would need basically four dump trucks and then a three- or four-person crew to flag. That would be at an optimum. That keeps that crew running the full day.

Right now we have -- we might have a crew with a Gradall, a Gradall operator, and maybe two
trucks and -- and the flagging crew. And they're
going out because that's what they have available
at their camp. And it's not the most efficient
operation. There's a lot of time -- idle time in
there waiting on trucks to get back to load and
that sort of thing. So there's some things there
that we can improve on.

And I think if we didn't have three
Gradall crews here and three Gradall crews and
three Gradall crews here, we combine all of those
to make six Gradall crews that have all the things
they need to be an efficient and successful crew.
Then we give them more tools to do more. And in
the end, we get more done.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Is there any days that you've got a
Gradall crew that has nothing to do?

A Very few. Very few. But if -- if there
is in a particular area, they get reassigned
within that area. We don't send that Gradall crew
to the camp.

Say camp 3 had a Gradall crew that was
down for the day. They didn't really have
anything to do. Well, they would get reassigned
to help out in other capacities within that camp,
where it might be better to send them to camp 2
where they have a lot of ditches that need to be
cleaned out.
And -- and given the current set up of
our system and -- and how we operate between
camps, it's -- it's difficult to move personnel
and equipment across camp boundaries than it would
be if it was just countywide Gradall crews.

BY MS. HODSON:
Q Okay. Thank you.

BY MS. LODGOOD:
Q Do y'all still have safety meetings where
everybody comes and it's done camp by camp?
A It's done department by department. They
have monthly safety meetings.
Q And, so, there's never a time, other than
the way you're doing it now, where every single
person is sitting in the same --
A Yeah. It's -- it's very rare. It's very
rare for the whole camp -- the whole public works
department to get together.
Q: Do you see any value in that?
A: In bringing them all together?
Q: Uh-huh.
A: Sure. Sure I do. Like I said, it --
Q: It -- we're all one big family. But if you don't see them -- if you never interact with them, you don't really know them anymore. And it -- and it's harder to interact when you do come together.
A: And -- and if we have a storm or we have an event that requires us all to get together and -- and get things done, I think they'll work better if they know each other. So any time I can get them together and let them interact and let them mingle -- because a lot of these guys have transferred around. And -- and they may have been in one end of the county for several years and then moved and needed a transfer to the north end of the county. Well, they left behind a whole group of guys and ladies that they worked with for a number of years and they haven't seen them since.
Q: So something like the -- the Chili Cook Off I had, I had over a dozen people come up to me
the next day and say that was fantastic. I -- I
got to see these guys that I hadn't seen in three
or four years.

And, you know, they sat around. They
stayed afterwards and talked and caught up on
their families and where their kids are now and
all of that kind of thing. I -- I -- I think
that's very important. I think it's very
important.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

MS. LUDGOOD: I'm done.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q In dealing with your employees, how do
you ensure that whatever direction that you give
employees, that it's actually followed through?
what measures do you have in place to -- just as
accountability to ensure that?

A For me to be absolutely sure that they
followed through, I -- it requires me to get out.
It requires me to -- to go and -- and check up on
things.

Like I said, you know, in my previous
experience, I relied on someone telling me they
I did something and -- and it got me in a -- in a position I didn't want to be in again.

I give a lot of written instructions just so that an employee can't say, you know, you didn't tell me that or that's not what you told me. So I try to be clear and precise in what I'm telling them to do.

And -- and then a lot of times I try to be there when they're doing it in -- in case it's something they may not be comfortable with. Then they at least have my support and my guidance.

Q: Okay.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q: I mean, is there software -- oh, let me just go back. You know, the one thing that the study talked about was measuring. Everybody knows. Everybody is working as fast as they can as hard as they can really for the most part. But have you given any thought to that recommendation about tools, measurement tools for --

A: Yes. It's -- like metrics, to -- to gauge, you know, just what we're getting done and how fast we should be getting it done so we have a
way of -- of gauging are we falling behind. Are
we, you know, staying ahead.

I'm sure there are some -- some tools, some software that would be available to help with that. I don't know that we've taken any steps towards that yet. But I think that would be --

It's -- it's kind of one of the things that I -- I'm tasking the supervisors with now is looking into what is a -- what is your optimal crew for a certain task? How many -- how many motor graders do we actually need? How many, you know, mowing crews do we actually need to get the job done.

Because a -- a lot of times, you know, in the past we would just -- we have all the equipment and we -- we use what we need. But it might be we're buying new equipment just because we have old equipment. We need to be replacing the equipment that we use all the time.

So I think that if we can measure that and know, you know, it takes 20 lawn mowers spread across the county to mow everything on a regular basis. Well, that's good. That's what we need to
We need to know we've got to have 20 lawn mowers that run all the time. So I -- I think -- like I said, that's -- that's one thing I've asked the supervisors to go through now is, you know, identify each task you have and identify what it is you define as an optimum crew to get things done and set a time table for it.

If you want to -- if you want to mow camp 2, that's fine. But let's say we want to mow camp 2 in a week and a half. How many lawn mowers would it take to do that.

The American Public Works Association I think has some standards or something that mentions -- maybe that's something we could look at just to see. My guess is that we're doing it. We may not have a document like that, but that we're doing the standard.

True.

But I think that was one of the things that was mentioned in the report was those standards are available kind of as a guide as we move forward.
MS. HUDSON: To measure productivity?

MS. LUDGOOD: Uh-huh.

A Right. And know that you -- you should be mowing X number of acres a week or you should be ditching X linear feet.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Of course, there's all those factors about equipment. As long as your equipment is operating --

A As long as your equipment is operating and --

Q -- and your operators come to work --

A -- your operators are coming to work and as long as the sun is shining.

Q It's true. Rain --

A Yeah. We had that situation -- we had that situation last year where it rained in a certain part of the county almost every day for three or four weeks. And you just simply could not mow.

Q And, meanwhile, people are calling and complaining.
And people are calling and complaining.

But, you -- you know, you -- we just simply couldn't get to it. And that prompted a lot of this discussion about task related. Because once the weather did clear up, we put as many mowers as we could out there and realized we had the equipment. And if we had people in the seats, we can mow an entire camp in under two weeks. That's pretty good.

Q I'm going to go off course here just a little bit. I see one issue that I think we, the county, has had. For example, Sheriff Cochran right now is running a program where he's offering a $4500 bonus, a sign on, of law enforcement.

I know in the county, from listening to you, you keep referring to trucks, trucks, trucks and then you don't have enough drivers is the way I'm interpreting that.

That's correct.

What can we do? As a county, what can we do to encourage; A, the employees that we have now to step up and move up into those positions; or,
B, how do we recruit and hire those people?
Because right now with the construction boom going on, a truck driver is becoming very hard to come by.
Very hard. And we see that. And I mention trucks a lot because that is the case and we are short on truck drivers.
But in general, our equipment operator position, we're very low all the way across the board. We don't have that generation of laborers and our PSW, public service workers moving up that want to advance into a CDL position for whatever reason.
And, so, I think it's -- it's becoming crucial that we recruit, that we find people out there looking to be a truck driver and looking for a stable local career.
Q Are we not incentivizing enough? I think that's the --
A I -- I -- I think -- I think that the starting salaries are -- are just too low. We can't attract someone, especially with the boom
that's going on in Mobile. There's a lot of
colorful construction. All the contractors are busy. The
big building projects have come up -- and if -- if
a person has a CDL, they can go find a good job in
Mobile right now. And -- and the county just
isn't attractive to that person looking for a job.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q Well, you know, do we have 18 year olds
with CDLs or do you have to be 21?
A No, you don't have to be 21. You get
a -- if you're 18, you can get a CDL.
Q Okay.
A Yeah. I would -- I would think if
you're -- well, I mean, if you can get a driver's
license, you can pass a CDL.

BY MR. CARL:

Q I thought the county had a reg -- and I
may be wrong, but I want to say that Ricky said
that there was an age requirement.
A Well, there might be. I'm -- I'm not
aware of that. But --
Q Well, when you go to get a CDL, then the
problem is keeping them.
A: Well, usually what we have is the ones that do show some initiative that come in the door as -- as a laborer or a public service worker, and they work with us and we see they have the potential and they show some initiative, we go through the steps and we train them and we put them in a truck and we guide them through the process of the CDL test and -- and get them the CDL. And then within four to six months, they've found another job. And -- and the county is a great stable place to come and train and get your CDL and then go make money somewhere else. So we don't have -- we don't have the incentives or -- or whatever is needed to keep them and retain them.

B: BY MR. CARL:

Q: And you can't blame somebody for wanting to better their situation --

A: Yeah, there's no question. I mean -- I mean, that -- it is what it is right now. And -- but I -- I think some strong consideration into the starting salaries or incentives for, you know, continuing education or -- or passing a
test, things of that nature might go a long way.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q That's a great idea.

A You know, similar to like a -- a signing bonus that companies offer. I think anything along those lines would be good.

One other thing we are looking at that I'll -- I'll mention at this time, is an incentive program for employees. I think the city has one now where they run off a point system. And -- and it -- it's basically points or rewards for anything you're doing to better yourself as a citizen of the county, as an employee of the county.

Say you go back and get your G.E.D., well, that's worth a certain number of points. You go and take some -- some training classes, that's worth certain points. You're involved in -- in a charity outreach in the community, you're a visible productive member of society, that's worth some points.

And -- and we're coming up with a list all of the different things and all the different
1 point values. And then I imagine we would sit
2 down with the commission and discuss it and see if
3 there's a way to, say, after -- let me see if I
4 remember. After 200 points, after you amass 200
5 points, you're eligible for a raise. And -- and
6 it doesn't -- it doesn't go along with any other
7 merit or cost-of-living raise. It's independent
8 and on its own. And you can get one every so many
9 years, however long it takes you to amass those
10 points. But it's a way to reward them to go out
11 and better themselves. And --
12 Q And help the county.
13 A -- and help the county. And, like I
14 said, you know, the -- the Touch-A-Truck thing,
15 I'm not sure if y'all were able to attend. But
16 that's a fantastic event at Bay Bear Stadium. And
17 every year we have more and more employees that
18 say: We really love that. We -- we want to be
19 involved in that next year. So next year we'll
20 have more equipment than we had this year.
21 And they go out on a Saturday and they
22 interact with the public and they pick up kids and
23 sit them in the seat and let him then blow the
horn. And, you know, it's -- it's just a -- it's a great interaction.

    Because a lot of times, their only interaction with the public is somebody yelling at them to get out of the road or telling them they're number 1, and stay off my lawn and that kind of thing. So, you know, those kind of things go a long way, even in the perception that the public has of -- so participation in that event is worth so many points to them. And it helps them because they're helping the county.

Q Well, we look forward to hearing more about this and seeing what you propose to us.

MR. CARL: I'm good.

MS. LUDGOOD: I'm good.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Any questions?
A I mean, the only question I had was just
2 on the -- the time line of this, what the
3 commission sees going forward. I -- I -- I think
4 the interviews wrap up this week. But I didn't
5 know if y'all would --
6 Q We anticipate -- and I believe I'm
7 speaking for us all, that we are hoping to get
8 this swiftly done. We know it's been 18 months.
9 So --
10 MR. CARL: It's drag out long
11 enough.
12 MS. HUDSON: Yeah. It was. And,
13 you know, unavoidably in some
14 respects because, you know, we had to
15 wait on the personnel board and go
16 through the whole due diligence
17 process. But now it's in our court
18 and we anticipate we'll be making a
19 decision soon. Okay.
20 MR. HOWARD: All right. I don't
21 really have any questions.
22 MS. HUDSON: All right. Well, we
23 thank you for your time. You did a
great job. We appreciate it. We appreciate all you do for the county.

MR. HOWARD: Thank you. My pleasure.

MS. HUDSON: We notice. We pay attention.

MR. HOWARD: Thank you.

MR. CARL: I talk to him every day on the phone.

MR. HOWARD: Yeah. Yeah. This is the -- this is the first hour in a long time that my phone hasn't gone off. I appreciate that.

MR. CARL: Thank you.

MS. HUDSON: All right. Have a great day, Neal.

MR. HOWARD: Thank you.

9:21 a.m.

(Recess taken.)
INTERVIEW OF ROSEMARY SAWYER

MS. HUDSON: Our next applicant is Rosemary Ginn Sawyer.

THE COURT REPORTER: Ms. Sawyer, how do you spell your middle name?

MS. SAWYER: Ginn, G-I-n-n.

MS. HUDSON: I'm sorry.

THE COURT REPORTER: G-I-n?

MS. SAWYER: G-I-n-n.

THE COURT REPORTER: Thank you.

MS. HUDSON: You're welcome.

MR. CARL: I called her Gin, too.

MS. HUDSON: Ginn not Gin.

MS. SAWYER: I have -- I've been answering to that all my life.

MS. HUDSON: It's either that or correct people, right?

MS. SAWYER: Right.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Well, thank you for joining us today and your interest in this position. What we will do
first is to give you an opportunity to introduce
yourself and tell us about whatever you want us to
know about you, and then we'll start. We'll do a
series of questions relating to the position and
get your responses. So we'll go ahead and begin.

All right. I'm originally from
Birmingham, and I grew up there, a daddy's girl.
I worked with him on Saturdays in the summers in
our family drugstore. And, so, I have lot of
experience with customers.

But my father being a pharmacist, in his
spare time, we mostly just rode the interstate
being built in Birmingham. So I ended up being a
civil engineer that I think my father wanted to
be.

I had a four-year scholarship to Auburn
civil engineering, and I graduated from Auburn and
moved to Mobile 25 years ago, almost 25 years
ago.

So fast forward to today, for the last
five years I've served as the Assistant City
Engineer for the City of Mobile in its permitting
section, and over engineers, our inspection staff.
And a big part of that is co-managing our MS4 program also. And I took over the program in August of 2014. That was a new assignment handed to me. And our -- our program was under a consent decree in 2014. We were lifted from the consent decree in 2016 and we were deemed to have a -- a satisfactory program, which is the best rating you can get from ADEM.

We -- we are referred to by ADEM for resources to other programs now. And just last week I was asked to speak at ADEM's Nonpoint Source Conference.

So we turned our program around under our management, with another engineer in our department. Also, the last three years our program has been in budget and our annual report has been in on time and compliant.

Also when the Air Bus final assembly line project came -- was built, was permitted, I was the permitting coordinator, designated a development agreement with the State of Alabama.

Also I've served as flood plane manager.

I do a lot of things as the Assistant City
Engineer. And I've been with the city for 13 years.

Before coming to the City of Mobile I was a consultant doing transportation projects, storm drainage projects -- I'm not going to read the projects from the resume. But that -- and I was with a consultant for 12 years before coming to the city. That's me in a nutshell.

Okay. Thank you very much.

BY MR. CARL:

Okay. Rosemary, is that what you go by?

That's right.

Not Ginn, right?

No. Well, you can call me that.

We have a list of questions that's just stock questions, and we try to follow those. But if any of the commissioners hear something that may strike a nerve, we can run off of that. So if you see us reading the question, there's reasons for it. So --

All right.

-- as informal as that may seem.

Okay.
Q: But how would you describe your leadership style? And tell us how that style applies to the actual functions of the job.

A: I am a leader here. I allow my employees to do their jobs. I'm not a micro-manager. I want them to do the job that they are supposed to be doing. If there's an issue, I'm going to intervene. I'm going to talk to them about it. But I'm -- just for the most part, I'm not a micro-manager.

Q: Good. Simple enough.

A: Okay.

By Ms. Ludgood:

Q: Let's see. How do you currently develop your key employees? For example, if you have people who come in and they're young in their careers or if you see potential, how do you work with those people to help them achieve that?

A: We make a point -- I mean, we've got -- I've got -- I'm thinking of one in particular right now. I'm making sure that they are involved. We have important meetings, important things that are going on in our department with
developers, with officials, bringing them in, making a point
to mentor them and share with them similar
situations that have happened in the past; try to
work with them, talk to them about why we do
things the way that we do.

I'm sure at the city it's very much like
the county. We have procedures. We have policies
that we follow. And we do not -- we have not
gotten to those. We put a lot of careful thought
into those. And there's engineering design
standards. There is reasons that we have those.

And sometimes when new engineers -- they
don't understand why they came to be. But it's
through experience. And sometimes engineers who
supervised us who may not be with the department
now, but we -- we make a point to -- I'm making a
point with the engineer I'm thinking about,
letting him understand that some of the things
that happened before I was at the city, the things
that I've experienced since I've been at the city.

And that's how I would approach it if I
were the county engineer and mentoring employees:
Just share my experiences, let them understand my experiences. Even in the consulting world, things that can happen if we aren't doing what we need to do, following our policies, adhering to the design standards and just letting them understand why we do the things that we do.

Okay. Thank you.

Q. Rosemary, I'm sure certainly by now you know how important it is to have rapport not only with subordinates but other departments, directors, and commissioners and council members and the mayor's office, of course. There's a lot of people that you deal with. So what is your style as far as your rapport and how you deal with other people? And how does that work into building consensus when you need to do that?

A. I'm honest with people. I try to be very personable. And I am, just by my nature, a people person. And I communicate both with e-mail and in person depending on what the issue is. Sometimes it's appropriate to call someone and let them know
what's going on. And then depending on the issue, if it's with a developer or perhaps, you know, another department head, let them know via e-mail, follow-up if it's a complex issue, the bullet points that we've -- but typically just try to be very honest and simple, especially on engineering issues. Sometimes things can be really complex. Just try to be as straightforward and break things down as much as I can for people.

Q Okay.

BY MR. CARL:

Q What do you believe are the most critical steps to take when managing changes, any changes? And what are some of the pitfalls that you look for?

A No one likes change. That's unfortunately a reality of it. So, you know, we've made a lot of changes at the city. And, so, I think it's really important when you are managing change to be honest with people and tell them what is happening, what's coming. And that's how I approach that.

Because we have had a lot of changes in
the last eight years in our right-of-way
department and our permitting section. And, so,
I've got experience handling that.

We've completely restructured our
departments since I've been there, under my
tenure. And I have just been honest with our
employees, explained why we needed to make the
changes that we did.

We were met with resistance. Nick
appointed me to take over the city engineering --
to take over our right-of-way department. We made
staff changes, and there was some resistance. But
just explaining to our employees why we needed to
make the changes and just being honest with people
and just continuing to be on point with our
message about why. We were able to provide for
better -- better customer service. We were able
to have better documents, better standard
drawings. We had a better website. We were able
to articulate what our designs standards were.
And we were more business friendly. And just to
be consistent also.

Q Okay. Thank you.
Q: Okay. If you are some-- as the county engineer, some of your current responsibilities that you're doing at the city now would be transferrable. Some out of your other life, your pre-City of Mobile life would be transferred. Have you given any thought to what you'd have to bring out that you haven't used in a while and what you would do?

A: That's a really good question, because you are absolutely right. I am at the City of Mobile, and this is an interview for the county engineer. And in my previous life in consulting, I did do roadway transportation projects. And I'm accustomed to needing to design those on time and in budget. And that's a very important part of what you know, the Pay-As-You-Go projects are,
What your program is. That is the important part
of getting your consultant to get those designs in
on time and -- and get those contractors also to
deliver those within the budget and on time.

Also from my previous life, I understand
what it takes to put together a set of drainage
plans instead of roadway plans. So when you're
talking to consultants and even to contractors,
I -- from that history, I'm going to understand if
someone is telling me something that's -- I'm not
going to say untruthful -- but realistic or not.
So from that previous life, it's very applicable
to the county engineer job.

When I came to work at the city, I did --
I utilized AASHO, all kinds of design standards.
But when I started doing the work that I did at
the city, I've learned a completely different set
of standards, city codes from storm water and
flood management, right-of-way ordinances.

I utilized everything I've done the first
12 years of my career, knowing that knowledge
to -- to apply to the last 13. I've learned flood
plane management, 44CFR. And I'm not going to sit
here and quote a bunch of boring federal
regulations that --

BY MR. CARL:

Q Thank you.

A Yes, I’m sorry. I -- I want you to make
it through the rest of the day. The reality is,
yes, ma’am, you’ve got a very valid point. But
what I did with my first 12 years was to apply
that knowledge to learn a new set of standards.
And I’ve built on that knowledge and I have put a
lot of thought into, as county engineer, I am
going to learn what the county process is to do
things. But the city does have a capital
improvement project program. We have got our CIP.
We have --

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Which was modeled after ours.

A It absolutely was. And, so, we --

Q I had to throw that in there.

A And part of my role doing the
right-of-way permitting, I coordinate with
contractors to get their -- excuse me -- the
utilities to their contractors to get their --
their infrastructure out of our way when the
resurfacing comes when we get money from the
county to do resurfacing or to do projects. So I
understand the process.
And -- and just one more thing. You
mentioned morale and the change in your last
question the commissioner mentioned. You know, I
was on staff, you know, when Nick Amberger came in
as the city engineer. He was very successful in
coming in from ALDOT and it was a completely
different organization and experience. He's been
very successful. And I think I can do the same
thing and use my experience to benefit your
organization. And I really would hope you
consider -- I would like to do that. I hope you
consider me to do to that. And I hope I've
answered that completely.

BY MS. HUDSON:
Well, Rosemary, you mentioned your
familiarity with the county process, especially
with Pay-As-You-Go and so forth. But if you're
appointed to this position, what kind of things
would you hope to accomplish in the first year,
whether it's through, you know, the issue of
morale or staffing or programming or whatever?
What comprehensively would you like to attack or
accomplish your first year?
A I do not have specific goals. I would
want -- I would definitely want to improve morale.
I can understand -- if I were fortunate enough to
come in, coming in as an outsider, so to speak. I
mean, I'm from the city of Mobile. And I think it
needs -- this position does need to be somebody
with Mobile experience.
I would want to get into the position and
evaluate everything that's there. But you do have
a very good structure in place and a very good
staff. But I think a breath of fresh air, so to
speak, some new blood, would be a very good thing
for the organization.
But you do have good people. You have
good processes. And the Pay-As-You-Go program is
very effective and it's envied across the state.
Q So what you're saying is you would look
at everything comprehensively and come up with
your objectives?
Q What do you think employees are looking for in work, and life, today? And how do you get the best out of those employees?

A I think employees want a leader who is not -- who would not ask them to do anything that they're not willing to do themselves. They want -- they spend more time at the office, many times, than they do with their families. They want an employer -- they want a workplace where they're valued and appreciated for the work that they do.

A big part of what we've done with our MS4 program at the city is we have evaluated many of the functions of different employees throughout the city, the public works, engineering, and see how they mesh into our storm water management program.

And just at a basic level, understanding what all your employees do and letting them know how vital that is to the function of the city, of
our storm water management program, that's how we approached it. They -- they understood how they fit into the big picture and they were really appreciated.

And I don't know if anybody has ever done that. And I think just having a leader who can -- can sit down with them and appreciate them.

And -- and I guess back to your question, Commissioner Hudson, just one -- back to the question. What I would like to do is just sit down with everyone and understand what all the employees do and -- and see how they fit and maybe more efficiently organize them.

But once you do look at all your employees and let them know they're appreciated and -- and valued, I think that's what everyone ultimately wants. And I'm rambling on at this point, Commissioner Carl.

BY MR. CARL:

Q What things do you do in your current position to help build morale that you could maybe see transferring?

A One of the things is, work is very
1 important and we need to do the very best job that
2 we can. But family is first. And that is --
3 everyone who works for me knows that. We need to
4 make our jobs most important, but -- or very
5 important, but our family is first.
6 And we -- that is what is inherent is
7 sometimes, you know, I'm not going to have an
8 issue if someone says, you know, I've got a child,
9 I've got an issue with a parent. And we -- I
10 mean, we obviously document our time to do what
11 we're supposed to. But that is the work ethic
12 that we go by in my office.
13 BY MS. LUDGOOD:
14 Q Okay. Can you give us an example of a
15 time when you had to deal with conflict within
16 your team? And how did you manage that? And, in
17 retrospect, were there things you would do
18 differently next time?
19 A We have on our team since 2010 -- I -- at
20 one time I was the youngest. I think through
21 attrition I've gotten older. But --
22 Q It happens to all of us.
23 A It does.
Right.

And, so, I think there was resentment with some of our inspection staff, with some of our engineers. And just calling our inspector in and being -- try to be as positive as possible, but let that employee know that it's not acceptable to be disrespectful to the engineer.

And I think it's -- unfortunately it's a common practice in our field. A mentality sometimes with our field staff -- and I'm not saying at the city, but as institutional issues with the field staff, that the engineer -- it's their field versus the engineer, but letting them know that that wasn't acceptable.

And I was probably more stiff and forceful than I should have been. You know, that's eight years ago. Now with eight -- eight -- seven and eight years I've been -- I've become much more comfortable in that role dealing with that with our field staff. And --

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Okay. Thank you.
BY MS. HUDSON:

Rosemary, how did ensure that your engineers, the people who work and are subordinate to you, actually follow through, that they're -- how do you measure accountability and productivity? Do you have measures in place, performance measures?

A We do. With our permitting, we have a permitting software. We have a permitting program -- permits come in and they're logged in. And, so, we have a time frame under which they're supposed to have their permits done. So that measures within that time frame. And we also have our -- our annual reviews and employee appraisals. We have our standard employee appraisal.

Additionally for inspection staff, they have an electronic -- a program that's just come online for all their inspections. Those are also measured on a time basis as well.

BY MR. CARL:

Can the public view that time frame?

A Right now it is not. The only reason they cannot is it's a software --
Q: Well, can --
A: -- with the developer. We intend for it to be.
Q: Presently are you over that department?
A: Does inspection fall under your domain?
Q: For the engineering part, yes. Build Mobile is the one who's doing interface. But the field inspectors are -- and right-of-way permitting is under my purview.

By Ms. Hudson:
Q: So this electronic program, it measures the productivity. You can identify the individual?
A: Absolutely.
Q: And, so, when it's time for the annual review, then that's basically part of what's included is --
A: Absolutely.
Q: -- how productive they were in getting reports or permits or whatever out on time?
A: Absolutely. And, likewise, you can see which of the engineers doing the permit reviews are more productive.
1 BY MS. LUDGOOD:
2 Q So, was that there when you came or did
3 you have to implement it?
4 A This is the -- it's something that's been
5 implemented over the last two years. And I've sat
6 on the committee to help implement how we'd set it
7 up. This is physically something that we set up
8 ourselves, myself and another engineer set it up
9 for the engineering department. But all city
10 departments sat in and developed their software,
11 what they wanted to have the software depict.
12 Q So basically --
13 A Yes.
14 Q So your role was identifying what you
15 needed and then building the software to respond?
16 A That's correct.
17 BY MR. CARL:
18 Q All right. How do you enlist support
19 from your staff to establish a common approach to
20 solving a problem?
21 A We have -- if we have a common goal in a
22 meeting, we have a certain item we need to
23 approach, we typically will have a meeting. We
will have a team-building session and talk about what we need to do to accomplish it. And then we will assign specific responsibilities. And I will let the engineers and technician do -- perform their role in our activities. And then I will follow up. We'll have follow-up meetings and make sure that we're progressing like we're supposed to.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q Do you manage a budget now?
A I manage the budget for the MS4 program.
Q Okay. And what is your role in the development, implementation, and administration?
A I mean, do you sit down and figure out what it is and then watch it?
Q Yes, I do. I absolutely do. And then also for the permitting section, we've already --
A I've already provided to the city engineer the additional personnel that we would like to have in our permitting section for the next fiscal year.
Q How do you like dealing with budgets or is that something you enjoy or is it something you do because it's just a part of your job?
1 A It's -- it's a part of it. But it's --
2 it's a -- we need to be in budget. We need the
3 money to -- to accomplish what we need to do. I'm
4 an engineering geek so I kind of like it.
5
6 BY MR. HUDSON:
7 Q What partnership or alliances do you
8 believe will be viable to you in achieving your
9 goals in the new role?
10 A A partnership with ALDOT, with other, you
11 know, cities across the county, also to continue
12 with the South Alabama Regional Planning
13 Commission involvement there, just -- just
14 continuing with other engineering organizations,
15 consulting, AGC, road builders, just partnerships
16 within the engineering community.
17 Q Okay.
18 A I'm thinking -- I was about to say my MS4
19 hat, but those days are, you know --
20 Q I just wanted to follow up by asking you:
21 What do you feel has been your biggest challenge
22 in your role so far? What has been your biggest
23 challenge?
24 A Being in consent decree with ADEM and
1 working to combat so much negative press and a
2 negative image about the city's MS4 program.
3 People have perceptions that aren't necessarily
4 true about us. And, so, just trying to get the
5 word out that we are doing a lot of good work and
6 get that message out. I mean, we are doing good
7 work, and let people know that we've got a lot of
8 good going on at the city.

MS. HUDSON: Commissioners,

anything else?

MR. CARL: You got all mine.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Well, then, let's turn to you and ask
14 you: Do you have any questions of us?
15 A What kind of time frame are you guys
16 looking to fill the position?
17 Q Well, we're going to accomplish all of
18 the interviews this week and, then, we're hoping
19 to make a decision very soon. This has been a
20 long process for us. It's been about 18 months.
21 And, of course, a lot of that was, you know,
22 dealing with the personnel board and rewriting the
23 scope of work, you know. Because these are two
new positions that were created that, you know, were merged into one. And, so, that's taken a lot of time. But, at this point, after the interviews I think that the decision, we will be making a decision very soon and it'll be approved in an upcoming meeting.

A

Okay. Great.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Do you have any other questions?

MS. LUGGOOD: I'm fine.

MR. HUDSON: We so appreciate you taking the time to be here today and your interest in the position. And we thank you for your responses. And we will be in touch. We'll move forward.

MS. SAWYER: Okay. Thank you very much for your time and the opportunity to talk to you this morning.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

10:13 a.m.

(Recess taken.)
INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW BROWN

MS. HUDSON: Matthew, welcome. We appreciate you being here and your interest in the position. And this is Matthew Brown, and he is a candidate for the county engineer position.

And what we will do, Matthew, we will start it off by giving you an opportunity -- the floor is yours -- to introduce yourself. Tell us anything else about yourself that you think we should know. And then we'll go through a series of the questions.

MS. JUDGOOD: Can you hold that thought?

MS. HUDSON: Absolutely.

(Recess taken.)

10:46 a.m.
BY MS. HUDSON:

Q All right. We'll turn it over to you.

And just tell us about yourself and we'll begin
with the questions.

A Well, thank you again for the opportunity
to come and just be part of this process. It's a
real honor for me. And I know y'all are very
busy. I'll try to keep my answers concise and
everything that I say concise.

But I do want to tell you a little about
myself and my background. My background certainly
feeds into my philosophy, my management
philosophies, my perspective on how we spend and
account for money.

I was born into a big family in a small
town in southern Iowa. And when my parents -- the
oldest of us, it was time to go to college. I
have a sister that's a year older, six siblings
that were younger than me. My parents were very
frugal, managed all their own money, stayed out of
debt, didn't take any kind of assistance. And
they kind of ingrained me with that philosophy.

When it was time to go to college, they
I said we're going to choose a college for y'all.
You're going to pay your way through and we're
going to move there with you. And, so, they chose
Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola. When I
was 16, we picked up and moved down here.
And as a 16-year-old, it was a little bit
of an abrupt change, but it's one of the best
things that's ever happened to me. We absolutely
love it down here on the Gulf Coast.
None of us have ever been back to Iowa.
Very few of us have ever even gone back and
visited Iowa. Everyone comes down here and visits
us because of the great resources we have down
here on the Gulf Coast.
So I went to Pensacola Christian College.
I paid my way through college for that. I worked
as an engineer with a land planning-type firm, so
we did more subdivisions, commercial developments,
and things of that nature.
But through my semester of college, I
said, well, I'm going to sit for the LSAT and, you
know, just see what happens. I -- I received a
good score on that and received a full-tuition
69

1 scholarship from Stanford University, Cumberland
2 School of Law. And I thought, well, God, you
3 opened this door. I might as well go to law
4 school. I went through three years of law school.
5 It was a very successful time there. I sat on a
6 law review and then came back to Fairhope where I
7 practiced for a year.

8 But my heart has always been with the
9 technical engineering side. And, so, I -- a job
10 opening came up with Baldwin County and I took
11 that opportunity. I've worked under the county
12 engineer ever since then in the Baldwin County
13 Highway department as an engineer.

14 So that's kind of my direct background.
15 And I guess I'd take this opportunity to kind of
16 just talk about some of the I guess unique
17 qualifications that I have.

18 I think everybody has a tendency to say,
19 well, you know, you engineers are already a little
20 bit too nit-picky and technical. The last thing
21 we need to do is add an attorney's mentality on
22 top of that, too. And what does that bring? And
23 I -- I would argue that it actually brings liberty
I was recently looking at a manual from the Alabama Department of Transportation that they used to train engineers in 1970. And as I went through that manual, it was amazing how little of what we do as transportation engineers has changed. I mean, there—there's some outside things that have changed, but the core things we do are almost identical to 50 years ago. But what has changed and what continues to change in all the type of the laws, the rules and the regulations, the environmental requirements that can inundate everything we do in the county engineering field.

And county engineers unfortunately are stuck with the technical side of engineering and the subjective interpretation of laws and regulations. And they're required to manage that.

And, unfortunately in the public sector, what I've noticed is that because engineers are fearful of the potential liability, there's a horrible tendency to over-design our projects. We
say, well, we -- we -- we don't want to risk being wrong on something so we're just going to design our project to comply with every regulation that's ever been passed for the past 100 years. And they drive their project costs. And it -- it -- it frankly takes away what we should be doing as engineers, which is engineering a project, value-engineering a project, engineering up for what the project actually needs.

So I think my law background has actually been one of the most useful things that I had as a -- as a design engineer for Baldwin County.

And I guess I should mention that that is my current position. It's very similar to what this position would be except for I report currently to the county engineer. And then there's also an operations engineer who oversees. She and I work closely with those CD&I guys. But that would be the one thing that -- that this new position would entail that's not currently under my umbrella.

So as a design engineer, I think my -- my legal background -- I was at the office at 6:40
last night working with the county engineer to
navigate a situation with a contract. And he
turns to me because my legal background on some of
those issues.

Some other things that I think make me
uniquely qualified for this position include the
fact that I'm very familiar with this region in
Baldwin County.

I think one thing that we all deal with
all the time is storm water. And there are lots
of folks from all over the country, but even in
Alabama, who don't appreciate the fact that we
received over 80 inches of rainwater last year in
south Alabama. And that's an incredible task to
deal with. And our -- our land is flat. And, so,
moving that storm water is a critical issue we
face in Baldwin County. I know it's an issue that
y'all face in Mobile County. And it's something
that I'm very familiar with in this region.

Another opportunity over the past six
months, I've been inundated to the Restore
project. And, of course, we have another ten
years of Restore money flowing our way.
Obviously a good part of that or I think some part of that is going to be spent on infrastructure. And I would assume Mobile County, having the engineer in a position that is very familiar with the process -- I essentially oversaw the process for Baldwin County on the infrastructure side, working with the county engineer. But all of that paperwork that had to be filled out and the coordination with ALDOT for our capacity projects -- and I want to commend you, Commissioner Ludgood, for the very thoughtful representation you gave to Mobile County while serving on that committee. I know all of y'all have served on that committee.

And I think also just the process moving forward with those projects, of course, there was a huge milestone passed a couple of weeks ago when the Restore Council passed that. But there's still significant hoops that we have to go through to make sure these projects get off the ground and make sure that there are no hurdles that are encountered, that there's nothing that delays these projects.
I know there's a dirt road paving project that was part of that. We have very similar dirt road paving projects that went through a CF process that's going to be very similar to what Restore is going to require for Mobile's dirt road paving projects.

So those are all items that I'm very familiar with and I can kind of hit the ground running essentially in supporting the work that y'all have going on here in Mobile County.

One final thing I would just say about myself: My wife and I love living in Baldwin County. It's where my dad pastors a church. But we would be honored and would commit to relocating to Mobile County as part of this position because we think y'all have great things going on over here.

Sometimes I think being an outsider from Baldwin County, I observed that some -- some folks in Baldwin County may turn their nose up a little bit at Mobile County. I can look over here and I see a lot of exciting things happening that I would be honored to be part of and my family would
be honored to be part of. So I'll -- I'll -- I
guess I'll leave that as that.

Q Very good. Thank you. Commissioner

Carl?

BY MR. CARL:

Q We have a list of stock questions that
were provided to us through the personnel board.
So if you see us reading directly from this, don't
think that we're -- we're kind of -- and then we
may vary off from that. It's kind of at our
discretion. But I'll get us started by reading
one: How would you describe your leadership
style? And give us an example of that leadership
style.

A Sure. Well, when I came to the Baldwin
County Highway Department and they put me over the
design section, there had -- the design section
had been through three design engineers, managers,
over the past three or four years.

And they told me as I came in that,
listen, you know, there are some issues with this
section. They are obviously disenfranchised a
little bit. They've had so much management, they
I feel like they don't have any consistent leadership in terms of no consistent vision in the design section. And, so, that was my first big challenge. And I'm not going to pretend I didn't make any mistakes in those first couple of months. But my -- basically my approach to that was to slowly gain buy-in from those design section members, all of which are older -- were older than me, some of which had more experience in the field than I did, and slowly build a team.

And there was kickback initially. I'm not going to pretend that there wasn't. I received great marks from my management on my first annual review. But I erased everything on my annual review and I sent it to the design section members and allowed them to fill it out anonymously, electronically, submit them to someone else in the design section. And they all got put in an envelope so I could read: What do my members think about my performance? And it was soothing. I remember feeling a little bit hurt after those first three months.
And, you know, I said, I've got to keep working at this. I've got to keep working at building the -- this buy-in. And, you know, initially some of the changes I had implemented were a little bit too much topped out. So instead, my approach shifted a little bit to say, okay, here's an outline of what I think needs to take place here. You know, we're a little disorganized in maybe this aspect of what we do. And then I brought that into our weekly staff meetings and I said, you know, here's an idea that I have. What do y'all think? And then we, as a team, built out the idea. And essentially it became their idea. And some of those ideas are -- are -- are flying right now in the design section.

A year later I did the same anonymous review, and I almost teared up because they were very touching and how the -- the 180-degree turn of the design section members as we become much more like a team, much more like a -- almost like a family.

And I can tell you that before I was --
left over to here, I pulled them all together. I said, listen, y'all, I'm not looking for another job but this one did open up and I threw my name in the hat. I would be honored to receive it, but I want to let you-all know that the hardest thing for me would be stepping away from this design section over here.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q What is an example of one of the ideas that caught fire?

A Sure. The biggest thing was our folder structure. And I believe that organization is crucial for what we do as engineering. And our folder structure in Office was horrendous. We couldn't find documents when we needed them. There was a lot of lack of order files that were spread all over the place that didn't match with our paper files; no archiving in terms of older projects.

And, so, we implemented a new file folder structure. Well, that had impact to people who, they can find their thing in their messy server space, but no one else can.
And as soon as we started making those changes, there was incredible kickback. And, no, that's when I dialed it back and said, okay, y'all, you know, how can we do this as a team? What are y'all's recommendations? And that's the biggest example.

There have also been changes regarding changing the software that we're using. We're both GIS and our -- our drafting that has received some kickback, but slowly working towards that buy-in.

Q Okay.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q Okay. How do you provide feedback to your employees and how do you currently recognize their achievements?

A Sure. Well, we have something we call the -- the gold star system. And it's kind of informal. But I make sure -- I see it as my job as a manager to bear the burden. Sometimes we get some stress that comes down, you know, as a project is moving forward and maybe something has gone a little bit wrong or something. It's my job
to bear the burden and it's my job to pass on the praise.

And we have an internal thing where we -- first of all, we meet every week for a staff meeting. Sometimes it'll last 15 minutes. Sometimes it'll last 55 minutes, depending on what's on the table for that week. And I make sure I thank them for the -- the great things that they've done. And then when we get praise that comes down, we -- like I said, we'll jot a gold star on the board and say, all right, so-and-so gets a gold star for X; and, so, just making sure that they're getting recognized when they go above and beyond to help us get something out the door. Does that answer your question?

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q Yes, it does. Thank you. You know what?
The piece I may not have said is feedback. You spoke to the positives. Let's talk a little about how you handle the feedback around challenges.

A Sure. And I'm sorry, I forgot to mention this: We do annual reviews at the county. And certainly I work hard to give feedback whenever
there's a challenge throughout the entire year.
But I'm often teased by -- by management because I
give the longest and most detailed annual
evaluations of anybody in the highway department,
maybe anybody in the county, because I -- I
believe feedback is crucial.
You can't expect someone to grow, you
can't expect someone to develop unless you give
them honest feedback. You can't just give
everybody five stars and say great job, great job,
great job because they're never going to grow in
their position. And I give very detailed
feedback. Sometimes the print in the PDF have to
be shrunk down really low because I feed it all.
But it always starts with the positive
things. Here are the things you're doing a great
job. And then there are always a couple of things
that they can do better on. There's always things
I think I can -- I can do better on. And I always
communicate that to them. I say, listen, I have
areas to improve on and you have some areas to
improve on. And here's what those are.
And, then, I set usually two or three
goals for them for the coming year that we'll then
review at the end of that year.

MS. HUDSON: Go ahead.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q You know, the demographics of Baldwin
County -- I don't know much about its workforce.
But certainly the demographics of the county are
very different from the demographics in Mobile
County.

And what I'd like to know is your
experience in working in kind of a diverse
environment which has its own set of challenges,
and how comfortable you were, you know, moving
into a space that is maybe more diverse -- I'm
assuming. I don't know that -- more diverse than
what you might be accustomed to.

A Sure. That's a great question. And I
grew up as a pastor's kid and found myself in just
a huge variety of diverse circumstances really
throughout my entire life, whether it was
participating as a kid with my dad in ministry,
you know, knocking on doors for VBS and -- and
things of that nature.
I have been involved in some different board positions that involved very diverse groups of people on that where I've had great relationships with people from all backgrounds.

At Pensacola Christian College, there's a huge number of international students that are part of the student body, more than most people would imagine. It's something like 15 percent or so. And usually every year a couple of them would stay at my parent's house over Christmas break, some even through the entire summer. And, so, it became a very natural thing to work with people of all types, all backgrounds. And it's really second nature to me.

Q Thank you.

BY MR. CARL:

Q And you spent some time in India?

A That's right. My third year in law school, it turned out they had an exchange program with India and students from there had always come over, but we had never sent nor had ever wanted to go the opposite direction. They didn't have electricity or had electricity but no heating and
cooling in their dorms. You had to hand wash your
clothes or send them out to have someone else wash
them. And I thought: Why would I miss this
opportunity on the last semester of law school to
do this exchange program?
And it was one of the most impactful
experiences of my entire life. I wouldn't -- I
wouldn't change it for anything. I stumbled
across a little church over there that was a lot
like my dad's church over here. And just -- it
was just so neat to engulf myself in that culture
over there for three months.

MS. HUDSON: A man who likes
challenges.

MR. CARL: I did a little
missionary work in Africa so I know
where your excitement comes from.

BY MS. HUDSON:
Q Should you be appointed to this position,
Matthew -- and I don't know how much you know
about the Mobile County engineering department and
the public works relationship and kind of how it
fits into the theme of the whole county
commission. But what can you bring to this
to this position? The first year, what would you want to
to accomplish or try to accomplish your first year on
the job?

Sure. Well, I think for the first three
months, I would have a policy of making no changes
except for things like making sure we’re having
weekly staff meetings, just very minor changes.

Obviously, I -- you know, I did some
research and saw the news articles about the
changes that have taken place over the past year.
So I figured it would be the vision of the
commission is for some -- some changes. And y’all
have obviously implemented some of those already.
So I would be looking to continue your vision as
commissioners.

And I think as a new leader for that
department, it would be important for me to be
careful how I implement the changes that appear to
be top down.

So I think the first three months would
be learning, making sure I'm getting to know the
staff really well and gain their trust.
The second three months, we should be in budget season at that time. And, so, I would be getting feedback from y'all as commissioners. And then I'd also give you some of my ideas based on what I had observed those first three months, and maybe recommending some small changes at that time.

Then that should put us into FY19. In FY19, it would be my goal to dig down into every single process that we do and find out are there ways to eliminate waste? Are there ways to streamline this? Are there ways to make our dollars go further.

And during FY19, I would like to propose that the engineering department consider something called a performance-based practical design. This is a new movement that essentially goes away from our past 50 years in the public sector of over designing everything, and essentially saying we're going to set guidelines where we now value engineering projects.

For instance, a -- a resurfacing project is a great example. We look at what are the
safety impacts that are taking place on this road? Have there been -- in the past five years, have there been any off-the-road accidents? And if there hasn't, then we need to say, okay, let's not fix something that's not broken.

Thankfully this is an initiative that FHWA is starting to -- to support as well. We have recently, in the past two or three years, created a vision that says we need courageous engineering. We need people who will engineer up a project instead of umbrella engineer a project to cover every possible conceivable thing.

Make sure our projects are safe. But the design result revolve around safety and you're not, again, fixing problems when there's no history of a problem.

A good example of this is ALDOT. And I have a great working relationship with ALDOT, but they are the kings of putting in a policy because something happened once and then apply it to every project from the -- for the future.

And you may have guardrail on a project, which is expensive. Guardrails cost a lot of
money. And that guardrail may have been in place for 20 years and never been hit. There's no reason to replace that guardrail in that situation.

Now, unfortunately, if you've got budget dollars or state dollars in play, you're going to have state standards that come into play. But local funds especially, I believe, have to be leveraged in any way possible to achieve as much as possible with those funds for the commissioners and -- and the taxpayers.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q You mentioned eliminating waste and streamlining processes. Can you give us an example in your current position how you may have accomplished that?

A Sure. Absolutely. We -- we resurface about 40 to 60 miles of road every year in Baldwin County. We divide those up into groups. And we used to have a situation where the budget would get passed, we would start the design phase, and it would result in all of our projects, 60 miles of roads, getting all bunched up in the spring,
which means you have less competition from the contractors which drives the prices and it just creates a problem for our CE&I guys as well. So we started --

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q For your what?
A I'm sorry. Our construction, engineering and inspection --

Q Okay.
A to to schedule all of that in --

MR. CARL: See, I knew what he was talking about.

MR. BROWN: And I apologize. I talk a little fast sometimes.

MS. LUDGOOD: It's okay.

MS. HUDSON: It's good.

A The so what I said is: I said, okay, let's identify the pocket. Let's create a group that we know the commission is very comfortable with. And let's start the design of that group early so that way on October 1st we're in position to to move forward with that project as quickly as possible. And that meant cutting out
unnecessary steps. It meant being very upfront, communicating with the commission on what our plans were, what we were shooting for. And they wanted that, too. They want our projects to be spread out through the year. It just helps everything flow so much better.

So that -- that would be one example where we have just increased the efficiency of our project delivery by trying to schedule tasks to take place literally when they can or concurrently when they can instead of literally we've got wait for this to happen before we can do anything on this next step.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q All right. Interesting. Okay, all right.

MS. HUDSON: Commissioner Carl?

BY MR. CARL:

Q We run into that problem over here. Everything seems to -- especially for the school project, it always falls within the time that schools are in session. And it has to do with organization of the contractors, and it gets a
It's hard to pave the entrance into a school when moms are trying to get in and pick up and drop off.

What do you believe is the most critical step to take when managing any change? And what are some pitfalls to avoid? We're talking changes.

A Sure. Well, I think when changes come, the most -- the most important thing to have in place is a team support -- a -- a team attitude already to place. The problem is you can't implement the changes you want if you haven't already built up that team rapport. And, so, that goes back to the groundwork that has to be laid out in the front end to build that team rapport.

And this is that change comes. You bring the team together. You say this change is going to happen. We're going to make this change happen. And instead of the focus of being, oh, here's the drudgery of this change, they're -- people are micromanaging what we do and, you know, there's all these things that come up. You then change the focus to, hey, here's a challenge.
Here's an opportunity for us to take on this new challenge and do an excellent job executing it for the people that we serve.

And I think so much of handling change is trying to change the attitude of the people who have to implement the change. And once you shift that attitude, then it becomes almost like a -- a fun competition to see how well you can do the change instead of fighting the change the whole entire process.

Q: Good. Thank you.

MS. HUDSON: Making change fun.

MR. BROWN: That's right.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Commissioner Ludgood?

MS. LUDGOOD: Okay. Let's see.

He's answered so much.

MS. HUDSON: Yeah. He's covered a lot of ground. Yeah.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q: Are there any specific strategies that you could point out that you've used to build morale? I know you talked about making sure you
have meaningful evaluations where people know what
their expectations are. And I like that word: Pass the praise. I'm going to use that. I'll give you credit for it when I use it. But I like that. Can you think of any other strategies that you use to try to build morale?

Sure. I think that first of all everything rises and falls with leadership. And I believe that present leadership is crucial for morale. If, for some reason I have an early morning meeting at -- with -- that I have to meet someone onsite or we've got a case where something with Restore came up and we're meeting with the Baldwin County contingent and my boss had asked me to be there at 8:00, I would make sure I always let the members of my office know, hey, I'm not going to be in here when you guys get in this morning because I'm going to be attending this other meeting.

I don't want them to ever think that I expect y'all to be in here today but I'm going to just go in here, whatever, and have this meeting for me. And then they're all up wondering, hey,
so is -- you know, is he at a meeting or has he just forgot to set his alarm last night? And I've seen that in management.

So I think it's crucial for me to be one of the first people at the office and one of the last people to leave the office every single day. And if, for some reason, I'm not at the office, I think people should -- you know, my team members should know where I am. So leadership I think is the first thing.

I think other things that are important is using different terminology when you refer to your team. I think my team members would verify to the fact that I rarely use the term staff or employee. I will -- If I'm in a meeting with them, I'll refer to them as my colleagues or one of the design section team members. And that makes individuals feel like they're valued. They're just not someone down lower on the totem pole. Make -- make them feel like they're part of something bigger.

And then I think a final thing is, you know, this is part of the millennialist atmosphere
that we live in today. But I think 100 years ago, people were intent to get a paycheck to support their families. You know, we had to work in coal mines and did incredibly hard work day in and day out.

But in our current generation, people place a much higher level of importance on what -- like what they're doing is making the world a better place. And this, again, comes back to leadership. It's important that we frame the issues, frame what we're doing as things that are positive in making, in this case, Mobile County a better place. So that way, people feel like their working value and that the work that they're doing is valuable.

And I'll just mention one other thing with this: This is also where it's important to make sure you don't have -- you're not overstaffed. And I -- I don't know anything about the current situation in Mobile County or anything like that. But if -- if -- and this is a little bit counterintuitive. Momentum is crucial to morale. When people feel like they're busy, that
1. they're doing valuable work.
2. And if you have -- if you're overstaffed,
3. it can actually create a situation where there's
4. not enough work. And then there are slow periods.
5. And then people find themselves twiddling their
6. thumbs at a desk. And that is a huge destructive
7. factor to morale.
8. So you have to -- I think you have to
9. consider all of those things. There's no silver
10. bullet. But all the things combined are tools to
11. building morale in a team.
12. Q How old are you again? No, I can't ask
13. you that. You're wise for your years.
14.  
15. MS. HUDSON: Yeah, you are.
16. MS. LUDGOOD: Yeah.
17. MR. CARL: You know, and I always
18. compare it to one's body, the later
19. you can run it, the strong it is.
20. And business is that way, too.
21. Government is not. But the later you
22. can run it, just like a lawnmower, I
23. mean, the later that gas is compared
to oil ratio, the faster and smoother
it will run. And there is that breaking point where it's -- but in government we have a tendency of overstaffing. It's because we think hire more and we'll fix the problem. And reality a lot of times is just restructure and management. I'm sorry. I got off track here. But I like that.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q What measures do you have in place to measure the performance of your key members and to ensure accountability and productivity? How is that measured?

A Sure.

Q And how do you monitor that?

MS. LUDGOOD: Including software, if that is appropriate.

A Okay. I owe much of this to my previous boss, the county engineer for Baldwin County. And he is now the county engineer for Jefferson County.
Early on in my appointment with Baldwin County, he made us all read a book called "Branding For The Private Sector" -- or "For the Public Sector". And he had a huge focus on eliminating waste, and that you can't improve what you don't track.

And he implemented something called one-page project management form. And essentially it's just like a schedule that would be prepared in Microsoft Project but it's your project in one page.

And when we start off a project, we outline from the very beginning what we anticipate that timeline should be. And in the case with consultants, the consultants are involved.

Every single Monday morning, the person -- they had one person assigned to handle this -- they send out every single OPPM to a consultant, the consultant. And then they CC the project manager who's over that project within the design section team.

And that consultant has to verify that they're on schedule or let us know if there's
anything that they're aware of that could possibly set that projects off schedule. Then they -- there is something, they have to work with our project manager -- and then I'm CC'd on all of these communications as well -- to revise the schedule, explain why the schedule is being revised. So that way, we're tracking, okay, what -- what caused this schedule to be revised? And, so, that's a way for me to keep track of the individual projects and each project manager within my section to see: Are their projects staying on schedule; when they're getting bumped off schedule; what's causing those; and then is there a way for us to correct this in the future.

And then regarding software use, I'm not sure what you mean by that, making it appropriate. Spending time on the internet or am I --

Oh, no. I mean, if you use --

To track --

Yeah. Some kind of tracking, online
1 tracking. That’s all I mean.

2 A Sure. We don’t have any type of online
3 tracking software currently in -- in Baldwin
4 County. I do, though, where I do their annual
5 evaluation, pull their internet usage record and
6 discuss that with them. And I’ll tell them if
7 they’re the most -- and I tell them that, hey,
8 listen, it seems like an inappropriate level
9 of internet use for you. So I want to be -- I
10 want to see it go down. And then I’ll do a
11 follow-up check on that as well.

12 MS. HUDSON: OPPM sounds like
13 it’s very effective, though, for
14 keeping everybody --
15 MS. LUDGOOD: Yeah.
16 MS. HUDSON: -- on track because
17 they know that there’s some
18 accountability on a regular basis
19 that they have to provide the input
20 on the project.
21 A And --
22 MS. HUDSON: You can’t bog down.
23 A That’s right. It’s a one-page. And, you
1 I know, we have a tendency to give a report about
2 something and it's ten pages long. And no one has
3 time to go through ten pages to figure out the
4 status of a project. But if a commissioner says:
5 What's the status of this project? The first
6 thing I should be going to is pulling that OPPM
7 from the server. I'll check with the project
8 manager to make sure there's been no change since
9 the last run.
10 And I can send that right out to the
11 commissioner and say: Here's the status of this
12 project. Here is our OPPM. That shows what
13 the -- where this stands. And then that's
14 something that you look at in one page on your
15 phone or -- or your computer that shows, okay,
16 this is where we are on this project.
17 BY MS. LUDGOOD:
18 Q Is this a tool that comes out of the
19 experience --
20 A It is something that my boss pulled from
21 his -- his -- now, I don't know if it came from
22 the Toyota way or the particular book that we use.
23 But it came out of all his research of that.
Q: So he designed it. He designed OPPM?
A: I don't think he -- I think someone else -- I think he got it from one of these books --
Q: Okay.
A: -- that he was reading.
Q: I like it. I want to go find it. That's why I was asking.

MR. CARL: We had a shot at hiring him. You know that.
MR. BROWN: Oh.
MR. CARL: First wave.
MR. BROWN: He's a -- he's a great individual.
MR. CARL: Yeah.
MR. BROWN: He's been a great mentor.
MR. CARL: I had a chance to talk to him one on one and get to know him a little bit.

BY MR. CARL:
Q: I'm going to get off script here a little bit. I'm looking at your personal references here
and I see some pretty strong people that we all obviously respect: Raul Richardson, Barry Booth, Rusty Glover. Those are three that just stand out.

What do you think those three are going to tell us about from a personal reference about you?

A I think that Senator Glover -- I've only worked with him more on a personal level, so he can't -- he's not going to speak to my engineering experience obviously. I think he's just --

Q Well, there's more to this job than just being an engineer. I promise you that.

A I think he's going to say, you know, Matthew is great at interacting with the public. He's a very competent public speaker and presenter if -- when that is necessary. He's a good-natured, a positive attitude, positive thinker type person.

Raul. I worked with him briefly on a board and have just -- he always sends me a Happy New Years greeting and we correspond back and forth. He's a very nice individual. And, so,
he's going to speak to -- just to basically my ability to get along and work with people and communicate with people.

And then Barry Booth. He's actually -- I worked with him on a number of issues in Baldwin County with the Veterans Cemetery over there. He wanted signage. And, so, of course, that went through the commission, the county engineer, but ultimately got sent to me to make it happen. And, so, I worked with him twice on two separate occasions. And I think he's going to speak very highly of my efforts there and my responsiveness and -- and my level of communication with him on behalf of the -- the commission to -- to make a reality.

Q I also see here where you're doing wills for veterans?

A So I maintain my license, my law license just because I think it's a good thing to hang onto and not let that lapse.

Q Yeah.

A And to -- so that way I keep interacting with South Alabama Lawyers Association, lawyers
associations here in Mobile. Whenever they reach out and say, hey, we need an attorney to help out with this, that's something that I have my name in the hat. I've done some wills for veterans and the underserved in Summerdale, like the Habitat For Humanity down there. It's not something I do as much of, but when the opportunity arises I jump in to stay a little active on the legal side.

Q  Okay. Thank you.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Anything else?

MS. LYDGOOD: No.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q  One last from me: What would you say so far in your position, in your role as engineer, has been your greatest challenge in dealing with?

A  You know, I think the -- the thing that is the greatest challenge, but it's also what I enjoy so much about what we do, is the complexity of the work that crosses our table in Baldwin County.

Now, I don't know if some of that work gets shifted other directions in Mobile County.

But the project that we were dealing with last
night, the contract -- and I don't want to say too
much about it since there's -- obviously all of
this is on the record.

But a very unique situation that maybe we
only get confronted with once in three years to
make sure we're doing this in a way that we
don't -- the federal government isn't asking for
us to send the money back in five years after an
audit.

And some of these projects were so unique
that they require you to start from scratch. One
thing, the law may have changed since you last
dealt with this issue five years ago.

And in coming into the office every day,
you have Restore funding, you know, suddenly and
all of the nuances associated with that. There's
always a new challenge. And that means you
cannot -- you cannot get into the role of, hey,
I'm going to go in and I have this checklist that
I do every day and then I go home. Because you
can't do the checklist on -- on the challenges and
the different circumstances that you're confronted
with every day.
So it's very challenging. It requires a lot of commitment. But at the same time, I wouldn't be able to handle a job where there was just a checklist that I had to check off every day and then go home. It's what makes the job a lot of fun and worth doing.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

MR. CARL: Can I ask one more quick question?

MS. HUDSON: Yes.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Over here we have three commissioners and we have three total different personalities and it works well for us. Sometimes it creates a little friction and our friction usually falls back on the leadership, and you've got to play the role of matchmaker and resolving issues and getting people to settle down and look at another point. Do you have that same issue in Baldwin with five?

MS. LUDGOOD: Four. They have four.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Four?
A There certainly is some of that and some -- some -- I've talked to people and some people say they think it's worse in Baldwin County. Some people say they think it's worse in Mobile County.

Q Well, that's good. That makes me feel good.

A So we do, absolutely. Similar to Mobile County, the county north of Baldwin County is huge. It doesn't have some of the water issues, coastal issues. And, so, there are different priorities among the commissions. And I've gotten to work closely with the county engineer as -- as he's navigated all of that and, you know, sometimes discussing some of those issues through with me as well.

Q Thank you.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Well, Matthew, we're asking you, do you have any questions of us?

A One question that I always have and this is an important thing to me: I don't mind if someone has a -- has a critical viewpoint of
something that I've done or a critical position as
long as I know where they stand so that way I can
try to adjust and make changes. So I -- I -- I
think y'all have an annual evaluation system here
in Mobile County. But my question would be:
Between those annual evaluations, if I were
selected for this position, how can I expect to
receive feedback from y'all as commissioners in
terms what you think I am doing right, what you
think I could be doing better, or what I'm doing
completely wrong? How -- how will you expect to
give me that type of feedback? And, you know,
know what I would expect in that area?
I think that's where communication comes
in and is so important, and really establishing
rapport, a one-on-one relationship with each
commissioner. Because, as Commissioner Carl
mentioned, you know, our districts are different
and, you know, our priorities can be different.
But we feel we need a lot of feedback; we need
communication. And we need our engineer to help
us understand, you know, because our team members
that are out there working in the field, they are
the eyes and ears. And they get a lot of
important feedback that needs to come to us. And,
so, I think establishing that communication
network with the commissioners would be vitally
important for whoever is selected for this
position.

MS. HUDSON: Commissioner, do you
have anything to add?

MS. LUDGOOD: With our previous
gineer -- and this is just me.
This is not a commission effort. It
was my mine. I asked that we sit
together to figure out what he wanted
to accomplish in a year and what I
was looking at and to have a
conversation about what my
expectations and hopes were. And
then he could say back to me: This
is what I want to do.

Because what I found was at the
end when it came time to do the
evaluation -- because at that time we
only evaluated two positions, and
that was the county engineer and the
county administrator. And everything
else was done kind of downstream from
us.

And I wanted a basis by which
to do that. Because I knew the work
was being done and all of that. But
to just carve out a space so that on
an annual basis we could say, okay,
this is what we hope to achieve. We
have a basis for doing it. So that
would be -- for me anyway, that would
be one of the things I would want to
do. And, so, that as I prepare the
evaluation, it will be based on an
agreed upon set of goals that we
would have.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

MR. CARL: I'm pretty easy to deal
with. Whatever is on my mind usually
comes out of my mouth. And I like to
deal with people that way. You know,
if you think I'm wrong, I'm wrong.
If I'm right, I'm right. We just move on. We can either fix it or come to a certain type of agreement that -- I'm more of a hands-on type of management style. So --

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q Have you scratched that political itch or is it still out there on the horizontal you think?

A Well, that -- that is something I would hope I would have some opportunity to address. Obviously I've had some political involvement over the past years.

I'll explain the way it started. Commissioner invited me to a political meeting. I -- I did. I thought it was pretty neat. It was fun meeting new people. I started going to more. Pretty soon they were asking me to take a leadership position. I made the mistake of getting involved in a countywide referendum regarding the school tax and unfortunately made some enemies in -- in that process. Thankfully over the time -- now, that was years ago. So I recognized those mistakes. I
1 worked hard to fix those issues.
2 And in the -- in recent months or
3 recent -- over the past year, I have actually
4 slowly vested myself of all political involvement.
5 Obviously, I can remain an engaged informed
6 citizen for the purposes of voting.
7 Because I realized I'm -- that was a
8 phase of my life that I enjoyed a lot. I learned
9 a lot and made some big mistakes.
10 But I'm entering a phase of life with
11 kids now and I need to focus on my career and my
12 family. So I think I have gotten rid of the
13 political -- I'm confident I've gotten rid of the
14 political itch and my focus now is on my career.
15 And I recognize that that was a mistake.
16 Even though it may not have been morally wrong or
17 legally wrong, it was a big exercise of
18 impropriety on my part because I held a position
19 where I had to have a relationship of trust with
20 the people that I was serving. And by me
21 getting -- engaging in the level that I did in
22 some of those political activities, it harmed that
23 position of trust. And, again, a mistake. I
learned from that mistake and I'll move on.

Okay.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Anything else?

(No response.)

MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

MR. BROWN: Thank you-all.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you very much.

We appreciate your time and your interest. And we would like to wish you the very best. And we’ve been asked by others, you know, how soon this process will take place. All of the interviews are this week. And we don’t have any exact date to make a decision, but we anticipate that it will be very soon.

MR. BROWN: Thank y’all so much. I appreciate it.

MS. LODGOOD: Okay. Thank you.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

MR. CARL: Thank you, Matthew.

11:31 a.m.

(Lunch recess taken.)
115

1 1:40 p.m.

2 INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW BARCLIFT

3

4 MS. HUDSON: We are reconvening

5 our meeting today to interview

6 candidates. And our first candidate

7 this afternoon, actually for both

8 positions, for our County Engineer as

9 well as Public Works Director and

10 Chief Engineer of the Division of the

11 Public Roads is Matthew Barclift, who

12 we all know.

13 And we are happy to see you

14 this afternoon. Thank you for your

15 interest in these jobs.

16 MR. BARCLIFT: Thank you for the

17 opportunity. They don't come along

18 every day.

19 MS. HUDSON: That is true. The

20 way we've been handling this,

21 Matthew, we're going to give you a

22 few minutes to basically tell us

23 about yourself and anything that you
And then we’re going to go through and do a series of questions that we basically posed to the other candidates as well. We veer off sometimes, as the commissioner will mention, about, you know, if it’s something that we want to ask a little more in depth. But, anyway, that’s how we’ve been handling it. And then we give you an end chance to ask us if you have any questions for us. So --

MR. BARCLIFF: That sounds good.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Let’s go ahead and get started and let you introduce yourself, although we know.

A Well, you know my name is Matthew Barclift. You may not know it now, I grew up in a small town, came down to south Alabama to study engineering. I graduated from South Alabama in 2003 into a very bad economy.

The first job I was able to get -- I
graduated in May, did not get to start until August or September -- was with Alabama DOT. And it was in Grove Hill, Alabama. And, so, for the first two years I drove 87 miles one way. So it -- it was 6:00 in the morning until 6:30 in the night. It was -- it was a long -- a long trip.

But I was grateful for the employment.

After being there nearly two years, I got an -- an offer to come interview here with the county and I was ecstatic about it. And I came down and I have -- very grateful for the opportunity to work for the county.

I have started out, out in the field and I have worked into the site planning side. I passed my professional engineering exam in 2008. And shortly after that, I was promoted to Engineer III and given more responsibility. And then a few years ago I was promoted to engineering manager.

Shortly after that, y'all -- you may know, I had a significant heart condition that I had a major surgery for. It was only God's providence -- I had three intraoperative strokes. And it is only God's providence that I am sitting
in front of you today whole and healthy. But it
gives you a -- a different perspective on how you
approach things in life.

Since then we had a manager in the
engineering department who elected to spend more
time with his family and resign. Rather than hire
another manager, they shifted his department under
me and I took that responsibility on and have been
working diligently at that since.

Why am I seeking these opportunities? As
I said earlier, they don't come around very often.
It's often attributed to Mark Twain that a man who
carries a cat by the tail learns a lesson you can
learn in no other way. And -- and sitting in
front of you is a lesson I can learn in no other
way but to come and speak with you and present
myself as a candidate.

Q Well said. Thank you.

BY MR. CARL:

Q We have some stock questions that were
provided to us and we're asking all the
applicants.

A Yes, sir.
We will vary from these. If you say something that touches a nerve, we can kind of throw it around. But if you see us reading the question off here, don't misinterpret that we're lacking something here. We're going to save you and us both some time. So you are looking at two different positions.

MR. CARL: If I'm right, ladies, we are going to interview for both?

MS. HUDSON: We are.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Do you understand that?

A Yes, sir.

Q Because it's the same set of questions for both. So we may or may not, you know, come straight off of this.

First question: How would you describe your leadership style? And give some examples.

A My leadership style. I try to be a lead-by-example. But also try to be an empathetic leader. I -- I want people to -- I want people to want to do a good job, to -- I want that to be -- I want there to be an intrinsic motivation.
When -- when people have -- for example, the people -- some of the people who work for me in the file room have had some medical issues and they -- they need some flexibility in their schedule. And I always try to work with them and make sure they understand that they can -- if they're getting the job done, that we can work with the flexibility in that.

We want to reward the people. I want to recognize in -- in the inspection services department those that go above and beyond. We try to reward them by when the new vehicles come, they tend to be the ones that are first in line to get them. Reward them in ways that make their job easier for them to continue to excel.

Q You've done an incredible job with the inspection department.

A I -- I am blessed with some tremendous talent and tremendous people out there.

Q You can do away with me, but don't do away with Tom Waters.

A Please don't do away with Tom Waters.
Q Okay. So when you identify a real
up-and-comer in your division who may be, you
know, a new employee, a younger employee, but a
person who, just based on your observation, is
like somebody we want to keep, somebody that we
really want to grow and grow in our organization,
what do you do to try to develop those employees?
And conversely, the ones who are struggling, how
do you work with them?
A With the -- we'll start with the first
part. When I see somebody that's really up and
coming, I want to make sure that they -- that they
understand that I'm looking at them to say that I
recognize their talent and I recognize their
ability. It's very important from the leadership
perspective to let them know that you see a talent
there.
We had a young lady that we hired out of
inspection services and she's very talented and
she -- she really took to the technology side of
it. So when I was speaking with her, I -- I asked
her -- I talked to her about where she wanted
to -- where she wanted to go and where she wanted to be. And then we tried -- I tried to start finding ways to move her in that direction. We ordered some -- we -- we try to set a path. If you can give somebody a clear path to get from A to B, it makes it a lot easier for them to get there. And, so, I said if we can -- if we can -- I bought some -- we bought some books. And I said whenever things get slow here, I said, you're trying to advance your knowledge. Here. We've provided these resources for you to be able to increase what you're doing. And in increasing that, you're gaining skills. You're gaining abilities. And those abilities will transfer -- will eventually translate you to certification and things that we can -- we can check boxes on, which allows them to have a clearer path of progression. It's much more difficult in my mind sometimes to -- to deal with -- with people who are underperforming. Because they talk about the carrot and the stick. And you can't stick somebody into a good work ethic. And you can't stick somebody into a better performance.
And, so, you've really got to find what makes them tick. You've got to help -- they need to be invested in it. And, so, you have to find a way with people who are struggling to be able to get them invested in the right ways.

Maybe that's adding a duty somewhere else or shifting their duties a little bit to try to get it in -- inside more of their skill set. Or if they are really good at -- you know, if they have a -- a skill in scanning and they really enjoy the scanning, you -- you move them and say, hey, let's get you a project. You set them some goals. You set them some ways to achieve and you work with them to reach those achievements.

Q  Okay. Thank you.
A  You're welcome.

BY MS. HUDSON:
Q  Matthew, should you receive the appointment for either of these positions -- and you can answer them separate if you want to --
A  Yes, ma'am.
Q  -- because they're different jobs. But what would you intend to do and accomplish in your
first year? Any changes? Any -- you know, you've
been around long enough. You've had an
opportunity to observe and to see, you know, how
things operate. So tell us what you would do, if
anything, to change the way it's currently
operated in either department.

A: Yes, ma'am. Let's start with the county
engineer side. The statutory -- a lot of those
statutory responsibilities fall to the county
designer whether that be signing the subdivision
plats or whether that be making determinations in
the dirt road program.

The Pay-As-You-Go program is also under
the county engineer side, so I'm going to start
with the Pay-As-You-Go program. I -- the
Pay-As-You-Go program has been a real boon to the
county. We -- it's given us the ability to do
tremendous things that in the past -- that other
counties, smaller, are not able to do.

We're finding with the Pay-As-You-Go
program that the traditional way of doing things,
the design-bid-build is becoming very burdensome,
greatly.

And I will give you an example. On the agenda for your consideration on Monday will be authorizing to advertise and receiving bids for MCR 2012-307, which is Half Mile Road. That's a 2012 project. So it was approved in 2012. So we've been working on it 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017. That's five years.

The people on our staff are doing what they can. There's a limitation in the design-bid-build. I think we should look to try to find alternative delivery methods. Part of these -- and nothing that we try to do is -- everything we try to do is probably going to have to have some legislative backing. But that is the responsibility of the county engineer and -- and working in conjunction with you guys to make that work.

Too often the engineers are at odds with the consultants who are at odds with the contractor. We have a budget we're trying to keep them under. But the engineer gets paid more if the -- if the price is overrun. And the
contractor is the insurance sometimes into what the consulting engineer has designed on the basis of a budget that they're having to stick to.

What if we teamed the consulting engineers with the contractors so that they work together in a design-build-type format? In that format, they could look and see. The contractor could have input into the most efficient way to build the roads while the engineer could have a mind to the safety as to the design aspects. And that way they are working together synergistically rather than at odds.

I think that that could drive down the timeline that it's taking to get these projects through the process because everybody would be working in concert.

I think it could also help our budget. At that point the contractor -- he handles qualified QBS, qualify qualification-based selections. And, so, instead of the consultants having to say, well, I've got to do this for so-and-so to get this project assigned to me, they present us a list of qualifications and we make a
decision or you make a decision based on their qualifications.
And then there should be a bidding process on the back side of that where they present to us what the cost is. I think you can see a significant cost reduction. And then the engineer, it will -- if not -- you know, if not, the county will only pay me this. The engineer will be determining the pay schedule in the sense -- by -- with the contractor by setting those project costs. We could -- we -- I think we could deliver quicker projects on lower budgets if we move into a direction like that.
Q When you say quicker, how much? Are you talking half the time?
A You know, I -- I point to the bridge. And ALDOT is working towards this design-build -- design-build. They are talking about, you know, whereas five or six years ago somebody told me I -- we would be lucky if we saw it my lifetime. Here we're talking about they want to have somebody selected by the end of the year, designed within a year, and constructed within five or six
after that. And when you're talking about a -- a billion dollar bridge project versus the 1.25 million dollar Half Mile Road project, I've got to think that there are some ways to find some improvement in that. And, again, I -- that is not a slight against our staff. Our staff are doing the best they can in the process.

Q But it's a process.

A It's a process.

Q And that would have to be changed legislatively?

A It may have to be changed legislatively. We would need to consult with legal staff. I -- I believe we did the roof in kind of a -- a design-build.

Q We did. We did.

A I mean, if -- if we can extend that to this, it would be a -- a tremendous -- a tremendous boom to the county. It seems like we've had -- not everybody was real popular -- real happy with the roof. But, as I see it, we had two or three projects where we tried to fix it. And it wasn't until we went with this
design-build that we got a solution that works.

Further, I would consider putting in an operation and maintenance clause into that Pay-As-You-Go program. You know, the contractor gets out there and throws it together. It may -- you know, it may work and it may not exactly. And then they turn it over to us and our staff has to maintain it whether it's working or not.

If we put an operation and maintenance clause in the back of the Pay-As-You-Go, all of a sudden the contractor has incentive to build it right, build it well, and build it in a sustainable method. So if they've got charge of operation and maintaining for, say, five years after the project is -- after the construction phase is closed, that would take some pressure off of our maintenance staff out there on the public works side because --

Q Any major problems will show up in that period of time.

A And major problems. And we would not be buying any major problems. Yes, ma'am. So --

Q Interesting. Okay.
A They're -- the dirt road -- excuse me.

I'm a -- I'm longwinded. When I -- when I used to mentor college students, I always told them that they could have change incrementally, internally, or they could have external forces that would force the change upon them.

Not only with Pay-As-You-Go, but with the dirt road program, we've had discussions -- I -- I know with several of -- of you individually -- that anybody looking to the future, there could be a day when we are forced to take these private dirt roads that we have been neglecting under -- legally under the law, there could be a day that we're forced to take some of these. And what that turning point might be, I don't know.

But I would think -- I would think that we should -- and this would take a legislative act. We should consider finding a way to reinstitute the dirt road program in an updated fashion. It would need to be funded. It would need to be done in a progressive fashion so that we don't -- if it's dumped all on us at once, it's an impossible burden. We would -- we would
struggle.

But if we took on a road incrementally the way the program was designed, we could get back -- the people who live on private dirt roads are some of our poorest citizens. And it hurts sometimes. I've -- I've talked to a lot of them over four or five years. And it hurts sometimes that there is nothing we can do to help them right now, that our hands are tied. And, so, I -- I would suggest that we find a way in the first year to --

But how could we do that and continue to maintain what we're already responsible for? That's been always the, you know, $64,000 question.

It's -- it's always -- it's always the problem.

Probably the $64,000,000 question.

And -- and -- and more taxes is the easiest answer. I don't have a good answer beyond that right now. But that would be something that I would look at and say, well, how can we fund? How can we find money to do that? If we -- you
I know, if we're able to take money -- if we're able
to save money in other ways through the
Pay-As-You-Go and other areas, we may find sources
that we didn't know about before or get -- a
repurposed source. But I think it's important
because they are citizens, too. And -- and a lot
of them didn't ask to be put in that situation.

Those are the -- those are the primary
things that I would tackle in the first year as
county engineer.

Public works director: We have, I think,
an impending crisis coming. It comes --
A what?
A An impending crisis coming. And it comes
on the heels of what we look at as a great boom to
the area, that is this economic boom we're
experiencing. Our Equipment Operator I starts out
at $13.13 an hour according to the pay scale from
the personnel board. When this new Wal-Mart
reports correctly, they're going to start people
at $15.50 an hour. I think that we could have a
serious workforce crisis in the next four to five
years if we don't.

The commission had the foresight and were gracious enough to do an increase for the sheriff's deputies. We saw a problem coming. The sheriff -- the sheriff brought to you a proposal and there was a decision made to increase that bottom for the sheriffs to help. We may have to do something like that to avert a crisis from our workforce side.

The other alternative is to consider operation and maintenance contracts. I -- I think we should never get rid of having a workforce that could be out there and respond. They are our heart and souls. We know when the ice falls, when the storms come, when the surge comes up, they are out there on the roads, you know, putting themselves in harm's way. And I -- you know, I don't think that should be underestimated and I don't think that could ever be dismissed.

But we may need to consider outside sources for some of our maintenance needs because we just don't -- we've lost over the last four or five years 40 to 50 easily of our workers out
there who found other employment because people
are in demand for the construction right now.

They -- they find jobs elsewhere. And I think you would be surprised if you
went and looked at how many more workers are
working second jobs on Friday, on the weekends
because they're needed to do that to make ends
meet. And we shouldn't have -- we shouldn't have
workers that are having to work multiple jobs to
make -- to make -- to support their family.

But to get to the -- we may have to look
at operation and maintenance contracts. We may
have to look at setting aside a portion of our
maintenance budget and saying -- and looking five
to ten years and saying, okay, we have this
segment of dirt roads in this area of the county.

You know, Contractor A, you know, here is our
schedule. You need to be -- you need to inspect
this road, you know, once every two weeks. It
needs to be graded at least every so often. You
know, you need to document the cases. And, if so,
we will pay you X number dollars for the operation
and maintenance of this road.
Under that kind of thing, it will probably be more expensive than what our current people or our operators are paid. Because I -- I think we're underpaying our operators right now. But it's also going to take some liability off the county and let us share that some with the contractors out there.

It'll also give us a response outlet. On a -- on Friday if we don't have somebody in because we're on four tens, you know, we call our contractor and say here's -- you know, we need you to go out and check out this complaint. All of these contracts have a call-back provision where if they don't respond in a timely manner, if we have to send our people out there, then we could withhold part of the payment.

But I -- there isn't a perfect system. But I think we'd have to look at other alternatives. Because I think what we are doing now is not sustainable. It's -- it's worked for a few years. And when the gas tax went up in '92, you know, it allowed us to do a lot of things that we had not done before. But it's not gone up
since then. And we are -- we are, generally speaking, maintaining roads in 2018 with 1992 dollars.

MS. HUDSON: Commissioners?

MR. CARL: That's it? Okay.

MR. BARCLITT: You can do the math.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Tell me about the biggest changes in a work situation that you've managed. How did you cope with it?

A The biggest changes in work situations.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Just change in general. How do you cope with it?

A Just change in general. And -- and there has been -- part of the biggest change in -- in working with the inspections department was spending a lot of time. I wanted to spend a lot of time out there. It's hard to manage people, I think, without getting to know them on some level. And, so, one of the biggest changes in taking over inspections was getting out there and
getting to know them. And you need to be able to respond to their concerns in a way that makes them feel like you understand what they're dealing with and what they're going through. And it was -- it was drinking out of a firehose.

As I said before, I'm blessed to have a great staff out there. And they -- they were very -- and they walked me through things to help me understand things that I didn't know before. I was able to go into it with no ego. I told them, I said: Listen, guys, I said, you guys have been doing this, I said, I am the learner. I said, teach me what I need to know to help you guys. And they have been very gracious to -- to teach me along the way. They've heckled me along the way a little bit, too. But that's okay because there has to be a give and take. They have to -- we're all human and -- and we're all -- you know, we're all going to make mistakes. But by spending time out there, it helped me cope with the change.

BY Mr. CARL:

Q Thank you.

BY Ms. LUDGOOD:
Q In your current role, what strategies do you use to build morale among those you supervise?

A I -- I think that -- that being down among them and the give and the take and then seeing you in the trenches is one of the most important things. I will periodically provide breakfast out there to the inspection staff. I'll come in and we all will eat together.

I reinstituted -- when I got out into the inspections department, I reinstituted what we call our monthly roundup. And basically we get everybody in a room and I say: What's going on? What do we need to do? What do we need to address? Let's hear your concerns. And it gives them an open forum so they feel like when -- that somebody is listening, that it's not being ignored, that they know that about once a month, you know, sometimes once every two months if it gets real busy, they know there's going to be a place for them to come and express what they need.

I feel like being flexible with them when we talk about people needing -- you know, they need to work through their lunch because they need
to go early to see their son or daughter's event, whether it's a softball game or a play or something. If you work with them doing some flexibility on that. If they see the people working hard getting rewarded and they see it being recognized, that helps. Those are the things that help build the morale of the departments.

Q Okay. When you do monthly roundups, is it everybody you supervise or just inspections?

A So our inspections department is about 20 something people. And, so, we split them into two different groups.

Generally we have the ones that are out in the field for the most part because their concerns are different than the ones who are working the front counter.

Q Okay.

A And, so, we'll -- a lot of times they'll be separated by, so that can get their areas. There is still communication between the two. It's oftentimes that the inspectors say, hey, we need this from the people up front. And I can --
I can talk to the people up front and say: Hey,
this is what we've got to do.

And the people up front can say: Hey, we
really need our inspectors to X, Y, Z. It will
help make our job easier. And I'm able to relay
that back to the people who are out in the field.
So while -- they're groups, but we try to get them
to be interconnected enough so that we don't get a
silo effect.

Q Okay. Are people pretty candid with you
in those meetings?

A Some more than others. Some more than
others. I encourage an open-door policy. You
know, I tell people, I say: Listen. I said: If
you need to come vent on me to me, I said, come
and do it. I said: We'll -- we'll get in the --
we'll get in the office. We'll close the door.
I -- I was down there yesterday and
somebody said: I need to talk to you. And we
got into Tom's office. And I said: We're going
to close the door. I said: Tell me what you need
to tell me.

If -- if -- people need to feel safe in
1 giving you honest feedback. And if you -- if
2 you -- if they know you're available to listen to
3 their feedback outside of that, it -- it gives
4 them a -- the inspections group is pretty tight.
5 And, so, they're -- they have a good working
6 relationship with each other. And, so, they're a
7 little more candid than other people might be.
8 But there are still some that come in and
9 say: Hey, I need you to tell me: Am I doing what
10 you need me to do. And we will say yes. We --
11 you're doing what you need to do for -- actually
12 what we need is you to focus on X, Y, Z instead.
13 That way, if they can -- if they -- if they feel
14 safe, they can accept constructive feedback in a
15 little more -- in a fashion, allow them to be more
16 productive with it.
17 BY MS. HUDSON:
18 Q In terms of performance measures -- and I
19 guess with either department -- how would you
20 monitor any differently than you do now or what's
21 in place to monitor the productivity and
22 performance of employees to make sure that
23 everybody is performing to their highest
capabilities? What do you do?

A So in our -- in our file room side,

OnBase has a tool that will allow us to see how

many files have been indexed by any -- or pages

have been indexed by any given person.

And, so, in my performance evaluation of

the employee there, I normally -- we will look at

what they've done the previous year and any other

previous year, which will break it down. And we

set goals for them to achieve. So, you know, if

you achieve this, you're doing -- you're -- you

know, by standard level of work, if you can get

here, I feel like you're really exceeding your

expectations.

Inspections is very similar. When the --

ey do their inspections on the tablets or the

people up front write the permits and it's tagged

with their name. And, so, I can go -- we can go

back and readily identify through the software

what they're doing. Whether what means they're --

if they've messed something up, that means we can

identify that, too. And we've had counseling

sessions on that before where you need to be a
We had a meeting with the OnBase representative last week. And she was talking about another piece of their software that will allow us to integrate our public works into -- I -- I think we've only begun to scratch the surface of what public works can do for us in terms of reporting. I think it has all the abilities to measure the metrics that we need to.

Where we need to go now is with implementation. We need to make sure that we are using the tools to their greatest effectiveness. And, frankly, we need to train our guys that are boots on the ground. If they understand how the software is being used to measure their performance, whether that means they should check a box, they should make sure that the field is -- is filled out, you know, better. If they know that that's being measured and they know that that will help document what they're doing, I think that we tie incentives to them achieving more and doing more as documented through the software. We have the tools in place to measure these things.
1 We've got to grow into the tools in a sense.
2 MS. HUDSON: Ms. Ludgood?
3 BY MS. LUDGOOD:
4 Q And part of that is just the training.
5 We have software, but we just haven't yet invested
6 the amount of time that we need to really get in
7 there.
8 A And -- and don't stop the investment at
9 the administrative level. Let's make sure that
10 our investment goes all the way to the bottom so
11 that -- you know, so that these guys, who are --
12 who I said earlier was our heart and soul, so that
13 they know that this software is here to help us
14 help them do their job more effectively as well.
15 BY MR. CARL:
16 Q Have you ever been in a situation where
17 you were less successful as a leader than you
18 would have wanted to be? And what did you learn
19 from that experience?
20 A So in probably -- I'm guessing 2012 or
21 2013, somewhere along in that, my supervisor
22 pulled me in. And he'd always been very good
23 about saying: Hey, this is the track. If you're
1 doing at what you're supposed to, this is the
2 track on how you continue to promote and you
3 continue to move forward.
4 He pulled me aside and said: Hey, look,
5 we're going to promote somebody over you, and this
6 is why. And I -- I -- I went back. I said: But
7 I'm -- I'm doing my job. I'm doing what I'm
8 supposed to. Things are getting done in a timely
9 fashion. There -- there aren't any real
10 complaints that -- that are coming out. Where is
11 this coming from? And the response was: Well,
12 you know, people see you on your phone too much.
13 People think that you're spending too much time
14 doing this or doing that.
15 What I realized is it wasn't that I
16 wasn't doing my job. But it's that I wasn't
17 setting an example for doing my best. People
18 didn't see me and -- and go, he's absolutely doing
19 his best out there right now. And that was a
20 harsh wake-up call for me. It -- you know, it --
21 it kind of knocked me a little bit because --
22 and -- but I learned.
23 From that point on, when I got to work in
the mornings, I would set my phone on the side of
the desk and I wouldn't touch it until I had
worked on the computer, until I had finished some
things. I tried to change the way people saw what
I was doing. I -- I wasn't -- I don't think I was
doing a bad job before.

We have this little saying out in
inspections, that perception is reality. Because
if people don't understand what's going on, it's
only what they've perceived that is their reality.
If they see me drive my county vehicle home at
7:30 at night and stop at the grocery store and
they see my blue tag at the grocery store, they
go, hey, he's using a county vehicle for personal
purposes. They may report me; they may not.

But in their mind from there, from that
point on, county employees are not using the --
their resources wisely. They may not know that,
hey, I was in the office until seven o'clock that
night and just stopped to get dinner for my wife
on the way home.

But that's we -- perception is reality.

We have to be mindful at all times that -- of the
way people are -- are perceiving what we're doing. We have to put our best foot forward. And when people have -- we want people to understand we are doing the best we can. Sometimes that's being aware of how it appears that you're doing something. And sometimes that means stepping out and doing things in a way that people can see them.

With the flood maps, we could have -- we could have sat back and allowed that FEMA meeting to be all. That was all we were mandated to do. We could have allowed it to be all we did. And people would have said, man, the county didn't do anything. But we stepped out and did something different. And I reached out to the community and made an effort to do that. And, so, that's -- that's what I have learned, is sometimes you've got to step out more than you realize. Doing just doing your job and doing it well isn't enough. You've got to step out with it.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:
Q: Oh, yeah. Do you manage a budget right now?
A: Yes, ma'am.
Q: Could you tell us a little bit about how you ensure that costs are controlled?
A: So we get a monthly report and -- and more recently have been given access to ONESolution.
Q: What's ONESolution?
A: ONESolution is our budget software that --
Q: Okay.
A: -- the finance department uses.
Q: Okay.
A: I think the controlling of the budget really has to start at the beginning of the budgeting process. One of the -- I -- I asked -- when I started in inspections, I asked them what they didn't like about what had happened there previously, about the leadership previously. And one of the things they said was we weren't involved in any of the budgeting and finance process.
So we started at the -- at the beginning of the budgeting process. And I said: Hey, guys, tell me what you want to accomplish in the next budget year. And, so, each of them looked at some training they wanted to do. They might look at equipment that would make our jobs more efficient.

But we started at the beginning in setting the budget or at least setting what our task was. And that way they were -- they were able to know. When the budget came down they were able to say, okay, yes, we got these things that we wanted. We'll look at this -- these things for next year.

I did a monthly report, and I go through the monthly report. I generally start with a -- I look -- they've got a percent of above and below budget. And I usually start with that and say, okay, what is there that just jumps out at me as being, wow, this is crazy.

For example, the last two years there was an encumbrance of a hundred and something thousand dollars from the Kronos software that was in the inspections department's budget. And I received
assurances from the -- from the finance department that there was some -- something going on behind the scenes that I wasn't aware of. But it jumped off the page when I saw that large encumbrance. But I go back up through the line items.

I know which ones -- I know which ones should be about right on. I know how this one should be about right on. Our bill is $1,000 at the inspection's office every month. And, so, I'm able to quickly look through those numbers and go:

That's about right. That's about right.

Then I look at the lower numbers. I'll go: Okay. What's happening here that these lines are not getting expended as a proper -- am I going to expect that something has been charged wrong that's going to come back incorrectly?

And -- and usually I'll finish by looking at the bottom line and going: Okay. We are halfway through the year, we are less than halfway through the budget. Things are more or less on schedule. Or I will look at it and go: Okay. We need to go back and figure out what's going on here. Our office supplies are way over budget.
1 We need to look. We need to see what we did
2 wrong, see if there's something that's charged
3 wrong, or see if we need to make changes about how
4 we do the ordering, per se.
5 Q Okay.
6 BY MS. HUDSON:
7 Q Matthew, in either of these positions
8 that you've applied for, well, both positions
9 require that individual to be able to communicate
10 well and establish a rapport with the
11 commissioners, with department heads, with other
12 people who don't necessarily report directly to
13 you.
14 How would you go about establishing that
15 rapport? What would you do to I think create
16 that, a better relationship or create a
17 relationship that you could find useful in working
18 with people?
19 A I -- I think that should -- I think it
20 would have to be a two-prong approach. I -- I
21 feel like there is a -- there needs to be a strong
22 social aspect to it. Maybe we pull together the
23 four -- four or five people at a time or so and we
1. go have lunch together.

2. You know, you'd be amazed what you find out about a person when you're sitting -- when they're able to relax a little bit to sit down to -- to eat, fellowship, and -- and to just -- to get to know them. Because it's important to know them as a person to be able to understand how they think and how they operate. And, so -- so a one-prong approach would be to try to -- let's get some people together in a social setting. Because it won't -- it -- it won't be just -- just me. I'll be me and person A and person B. But person A and B will probably need to get along too and need to interact.

3. The second -- the second approach will be to identify the key stakeholders, the ones that are very important, and sit down and have some goal meetings. What do they want to accomplish in their department? How can I help them accomplish their goals in that department? How can I help them operate more efficiently? What are we not doing now that's hindering their functions and hindering their purposes right now? And then that
1 might be the more important thing to ask, how to
2 make -- how to make things better: how are we
3 hindering you now?
4 But meeting with them one-on-one will
5 also give them an opportunity to -- to share
6 things they might not share in an open forum with
7 five or six people. And it'll give you a grasp
8 about how are they managing their department? How
9 does -- you know, how does it operate? How do
10 they control it. Or how do they motivate is the
11 better word for that. That -- that's the
12 two-prong approach that I would take.
13 Q Okay. Thank you.
14 MS. HUDSON: Are there any other
15 questions that you think we need to
16 include?
17 BY MR. CARL:
18 Q If you were in charge of the engineering
19 department tomorrow, what are some of the quick
20 changes would you see under the previous
21 management? That's off the written script here.
22 A Quick changes.
23 BY MS. LUDGOOD:
Q You talked about some of them when you talked about the first year. Is there anything that you'd --

MS. HUDSON: I guess he's meaning immediately, you know, immediate change.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Yeah. Anything that you think that we -- and, I mean, you had mentioned the problem with road and bridge maintenance. And I get that. But on the engineering side, any changes that you see need to be made?

A You know, right -- we discovered that we didn't have the personnel to effectively survey things and get them into -- and, so, we have a professional services contract with Mark Watting (phonetic) now. And what that allows us to do instead of having all of the equipment and the personnel and all of that to maintain, we're able to use him on an as-needed basis to provide us with some services.

I think that we could put some of those professional services contracts into place so that
if we -- you know, if personnel leaves suddenly,
that we don't -- that we not be put in a lurch by
people with expertise not being there; but, two,
that we've got a chance to look and see and to
draw on outside -- outside perspective on how
we're doing things.

Our traffic manager has undergone an
illness of his own. And we had to make some
adjustments to make sure that we're getting the
perspective from the traffic side. And, so,
that's presented a challenge. But it's also shown
us that we may -- you know, a contract -- having
personnel on -- on staff isn't always the exact
answer. Sometimes we need expertise that may lie
outside that we could use on an as-needed basis.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q As kind of a backstop.

A As -- as a backstop and -- yes, ma'am, as
a backstop.

MS. HUDSON: Any written up
questions?

MS. LUDGOOD: Huh-uh.

BY MS. HUDSON:
Q: Well, we'll turn it around to you. Do you have any questions of us?

A: If you hire your ideal candidate, what is the one thing that you would like to see? And if I could get each of you -- I -- it probably is -- I can imagine it's different for each one of you because you each face different challenges.

Q: It's hard to narrow it to one.

A: It's hard to narrow it to one. If you can narrow -- if you hire your ideal candidate, in one to five years, what are -- what are the one or two things that you would like to see where you go: We did real well hiring that person?

BY MR. CARL:

Q: I'd like to see somebody that's excited and motivated about the opportunity and the chance. And I would like to see somebody that can pull all of the departments together and function as one, whether it be road and bridge, whether it be engineering, whether it be accounting. Everyone has always looked towards road and bridge because of Mr. Ruffer, you know, just like -- or engineering because of Mr. Ruffer. And he's been,
you know, a strong leadership role there. We need somebody that is capable, I feel like, are wanting to do that. I mean, the people have got to work with you. So --

And not to interrupt you, but I think that that can extend even to a more micro kind of scale. We need to make sure that the construction department is working with the design department, even within engineering.

Q: Y'all become a team --
A: Yes, sir.

Q: -- instead of everyone having their own little sections?

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q: I think someone who is interested in innovation and looking at ways even outside the box to, you know, improve things and make things work more efficiently, most cost effectively. That's very, very important.

And I think the morale issues is important to me, that in working with our staff members as well as commissioners and department
heads, just to work as a cohesive member of our county team. I think that's just vitally important.

We've come a long way. I think some of the changes we've made organizationally have been good. And, you know, we're hearing some good reports.

But I think it's all contingent upon having the personalities in place that are willing and eager to work together.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q: I think I agree with Jerry Carl in thinking outside the box when you said that. But when I look at our county, where we're headed, I feel like we are being dragged into the 21st Century. But in some key places, we're holding onto our 20th Century strategy.

And I want somebody who is going to push the envelope and come to us with challenges, not just same ole-same ole. I move, second it. That you're going to come to us and we've looked at this and this is the way we think we ought to be going. Because some of these things, we could do
something --

MS. HUDSON: There's always ways
to improve and make things better.

MS. LUDGOOD: Right.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q  But we really are not -- this is not our
expertise. And, so, I'm looking for really
someone to push the envelope and want to be as
open to change and new and the messiness that
comes as you try to move an organization?

But I had one highly-placed person that
I was having a conversation with. And I said to
him: The county is really growing. And, you
know, as we grow our organization is just going to
have to grow along with it. He said to me: I
hope not.

A  I'm sorry to hear that.

Q  He said: I hope not. Which meant that
he liked the way we've been doing it. But it's
just not going to happen. We've got the cat by
the tail and if we don't obtain it, we're just
going to get beat up. So --

BY MS. HUDSON:
Q: We want somebody, in a nutshell, that embraces the challenge --

A: Yes, ma'am.

Q: -- whatever that might be, not run from it.

A: Absolutely.

MS. HUDSON: Anything else?

MR. BARCLIFT: I just want to take the opportunity to say: Thank you, guys. There are good changes going on with the staff in the county. I think there is a general uplift, a positivity. And I think a lot of that comes from you guys. And I appreciate the efforts that you're making to -- to reach out and to keep everybody involved and -- and to be down among with us, too. And I thank you for this opportunity. And I'm looking forward to the change, whether I'm in either of these two positions. I've got some things that I'm -- I'm not done with the changes
in my little realm right now. So there are more things coming and I am excited about it, whether it's in this position or the one where I am now.

MS. HUDSON: We have told you how valued you are to our team --

MS. LUDGOOD: Yeah.

MS. HUDSON: -- and how well thought of you are.

MR. BARCLIFT: Thank you.

MS. LUDGOOD: You really are, even though you --

MR. BARCLIFT: Commissioner, if you stop giving me grief, I'm going to start worrying.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you, Matthew.

2:32 p.m.

(Brief recess.)
MS. HUDSON: For the record, our next interview for the County Engineer and the Public Works Director is Richard Spraggins. Spraggins, right?

MR. SPRAGGINS: Spraggins. Yes, ma'am.

MS. HUDSON: And, Richard, we are so happy that you are here today, and thank you for joining us and thank you for your interest in these two positions.

MR. SPRAGGINS: Well, I appreciate the opportunity.

MS. HUDSON: And the way we've been conducting these interviews is we're giving the candidate an opportunity to basically introduce yourself, tell us whatever you would like for us know about you, and then
we will move on to a round of questions.

And then at the end, we'll give you an opportunity to ask us any questions that you might like.

MR. SPRAGGINS: Okay.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q So go ahead and let's begin.

A All right. Thank you. I grew up in Alexander City and went to college at Georgia Tech for a couple of years and transferred to the University of Alabama where I graduated. I came to work to Blount County straight out of college. And the county engineer that was there was ready to retire. And he promised to stay two more years. And -- but I needed four years in order to qualify to take my PE exam. So they hired another retired county engineer, and he stayed there long enough for me take the exam. He retired October the 31st. And I took my exam on November the 1st, and the county was without a county engineer for a few months until I found out my results of my PE exam, which I passed.
And, so, I started there in March of ’81 as the county engineer and retired in February of 2012.

And right after I decided to retire, the ATRIP program popped up, and the highway — the transportation director asked if I would be willing to serve on the ATRIP committee to do the selections, because there were two retired county engineers to be on that committee.

And then Rich Mitchell and I knew each other. And I said something to him about it and got a call from Mr. Ruffer. And he said: How about coming down here and running our ATRIP program for us? That's how I came to Mobile.

And, of course, I run the ATRIP program for us. And we've got all of our projects under construction or some -- a couple of them are complete.

I'm working on some Pay-As-You-Go problems -- programs. And the TAP program, I'm kind of hanging on for our third round of sidewalk projects that we do. I'm also doing the regular federal aid that we get through the DOT.
So that's the quick run through of that.

While I was county engineer back in the early '80s, I saw a need, being a young engineer and not really knowing all of the footsteps that you follow through on a lot of these DOT projects. I was the chairman of the committee that developed the first manual for county engineers. And we did that.

And then later on I served on the committees to bring the National Association of County Engineers here to Mobile in 1988 with Mr. Ruffer. And then -- then also again in 1997, we brought it to Birmingham, and I was on that committee as well.

I also served on some DOT committees to rewrite the bridge inspection manual. I was one of the two or three county engineers that was on that committee with the DOT.

At that time in the early '90s, y'all may remember there was a big push to go to metric. And we were rewriting the -- the manual to comply with the metric system.

We -- I've been on a lot of committees
with ACCA to do some things, the joint bid
program. I've been to the legislature to kind of
promote changes in our subdivision roads that have
gone through in the past, visited with several of
those legislatures over the years.
And that's kind of a quick run through
of -- of what I've done in the last 35 to 40
years.

BY MS. HUDSON:
Q A lot of experience.
A Close your eyes and it's over with, right?
Q It's not that fast.

BY MR. CARL:
Q It's moving at a high speed. We have a
list of questions that they provided us on, so if
you see us look down or read a question, we're
trying to keep things moving. And from this, you
will hear us ask some side questions. It really
has worked well so far. So you're being asked the
same questions that we've asked everyone else.
A Okay.
Q But the first one here is: How would you
describe your leadership style? And give us an
example of how you apply that style.

Well, I -- I kind of have a leadership
style that's a little bit laid back. I -- I -- I
I'm -- I try to meet with each of my employees,
give them their job assignments and expect them to
do so. If they need help, I'm -- I'm there to --
to do that.

I try to look forward and -- and try to
see what else I need to do to keep things moving
to give my employees an idea of what they're going
to do, not today or tomorrow, but maybe next week
or even next month. They -- they've got an idea
what they've got to do in the future as well.

And if they need some help with some
things, I -- I'll -- I'll take time to -- to give
them that. I try to give them some training where
I can.

Okay, all right. Thank you.

Yes, sir.

In the years when you were really in the
county engineer's role, how did you provide
feedback to your employees and how did you
recognize their achievements?
A Well, it -- it was kind of a -- a general
thing. I would let the commission know, hey,
we -- we completed this particular project. I
wouldn't necessarily name anybody by name. But
I -- I would just say: Hey, we -- we've done
this. And I think these -- the department or
these particular individuals if I did want to
recognize someone, I would want to say: I
appreciate you recognizing these at a -- at a
commission meeting to say: Hey, a job well done.
MS. LUDGOOD: Can I go?
MS. HUDSON: Sure.
BY MS. LUDGOOD:
Q So when you have had employees that you
recognized were either one of two things, that
they were going to be a real go-getter and really
was a contribution to the department, I'd like to
know kind of how you took them and nurtured them.
And then on the flip side, if you've had some that
were hired who were struggling, how would you
manage those two types?
Okay. Well, the -- the ones that were doing real well, I -- I would make sure, you know, go through and -- and double check with them and see if there was anything they needed to do, or that they had missed and -- and all.

I would compliment them on -- on what they were doing when -- when they were doing things that I'd asked for. I'd let them know what other things that I would be looking for when -- when they were doing a good job.

The ones that I had trouble with, I -- I would almost sit down with them at times on a one-on-one basis and say: Look, here's what we're trying to accomplish. And this is what I need you to start working on. And if you've got some problem with trying to understand the methods that we're going through, I said, let me know and we'll sit down and do that as well.

Okay.

Okay. One thing, maybe two things, because you're an applicant for both positions, that we would need to know is: What would be your
short-term and long-term goals for any changes in
the department or either department? What do you
see or think that needs to be done on the
short-term and then even on the long-term to
improve, whether it's efficiency or the cost
effectiveness, whatever. What do you see where
you could come in and, you know, play a role in
making that happen?

A

Well, I think on the county engineer's
side, I'd -- I'd like to see us be a little more
involved in our construction projects possibly. I
know that may mean another personnel or two.
But -- but from what I've been involved with -- of
course, I'm basically on the design side, but I
have been involved a little bit on the
construction side as well.

I would like to see us have a better
communication with the -- with our inspectors
and -- and our contractors and such.

Long term, I think we've got to look
ahead to see what's -- what's out there that's
coming to us. I know that Ricky Ryan has been
working on trying to develop the OnBase program so
that we can have our consultants submit their plans electronically rather than by paper so that we can maybe not have to make so many corrections over and over again with these -- with these consultants. And that's a short-term type thing.

Long term, it's a computer age and -- and everything. And IT is -- is just -- just busting at the seams. And you're hearing about artificial intelligence and internet of things out there and autonomous vehicles and that sort of thing. I can see us being -- getting into that in the long -- in the -- in the future of -- of having to set up sites, wifi hot sites so that those cars can -- can read each other as -- as they travel down the highway.

On the public works side, that kind of goes in with that, with the IT stuff. But -- but with our road program, I -- I think we're doing a pretty good job short-term. I haven't really been involved in that, so it's kind of hard to say what are my short-term goals that -- that I would see.

I think we could -- we've got a pretty good relationship, it seems like, with the public.
I don't know if y'all get very many calls or -- or
I don't hear about too many. You may that I don't
hear about.

BY MR. CARL:

Q       We still get phone calls. Not a very
good measuring tool.

A       Yeah. But there -- there's always some
things that we could do out there on our own in --
in -- in our road department to see -- to help
look ahead a little bit to make sure that during
the springtime we've -- we've got our mowing crews
set up that we can run those at the right time of
the year, that -- well, we contract that part out.

Long-term. I'd -- I'd like to see us get
into some type of pavement management system where
we can go out and -- and Gradall of our roads
ourselves or -- or have somebody help us do that.

You'll see a lot of that on -- if you go
to some of these national conventions where
they've got -- they've got a color chart on their
roads where they're green, yellow or red. And --
and you can plot that and you can see which roads
are in bad need of repair or -- or are in good
repairs based on the color. And I -- I would like
to see something like that happen.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q So keep an inventory of road conditions
based on a color-coding type of system?
A Yes, ma'am. You can go out maybe once --
    once a year or once every two years and -- and try
to -- or maybe every three years or something and
    rotate around the county and -- and -- and
re-grade the roads that -- that are out there
and -- and then come back in with a computer
program. And then it would plot how you graded
those roads.

Q So those are unpaved --
A Well, they would be paved roads.
Q These are all -- okay.
A Yes, ma'am.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q And there is software that can do that
for you?
A Ma'am?
Q There is software that can do that for
you?
Yes, ma'am.

Okay.

That's -- that's something that -- that I would like to see us do. And -- because we could show that to you every day and say: Look, here's -- here's our problems that we see in your district that you might not be aware of. And -- and -- and that might help y'all decide which -- which roads you want to do in the next Pay-As-You-Go program.

BY MS. HUDSON:

All we have now, we have that rating system that --

But -- but you don't -- but -- but you don't really see the overall picture. I mean, we go out and say, okay, here's how we graded the roads that we think need to be repaired. Well, this would show you. These roads are in red, which means they are -- they are a higher priority than the ones in yellow. And, you know --

BY MR. CARL:

And at this point we don't really have a lot of input, or I don't, into the roads that are
being resurfaced unless it's a major project. And then it has to go on the Pay-As-You-Go. But if it's a neighborhood street or something, you know, that's -- Richard and Chris puts that list together.

Yeah.

But that software would not eliminate that, but it would enhance that so we could have some input, right?

Right. It -- you know, if you could be given a map of your district and with all those color codes on it and you could see which ones that you would prefer to have done rather than, you know --

MS. HUDSON: Uh-huh.

By MS. LUDGOOD:

What's the name of that? Do you know the name of that?

No, ma'am, I don't. I -- I can -- But it's called pavement management?

It's asset management I guess is -- Asset management?

-- is what it's called. Yes, ma'am.
They -- they called it asset management. And you may see it in the pavement preservation-type stuff. So --

MR. CARL: We're going to buy a lot of books when this is over.

MS. HUDSON: We are.

MR. CARL: Mark Twain --

MS. LUDGOOD: And that was mine, this is yours.

BY MR. CARL:

Q All right. Have you ever been in a situation where you were less successful as a leader than you wanted to be and what did you learn from that experience?

A That you were less successful as a leader than you wanted to be.

Well, I -- I guess in some ways you could look at it that back in the '80s when I was just first getting started in the business, I guess you'd say, counties didn't get a whole lot of money in from the DOT and federal funds back then. We -- we were lucky to get $100,000 a year. So -- and there for a while, we got it about once every
three years. We didn't even get it every year for a while.

But I had set up a project to replace a bridge structure in the county. And I thought I had everything worked out with that particular commissioner and all. I went all the way through with the right-of-way acquisition. We got the funding agreement with the DOT and I took it to the commission. And -- and they said no. We can build a bridge for our matching money and just give -- give that federal money back to -- to the state.

I wish I had done more with that. I wish I could have convinced that commissioner that in the long run, it would have been beneficial. So that -- once he built his bridge, we still had it posted, so it was still eligible for federal funds.

And that kind of taught me a little something, that I needed a backup plan to be there, to have a second project sitting on the shelf waiting for that. And -- and now that's helped me here.
In both projects in your district, Commissioner Carl, the Dog Road project from Scott Dairy on up to Cottage Hill is basically in line -- was in line for our next federal aid project through the DOT. But because of the right-of-way issues that we've got out there, I saw a need to -- to change. And, so, we flipped over your Pay-As-You-Go project on Three Notch Road from Dog Road to McDonald over to a DOT project. And we were able to get that one processed a whole lot quicker. We're -- we're to the point, all we lack now is just the Corps permit and then we'll be ready to have that one in the --

Q Which one is that one?
A Three Notch. From Dog Road over to -- to McDonald.

Q Can you change the Pay-As-You-Go programs up?
A Well, you've got to use the Pay-As-You-Go money to do the matching. But --

Q Okay.
A But -- but -- but yes, sir.
Okay.

But that -- that experience back then helped me with -- with what we're doing here today. It's doing that. So you've got to have a backup plan sometimes. And that -- and that's kind of helped me understand I needed to -- to be a little more involved and -- and be a little more of a leader for the county to -- to have a second set of plans sitting on the side in case we did lose one, we had another. We don't want to lose federal money. And -- and that's the only federal money I ever lost while I was county engineer.

Thank you.

You know, one of the issues we have been facing, and you've probably been following, is the study and the report we got. And one of the things that emerged was some morale issues. What strategies would you use to try to build morale among all of the staff, either at public works or in engineering?

I would try to continue to try to find
out the problems or the issues that -- that our
employees are having, whether it's on the roads or
in the office. If I can help solve them, I'll do
so. If -- if -- if I can't, I'll -- I'll come
to -- to y'all and say, hey, this is an issue
we've got out there. I'd like to sit down with
y'all and try to develop a plan to -- to improve
the -- the morale that's out there.
Q Uh-huh.
BY MS. HUDSON:
Q Richard, in the position of either the
county engineer or public works director, you
would be in a position of I guess more of a
heightened communication with a number of
different entities, whether it's commissioners or
directors of other departments or even outside
organizations or entities. How would you go about
trying to establish a good rapport in
communication with these different entities?
A Well, it -- I kind of started that when I
came -- came to Mobile with -- with the -- with
the DOT. I -- I just went over there and just sat
down and met them face-to-face and said: Here I
am. Here's what I'm trying to do. And I wanted you to know if I can help you, let me know. And -- and I've done that with some of the -- you know, with -- with Bill Melton and -- and Tyler. I've -- I've sat down and talked with them a little bit.

But I would look at that. I'd talk with the road builders a little bit. I'd kind of begin to get to know some of those. But that's what I would want to do. I would want to sit down with them face-to-face and say: I've just been in this position. I'm getting -- I want to get started on the right foot with everybody and -- and see if there's anything that -- that I can do from our side to help them and -- and offer any assistance that I could.

Q And how do you see yourself working with the commissioners?

A Well, I hope I have a good relationship with all three of you. And -- and -- and that's -- that goes with it. The -- like I would want to sit down with each of you. If there's a -- an issue in your district that I'm working
on, I'll come to you and let you know what the problems are and -- and what my solution is to the problem.

Q Okay, all right.

BY MR. CARL:

Q What do you believe are the most critical steps to take when managing any change? And what are some pitfalls to avoid?

A What kind of change? What -- to take --

Q Yeah. What do you believe are the most critical steps to take when managing any change?

A Some of the critical steps would be to

let that particular department or those particular employees to be aware that, hey, this is fixing to happen and these are the reasons why.

I -- I -- and I think that goes with --

on the pitfalls. If you don't let the people that's -- that's affected by the change know what's coming or -- or what's going to be affected, then -- then you're going to have a problem from the very beginning.

//
Q. So you've had quite a distinguished
career as a county engineer and your various
roles. What would you consider to be your
greatest achievement, if you can think of one, if
not maybe two? What are you most proud of?

A. Well, I -- I'm -- I'm most proud of --
of -- of what the county was able to accomplish
while I was in Blount County as far as the number
of projects that -- that were completed. We
completed a 506-foot bridge there in -- in the
southern end of the county. And obviously with
federal money being only 200, $300,000 a year,
and -- and this -- this project was close to
$1,000,000, I was able to work with our probate
judge slash commission chairman.

And back in the '80s when this was being
done, the DOT would allow counties to swap federal
aid funds or borrow from one to the other. And he
and I went around to several different counties
and -- and borrowed their federal aid with the
understanding that we'd never pay it back.

Because they couldn't spend it. And we were able
to get several -- we got some from Clay County, some from Bibb, some from Walker. I don't remember how many others. But -- but that -- that's kind of an accomplishment I’d like to say I was able to bring more money into the county than what they would normally receive.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Okay. When giving direction to your employees, how do you go about making sure that those directions are followed through with?

A Well, once I give them, I'll give them a couple of days and -- and on a small scale. On a larger scale, I'd just have to go back to the supervisors and see.

But I would -- I will give them a directive and then maybe a week go by or so, depending on the type of job that I'm asking them to do, go back by and check with them and see if they've got any issues with it. If they do, then I'll try to help them resolve those and try to keep them on track.

That's kind of one thing I guess I -- I don't like to do is -- is have a bunch of stuff
sitting on my desk waiting for me to -- to take
action on. My desk may look like a nightmare when
you come up there and -- and -- and visit me,
but -- but any incoming mail that I receive, I
basically take care of within the next couple of
hours. I -- I want that -- if it came to me
and -- and if it's got to go to somebody else, I
don't want to be the person holding up the process
ever how far it has to travel.
Q  So you do ongoing evaluations. You
monitor the performance?
A  Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

Q  This is my last question. I'd better
make it a good, hadn't I? How do you enlist
support of your staff to establish a common
approach to solving a problem?
A  Well, I look at their strengths and their
weaknesses. And I -- I -- we're all working there
together to try to come up with a solution to
something. I would want to -- to ask those
employees: What do you think? What can I do?
What can we do as -- as a team to -- to resolve
this issue? And, so, I would try to do that
within -- within the departments.

And -- and -- and with our supervisors
out on -- on the roads, I would want to get with
them and -- and say: Hey, let's sit down and see
if we can't resolve this. And you tell me what --
what your problems are. And if we need to bring
in your equipment operator to say: Hey, we need
you to work the road a little better or -- or
operate that motor grader in a different way, we
need -- we need to sit down and show you what we
need to do.

MR. CARL: I got two phone calls
yesterday and two phone calls today
on a motor grader. It's motor grader
week.

MR. SPRAGGINS: It's about that
time.

MR. CARL: Yeah.

MS. HUDSON: It's springtime.

MR. SPRAGGINS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. LUDGOOD: I'm done.
Q Okay. I guess let me just ask you: In your career, in every job that you've had, if you had to tell us what the biggest challenge you've encountered is, what would you say it was?

A My biggest challenge was back in the Garvey program, which was back in the early 2000s. Each county got -- well, got a minimum of three and a quarter million. And that -- that's what Blount got at that time.

But we had to spend our funds or at least half our funds within the first three years of -- of the program. I was politely told that I would spend at least half of that money in that three-year allotment or I would turn in my resignation. And, so --

Q You got busy.

A Yeah. They -- they -- that -- that was -- was kind of critical. Ricky was working with me at that time. And -- and I never told him until just a couple of years ago. But -- but he was good enough to work with me. And -- and we worked some late nights trying to get the plans.
developed and all of that. We did. We spent

two-thirds, a little over two-thirds of our money

in that first three years. But that was a scary
time.

Q Yes, it was. I hate to hear that. But

you've done an incredible job. And it's not

escaped our notice --

A Well, I appreciate it.

Q -- on the work you've done.

MS. HUDSON: And I guess we'll

just end by asking you: Do you have

any questions of us?

MR. SPRAGGINS: Well, I know

you've got some more interviews to
do. I know -- I assume you'll try to

make a decision, but -- but whatever

your decision, I'll -- I'll support

you in every which way I can.

MS. HUDSON: Well, thank you.

MR. SPRAGGINS: I want to continue
to do that. And I appreciate the

opportunity to be here.

MS. HUDSON: Well, we certainly
value you as an employee and --

MR. SPARGINS: Well, thank you.

MS. HUDSON: -- part of our family. We're a family here, aren't we?

MR. SPARGINS: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

MS. LUDGOOD: Thank you.

MR. SPARGINS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. HUDSON: Well, we have all of the interviews this week. And, of course, I know this has been a long process. It's been about 18 months now.

MR. SPARGINS: Right.

MS. HUDSON: Some of that is because of the, you know, due diligence and all through the personnel board and everything that had to happen. But we expect to make a decision.

MR. SPARGINS: Okay. That'll be fine.
MS. HUDSON: All right.

MR. SPRAGGINS: Thank y'all.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you very much.

3:07 p.m.

(Brief recess.)
1 3:24 p.m.
2 INTERVIEW OF JOHN DAILEY, JR.
3 --
4 MS. HUDSON: We are reconvening
5 this meeting and our next candidate
6 is Mr. John Ray Dailey, Jr.
7 MR. DAILEY: Yes, ma'am.
8 MS. HUDSON: We appreciate you
9 being here and thank you for your
10 interest in this position. He is
11 interviewing for the position of
12 county engineer.
13 And the way we've handled this,
14 Mr. Dailey, is we will allow you an
15 opportunity to introduce yourself,
16 tell us whatever you would like for
17 us to know about you. And then we'll
18 follow that with a series of
19 questions, and then end with giving
20 you an opportunity to ask us any
21 questions that you might have. Would
22 you like some water?
23 MR. DAILEY: No, I'm good.
MS. HUDSON: Oh, okay. All right.
And you've met Commissioners Ludgood,
Mr. Carl and myself.

MR. DAILEY: I've never been to a
county with so few commissioners
before.

MS. HUDSON: Well, there's three
of them in the state. Out of 67,
there's three counties with three
commissioners. But this is by far
the largest.

MR. CARL: We're the best looking
group you've ever seen though, right?

MR. DAILEY: I will say that, yes.

MS. HUDSON: And the only
commission I think that's majority
female.

MR. DAILEY: Oh, really?

MS. HUDSON: Yeah.

MR. CARL: My mind has gone.

There's one in Portland that,
whatever county Portland is, I think
they're all females.
MS. HUDSON: All females.

MR. DAILEY: The last county I was in, there was seven commissioners.

MR. CARL: Washington County has seven, don't they?

MS. LUDGOOD: I think they have five.

As my application said, I graduated NC State in 1989. I got my professional engineers license for the state of Alabama in '92 or '93 or something. I can't remember the exact date. And I've been a practicing engineer ever since then.

I was in Clarke County where I served under Mr. Sam Noble, who was the county engineer down there for a long time.

I went to Chilton County as the county engineer. That -- that -- they had seven commissioners in Chilton County.

And, at that time, my father wanted me to come help run the construction business. At that point, I moved back to my hometown and have been running the construction business for the last 20 something years.
All of my wife's people are from Mobile.

And my child, my youngest child is fixing to start college. And my wife says: I'm ready to move back home.

And this job opening came up. And, you know, I said: This would be a perfect fit for me. I'm 52 years old. And this would be a point in my life where I could go -- it just fits me.

And, so, here we are. I've been doing engineering my whole life. I've seen both sides of the coin. I -- I know politics. I won't say I enjoy politics, but I know politics.

MS. LUDGOOD: We wouldn't either.

I'm not young. I'm not going to try and reinvent the wheel. I'm not here to stir up the boat. I know how to make people do what needs to be done. I know what'll work and what won't work from both sides of the -- the equation.

I'm a certified credentialed professional with Alabama Department of Environmental Management. I have been asked to be on the Board of Engineers twice. I turned it down both times because it would have been -- it would have been
1 just too much hassle for what it's worth.
2 I enjoy spending time by my -- I love
3 fishing. That's one reason why I -- I want to
4 move down here. I love bay fishing. And I don't
5 care much for the blue water, but I do like bay
6 fishing.
7 And I -- I guess that's really all I have
8 to say.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q  Can you tell us a little bit about the
12 kind of construction you've done?
13 A  I have done jobs ranging from
14 $25,000,000, highways and bridges, all the way
15 down to people's driveways. And I have designed
16 bridges for timber companies: Bloedel, Forest,
17 Soterra, Scott's Land Management Company.
18 I've sized culverts. I do a lot of
19 consulting engineering work with my company. That
20 gives me a niche because most contractors don't --
21 don't -- don't have that in the neck of the woods
22 I come from.
23 And I -- I do a lot of environmental
work. And I did some grant writing. I help with
grant writing with the City of Camden. I've done
that on several occasions. And anything to -- to
help out wherever I'm at.

MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

BY MR. CARL:

Q We've got a list of questions here that
we were provided with. So if you see us looking
at them and reading them off, we were trying to
give every applicant the same opportunity to
answer the same questions.

Although if we hear something that wants
to take us in a little different direction, we're
certainly leaving ourselves open for that. So --

AOkay.

Q -- if you don't mind, we'll ask you a
handful of questions and you can just rattle off
what you feel like your response should be.

And I'll go first. How would you
describe your leadership style? And give us an
example of how you apply that style.

A I'm not a micro-manager. I like to
assign tasks to people and get regular reports on
1 their -- how it's -- how it's going. I --
2 micromanagement does not work. I prefer -- and
3 then if I check on someone's progress and it's not
4 progressing at a rate that I think is acceptable,
5 then me and that person should have a talk about
6 why it's not progressing at a rate that I feel is
7 acceptable.
8 Q    All right.
9 A    They generally blame it on the person
10 below them, and that person will generally blame
11 it on the person below them. But my answer to
12 that is: Well, you're ultimately responsible.
13 And because I'm ultimately responsible -- because
14 you're not going to get -- you're not going to be
15 asking questions of the person -- people below me.
16 You're going to be asking me questions. So that's
17 the reason why.
18       I don't like to micromanage. But if
19 we've got a road crew doing something and they're
20 not getting anything done, whoever is over that
21 road crew, then I'll ask them why is this not
22 getting done and give them an opportunity to
23 improve.
Okay. Thank you.

Okay. So how do you maintain morale among those that you supervise? I know having been a county engineer, you know that the salary is never right. You know that we aren't able to really pay the staff as much money as they would like. And, so, sometimes morale issues develop. And I just wondered: What kind of things do you do to try to boost morale or what kind of things do you do in your company and then as well as the public sector? Some examples.

Employee morale affects every aspect of every company, whether it's public or private, especially nowadays. At my company now, I do little things from time to time. I take the employees and have little cookouts for them from time to time. I don't know if y'all are -- would allow such things as that. But if like maybe twice a month I could do little barbecue cookouts or something for the employees to show their appreciation for, you know, meeting certain goals or, you know, or if
someone is not tardy for work or good attendance to work or -- there are a million different ways and we could come up with all sorts of things to show and -- our appreciation for employees that -- that appreciate their jobs and that value their jobs.

In other words, there's all kinds of things that we could come up with. I mean, with -- sitting here in front of you, it's kind of hard to just come up with them off the bat. But we could come up with all kinds of things.

But I -- I -- the barbecue thing, sometimes I -- I -- I just cook steaks -- steaks not very often -- but sometimes I do chicken halves. And you'd -- you'd be surprised how much that does.

So basically just show appreciation and show them that they're valued, find different ways to show that they are valued as --

A Yes, ma'am. You know, anything other than nothing but grumbling. Nothing but grumbling doesn't but sow problems. In other words, if you can, you know, throw a cookout for them every once
Okay. Thank you.

BY MS. HUDESON:

Q How would you go about establishing a rapport and building a relationship with the commissioners as well as people who don't report to directly to you, either other department heads, other outside organizations and groups that you would go be dealing with outside, you know, just on a regular basis? How do you go about establishing a kind of rapport and relationship building?

A Okay. I have found in the long run, brutal and total honesty works the best in the long run. We may not always be best chums, but if I tell you the truth every single time you ask me a question, the hard truth, then it always comes back that I felt like I did what was right. And then in the end I think that you -- y'all as commissioners, I mean, y'all aren't fly-by-night. I mean, you've got -- this is Mobile County, you know. And this is the second biggest metropolis in the state of Alabama. I mean, so y'all had to
have stuff going right to get here anyway. So --
That's the best compliment I've been paid lately.
So, in other words, I guess what I'm saying is: Y'all have got some sense. So, in other words, if I tell you the truth, y'all have got to see that for what it's worth. Because if I sugarcoat stuff or tell you what you want to hear, eventually I'm not going to be able to deliver on what I tell you when I tell you what you want to hear.

What about --
All right. Outside offices, ADEM, underground utility companies, ADEM, boy, that's a big one there. They are --
MR. CARL: Well, they are here quite frequently.
(Comment redacted.)
BY MS. HUDSON:
You're brutally honest.
MR. CARL: Don't put that one the record.
I can work with anybody. I have gotten
along with ADEM in the past. I don’t know what y’all’s relationship with ADEM is now. But I will do everything in my power to make it better and certainly not make it worse. But if I see that they’re doing something that I feel like goes above and beyond what I feel like is best for Mobile County, then I’m going to bring it to y’all’s attention and -- and then look for direction from y’all on which way you want to go if that’s what y’all want me to do.

BY MR. CARL:

Q Well, a lot of what we’re looking for is some new ideas. You know, new ideas from people that, you know, have got what it takes to get us there. Tell me about the biggest changes in a work situation that you’ve had to manage and how you coped with it.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q And, as you’re answering that, you will be coming in from, you know, basically other -- you’ve been in different counties. How would you help to manage that change and get people accustomed to you and your style and all of that?
Because we've had the same engineer for 40
something years.

A What is his name?
Q Joe Ruffer.
A Yeah. I -- I knew Joe Ruffer.
Q Okay. So basically you'd be coming
behind him after all of those years. And part of
the change would be, you know, getting used to a
different person. But how would you manage that?
A The biggest change that I probably faced
in the work environment was -- let me see -- would
have to be the formation of ADEM.
MR. CARL: The formation of what?
MR. DAILEY: When ADEM was formed.
MR. CARL: Oh, okay.
A Everything turned topsy-turvy. And, at
first, the counties, all they -- all -- all they
had to do was get their different watersheds, a
different permit for all of their different
watersheds. And then ADEM left -- left the county
alone. All right.
Well, then they moved to where if you
disturbed more than five acres, you had to get a
Well, now if you disturb more than one acre, you’ve got to get a permit. And then the Corps of Engineers came along. And if it was a navigable waterway, a blue line on a topo map, you had to get a permit from the Corps of Engineers, which was never a problem. But then the Corps of Engineers got out of that. So we had to go back to ADEM again. And then we started having to go through these cultural resources assessments and these archeological digs on all of these sites before we could have a project.

And I don’t know about Mobile, I’m -- I’m sure you ran into the same thing. But if you’re going to take a nasty curve out of a road and you have to have that cultural resource assessment done and they find one piece of pottery --

MS. HUDSON: Or a milk bottle.

MR. CARL: Or a tortoise.

A -- or a yellow belly snail darter, you’re --

MR. CARL: I’m sorry? A yellow belly what?
MR. DAILEY: A snail darter.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

MR. DAILEY: That was a --

MR. CARL: Is that a real critter?

MR. DAILEY: He's a real critter.

MS. HUDSON: A yellow belly snail --

MR. DAILEY: A yellow belly snail darter. It's a salamander type.

MR. CARL: Okay. I'm sorry. I've never heard of that one.

MS. HUDSON: Wow.

MR. DAILEY: And they had people over there trying to literally move a yellow belly snail darter.

MR. CARL: I'm writing that one down.

MR. DAILEY: And --

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Well, I mean, was there a lot of them?

A Yes, ma'am. And we couldn't -- couldn't move the project because they found some pottery and some other stuff on the hills. So we ended
up, rather than taking the cheapest route of just taking -- we had to make a long sweeping curve. It ended up costing us about four times as much money. And it took me a long time to get used to that.

And then we had to start looking out for the red-cockaded woodpecker. I'm sure y'all have heard about those.

Q Oh, yes. We've heard about those.

MR. CARL: Also called the plantation pecker.

MS. HUDSON: Right.

MR. DAILEY: And -- and they're great big. They're probably that big (demonstrating). And --

MS. HUDSON: Noisy.

A Now when you do a project, you have to be more concerned about erosion than you do about the actual building of the project.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q And that's a bad thing?

A Yes, ma'am. I -- I'm not -- I'm all for saving the environment. I really am. But it's
like the tail wagging the dog. That was the
hardest thing for me to adjust to.

MR. CARL: You're going to love
Mobile. Everything we got down here
is environmental-related.

Everything.

MS. HUDSON: There's a lot of tail
wagging going on.

A But I've got -- gotten pretty good at it.

That's the reason why I went on and got certified
as a credentialled professional with ADEM.

BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q I heard you say that early on. And I
said, well, you said if you can't beat them, join
them. So you --

A So I can talk the talk with them, just as
good as they can.

Q So on the budgets, when you were a county
engineer before, you did manage budgets?

A Yes, ma'am. They were relatively
insignificant compared to probably what the
budgets y'all manage.

//
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BY MS. HUDSON:

Q What was the size of the budget that you managed?

A About $3,000,000.

BY MS. HUDGOOD:

Q So I would imagine you had to be creative.

A Oh, yes, ma'am.

Q What were some things that you used just to try to make those dollars go as far as you could make them go?

A Well, if money got to running short, then we'd start blading the dirt roads with about half of a crew and put them to cleaning shoulders so we could get all our 3-R money. We'd put it over into the general fund so we could have that money to make payroll and other stuff. And you could transfer your two-cent money over into your 3-R money and use it, too. And we had a lot of shoulder pulling and a lot of stuff like that to use up that money.

We never had a system as good as y'all, the Pay-As-You-Go program, which I think is a
1 marvelous program.
2 MS. HUDSON: We are real proud of
3 it.
4 BY MS. LUDGOOD:
5 Q So you had to figure out where there's
6 money and make the work follow where you could
7 pull that money?
8 A Yes, ma'am.
9 BY MS. HUDSON:
10 Q Okay. Should you be appointed to this
11 position, what do you see coming in within your
12 first year? What would you be trying to
13 accomplish? I mean, do you have some -- I don't
14 know how much you know about Mobile County
15 engineering or how familiar you are with it, other
16 than Pay-As-You-Go.
17 A I'm pretty familiar with the county. I'm
18 not very familiar with the personnel other than
19 I -- I know -- I knew Mr. Ruffer pretty well,
20 pretty well. I liked him a lot. And it would
21 be -- my first would be to get to know everybody
22 really well.
23 Q And how would you do that?
A: Talk to everybody.

Q: To everybody.

A: Talk to everybody one-on-one and let them know that I'm not here to be anybody's enemy. I'm not here to be a head hunter. I'm not here to run anybody off. I didn't come here to step on anybody's toes. That -- you've got to -- to let people know that quick.

Because everybody is going to be mad or jealous or, you know, that they -- they're going to think you stole the job or you didn't deserve the job or somebody within the system should have gotten the job or -- you've got -- you've got to put those fires out quick or you're never going to get a rapport with the people. You never are.

And you've got to get out there ahead of that quick and -- and get those people on -- you know, to where they're thinking, well -- well, he's -- he's not a bad guy. You know, he just came down here to work like the rest of us.

Once they get to thinking like that, then you can start having a rapport with them and then you can learn. And then you need to get out with
1 each of your superintendents or foremen and you
2 need to get out and ride with them on the roads
3 and take pictures and see what the problems are.
4 Do y'all get calls from people in your districts
5 about problems?
6 Q       Sure.
7 
8      MR. CARL: Yeah. Middle of the
9      night, middle of the storm, all of
10     it. Calls, e-mails, grocery store,
11     the mall, wherever you are.
12 
13     BY MS. HUDSON:
14     Q We have a lot of calls wanting us to
15     maintain private roads. We get a lot of that.
16     And then some of them are very, very sad
17     situations because they're in deplorable
18     conditions. People can hardly get up and down.
19     But, you know, the law doesn't allow it.
20     And, of course, there is concern even if
21     it did, you know, where would the money come from
22     to maintain a road -- I mean, to take over a road,
23     you know, that we're using our dollars to try to
24     maintain what we've got. So there's a lot of that
25     that we hear from people.
Yeah. We run into that everywhere.

And -- and the sad part about it is, there's some

of them you really wish you could help and then --

but if you help one --

MR. CARL: You help them all.

A -- you've got to help every one of them.

And -- and there'll be a newspaper man or somebody

behind every tree. And it's just --

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q It's a tough situation.

A Yes, ma'am, it really is.

MR. CARL: Is it my turn? I'm

sorry. It's your turn.

MS. HUDSON: Is it mine? You were

last.

MR. CARL: I don't know.

MS. HUDSON: We started our

follow-up questions.

MS. LUDGOOD: You asked the last

one. That was my last notes were

your questions.

MS. HUDSON: Okay.

MS. LUDGOOD: It's the one-year
goal.


MR. CARL: Okay. So it is me.

All right.

MR. CARL:

Q Have you ever been in a situation where you were less successful as a leader than you wanted to be? What did you learn from that experience?

A Yes, I have. Back when I was younger, I learned a lot. I learned a lot of valuable lessons. And I don't assume anything. If it looks like a fox and smells like a fox, it still not might not be a fox.

Q I've never heard it put that way. But you're right though.

A And -- and I guess a snake would be another good one. But treat everybody like you want to be treated. And -- but the minute you think you're in -- in a compromising situation, you need to tell the people you work for.

MR. CARL: Fair enough.
And let them decide how -- how to proceed. Don't take the matter into your own hands. You need to tell the people you work for.

By Ms. Ludgood:

Q I'm not sure about how Chilton County works. What is it, like a unit? There's a unit system? And then what's the other one?

A There's a district system and there's a modified unit system and then there's a full unit system.

Q So which one was Chilton County?

A That was a unit system.

Q Is that the one where the commissioners go get on the equipment?

A No, ma'am. That was -- everything down there --

Q The district --

A The county engineer.

Q Okay, all right. I got you. Okay. I was just trying to get that clear in my mind. So Washington County, they must be a district because they actually --

Ms. Hudson: They get on the
equipment themselves?

MS. LUDGOOD: Uh-huh.

MR. CARL: They have to. That's part of their job. When they told me that, I thought they were kidding the first time I heard that.

MS. LUDGOOD: No.

MR. DAILEY: For a county engineer, the district system is the easiest.

MS. HUDSON: Oh, yeah.

MR. DAILEY: Because the commissioners can go and do whatever they want to, you know.

MS. HUDSON: Easy in some respect.

MR. DAILEY: Correct. Correct.

MS. HUDSON: You've got to know what you're doing when you're out there. Most people don't have that kind of expertise. You have to depend on your engineering staff --

MR. DAILEY: For a --

MS. HUDSON: -- and public works.
MR. DAILEY: For the county itself, I think that the unit system really works better.

MS. LUDGOOD: I would think you would have more quality control and probably less opportunity for corruption.

MR. DAILEY: I -- I would -- I would say that. Yes, ma'am.

MS. LUDGOOD: Yeah. I think that was my last one.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q Okay. What sort of performance measures do you have in place to judge the productivity of your employees to make sure that they are producing the quality and quantity of work that you expect of them?

A We do monthly evaluations on every employee.

MS. LUDGOOD: Monthly?

MR. DAILEY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. LUDGOOD: Okay.
BY MS. HUDSON:

Q And that is averaged out to go into their yearly evaluation or how does all of that work?

A That is -- that goes into their personnel file and then -- and they're given to-improve-upon. In other words, it doesn't rate for or against them. But it's giving them time to improve upon so when they have their yearly evaluations, we can go back and look at these monthly evaluations and say: You were given January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, and October and November and each time you were told to improve upon this. Why did you not improve upon this every time?

Q Is something like that feasible when you have 250 employees?

A We may have to do it once a quarter or something like that or rotate it. You know, do all the "A", "B", "C" and "D" one month and do, you know --

Q But how do you actually measure? Do you look at the work output for each individual in terms of work that they're directed to do and
what's been completed? I mean, how --

A You can -- you can go behind -- I -- I --

I've been in that type of -- this type of stuff my whole life. And I can go behind a motor grader man and within 15 minutes I can tell you whether or not he knows what he's doing or not.

And I can sit behind him or go behind him the day after he does a road and say: Well, he did a jam-up job on this road. So I ain't worried about him on the motor grader. He does all right.

If go behind somebody else and the road is shaped like this (demonstrating), where all the water runs right in the middle of the road, then I know he's got to have some training.

And if I do some training and then -- then the road looks like this (demonstrating), well, he's got to have a little more training.

But then if I come back after three months and the road looks like this (indicating) then we did good.

MS. LUDGOOD: I have one like the first one in my district. I do.

MS. HUDSON: We need some more
drains.

MS. LUDGOOD: And one like this
and they call me.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q And that make senses in public works.

But on the engineering side of things --

A All right. On the engineering side of

things, I don't know how y'all do your

engineering. Do y'all have people that draw your

plans up for your different projects or do y'all

hire consultants to draw your plans up?

Q Some of both, depending on the size.

A It's -- it's pretty easy to -- when we

say, okay, I want to get this -- this overlay

project done up. Overlay projects are pretty easy
to get done up. I mean, it's not a whole lot of

checking.

And if two weeks down the road, I say:

How are we coming on the overlay project? Because

the -- the commissioners really want to get this

thing bid out. Well, I've just got the title page
done. Whoa now. Is -- is there some kind of

problem? Man, I've been working myself to death.
That's all I can get done on it.
Okay. Well, then explain to me why that's all you can get done. I'm not the kind of person that's just going to jump all over him to start with. I'm going to let them tell me why they can't do the work.
And then if they -- if they can't tell me why they can't do the work, then I'm probably giving it to somebody else and tell them I want this done by so-and-so.
And then that person will get mad. And then the next time I give them work to do, okay, is there going to be a problem? Are you going to be able to get it done? You know, it -- you know, and my surveyors -- do you y'all have surveyors?
MS. LUDGOOD: We do it by contract. We don't have any in-house anymore. We contract those out.
All right. Well, that's probably a good -- a good thing because surveying equipment nowadays is so expensive.
But when I was the county engineer, we did all of our plans. We didn't contract anything
out. And we had to draw all of it. And you just had to get it done. And it's just a matter of finding the right motivation for that person. And if that person cannot be motivated to do the work, then it's either find somebody that'll do the work or either that -- and if that person cannot be motivated to do the work, then that person needs to be replaced.

BY MS. HUDSON:

Q And based on your evaluation of their output that you see --

A Well, I mean, I don't want to answer a loaded question. I -- but I can tell if somebody is not doing all they can do. But I will gladly take guidance from people that have been here longer that me and say, you know, cut him some slack, you know. He's got this problem or that problem or he's going through some hard times right now or something like that. Because there are a lot of things I don't know, me being new. But I'm not going to come here and try to chop somebody's head off right from the start.

Q Okay.
BY MS. LUDGOOD:

Q And, I mean, we get that, that you've got
to observe and give them time and all of that.

But I think basically what you're saying, based on
your experience, you just learned down the years,
you can spot a really good employee and you can
spot one that's more challenging. I think that's
what you're saying.

A Yes, ma'am.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Questions,
Commissioners?

MR. CARL: I think I've got most
of mine answered here.

MS. LUDGOOD: Okay.

MR. CARL: Yeah. The ones I've
asked him has actually answered other
things.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Well, we want
to give you an opportunity to ask us
anything that may come to mind.

MR. DAILEY: Well, it's been a
very candid interview, very different
that any one I've ever been to. And
I haven't been to a job interview in 25 years.

Do you know when you will be making your decision?

MS. HUDSON: It should be very soon. We will complete interviews this week. And shortly after that -- I can't give you an exact date -- but we anticipate soon because this has been open now for the last 18 months while we restructured the department.

At one time when Mr. Ruffer was still here, he was public works director as well as the county engineer. And we've basically divided those positions. And, so, the scope of work and job responsibilities had to all be re-written through a personnel board and go through that process. And, so, now we've finally gotten all of that back so that we can interview people. And then the decision should
be coming soon after all of the interviews end.

MR. DAILEY: Yes, ma'am. Who would be my direct supervisor?

MS. HUDSON: The county commission.

MR. DAILEY: And the majority of the county commission --

MS. HUDSON: You would work for all three of us.

MR. DAILEY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. HUDSON: You would be reporting to us, all three of us.

MR. DAILEY: Would I come to the county commission meetings?

MS. LUDGOOD: Yes.

MR. DAILEY: All right. And then --

MS. LUDGOOD: You set your agenda, the things you need approved. You'd be responsible for working with your staff to create the items that need to be on the agenda, the stuff that's
going out for bids, subdivisions.
You have primary responsibility for
developing those.

MR. DAILEY: How many people are
on the staff in the engineering
department?

MS. HUDSON: I think -- is it 50?
Somewhere around 50. Public works is
a lot larger. It's about 250. The
two together are around 300 or so.

MR. DAILEY: Goodness.

MS. HUDSON: A few less than 50.

MS. LUDGOOD: Because we have
design and --

MR. DAILEY: Well, I look forward
to working for y'all. I really do.

MS. HUDSON: Okay. Any other
questions?

MR. DAILEY: Do you have to wear a
suit and tie every day?

MS. LUDGOOD: No.

MR. DAILEY: Okay.

MS. HUDSON: Is that a deal
breaker?

MR. DAILEY: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Does the county get to furnish the vehicle to go back and forth on?

MS. HUDSON: Uh-huh.

MR. DAILEY: I think that's about all I have. Insurance?

MS. LUDGOOD: Yes. We have a family rate and a single rate. And the employee contribution I think right now is right at maybe 17 percent. We pay the --

MS. HUDSON: We have a good benefits package.

MR. DAILEY: It sounds like it.

MS. HUDSON: We do.

MR. DAILEY: That is absolutely marvelous. Because I have an autistic daughter and I have to have good insurance big time.

MS. LUDGOOD: So we have an subsistence allowance that basically
for every day you come to work you
get an additional $10. It's
something really that originated with
law enforcement and then we expanded
it to everybody. So basically it's
your lunch money.

MR. DAILEY: Oh, it's like a per

diem.

Okay. Well, Mr. Dailey, again, we
appreciate your time this afternoon.
Thank you for sharing with us.

4:08 p.m.

(Recess taken.)

4:30 p.m.

MS. HUDSON: I move to be
adjourned.

MR. CARL: I second.

MS. HUDSON: We stand adjourned
until Thursday.

- END OF PROCEEDINGS -
CERTIFICATE

STATE OF ALABAMA )
COUNTY OF CONECUH )

I hereby certify that the above and
foregoing transcript of proceedings was taken
down by me in machine shorthand, and the
questions and answers thereto were transcribed
by means of computer-aided transcription, and
that the foregoing represents a true and
correct transcript of the proceedings given by
said witness upon said hearing.

I further certify that I am neither of
counsel nor of kin to the parties to the
action, nor am I in anywise interested in the
result of said cause.

I further certify that I am duly licensed
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the Mississippi Board of Certified Court
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