

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 Spraggins, 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

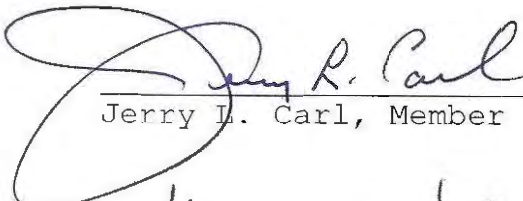
ADJOURN

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

Motion carried unanimously.



Connie Hudson, President



Jerry L. Carl, Member



Merceria Ludgood, Member

ATTEST:



John Pafenbach, County Administrator

1 MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION
2 MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION
3 205 GOVERNMENT STREET
4 MOBILE, ALABAMA 36602
5
6 TUESDAY; MARCH 20, 2018
7 8:30 A.M.
8
9
10 IN RE: MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING
11 MINUTES
12
13
14 INTERVIEWS FOR THE POSITION OF COUNTY ENGINEER
15 AND/OR PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
16 _____
17
18
19 CONNIE HUDSON, COMMISSION PRESIDENT
20 MERCERIA LUDGOOD, DISTRICT 1
21 JERRY CARL, DISTRICT 3
22
23 REPORTED BY: PATRICIA TAYLOR, CCR

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 - - -

3 8:41 a.m.

4 MS. HUDSON: This meeting is now
5 called to order. The purpose of this
6 meeting is to continue interviewing
7 candidates for the positions of
8 County Engineer and Public Works
9 Director, Chief Engineer, Division of
10 Public Works.

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

13 THE COURT REPORTER: Okay. Thank
14 you.

15 8:42 a.m.

16 - - -

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23

1 INTERVIEW OF NEAL HOWARD

2 - - -

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

5 MR. HOWARD: Good morning,
6 Commissioners.

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

11 MR. HOWARD: That's correct.

12 MS. HUDSON: And he is
13 interviewing for the position of
14 public works Director, Chief
15 Engineer, Division of Public Roads.
16 Welcome. Good morning.

17 MR. HOWARD: Good morning.

18 BY MS. HUDSON:

19 Q Neal, what we will do initially is to
20 give you an opportunity to just introduce
21 yourself, tell us anything about you that you'd
22 like for us to know. And then we will begin with
23 a series of questions, and it should be not

1 difficult at all, okay?

2 A Okay. Sure.

3 Q All right.

4 A Well, born and raised here in Mobile
5 County; 45 years old. I grew up in a small town,
6 Grand Bay which was a unique experience, small
7 town life, all eyes on you at all times. So I
8 learned from an early age to be accountable for
9 all of my actions.

10 I've been working here at Mobile County
11 for the past eight years. Currently I'm the
12 Public Works Engineering Manager, so I manage the
13 entire public works department directly under
14 Ricky Mitchell. And it's been an absolute honor
15 and a privilege. I greatly enjoy my job.

16 The men and women that serve Mobile
17 County do a fantastic job and it's a -- it's an
18 honor to be associated with them.

19 So I'm -- you know, I'm very interested
20 in the position and I think I can do a -- a good
21 job representing Mobile County in that capacity.

22 Q Okay.

23 //

1 BY MR. CARL:

2 Q We have a list of questions that we were
3 provided. And what we will do is we will each
4 pick four of them. And if we have the time, we'll
5 ask you the same four we ask the other candidates.
6 If you touch a nerve, we may come up with a
7 different question from one of us. But --

8 A Sure.

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

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

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

22 Q Okay.

23 //

1 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

18 For instance, an individual that is
19 chronically tardy, we -- we have that a lot.
20 And -- and we need the employees there at a
21 certain time of the day so that we can get the
22 crews lined out and we can get out and do our job.

23 It might be that -- that they just can't

1 get up on time. Or we might have another employee
2 that they have one car in their household and very
3 limited funds and income and they're responsible
4 for getting the wife to work and the kids to
5 school and a whole sort of -- you know, a -- a lot
6 of issues there that could be involved.

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

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

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

22 Q Okay.

23 MS. LUDGOOD: Was that --

1 MS. HUDSON: That was a follow-up.

2 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

3 Q So how do you currently develop your key
4 employees, the people who you recognize as really
5 good employees who might make really good
6 supervisor material at some point in their
7 careers? What do you do now to try to develop
8 those people and nurture them and bring them
9 along?

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

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

23 Just like we encourage our younger

1 laborers that want to be equipment operators: We
2 encourage them to, you know, shadow these
3 equipment operators, go and train with them
4 whenever the opportunity affords itself.

5 Q Thank you.

6 BY MR. HUDSON:

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

12 A Yes, ma'am.

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

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

18 I -- I have a policy with all of my
19 supervisors that if they're called out in the
20 middle of the night, I get called out in the
21 middle of the night. They know that they're
22 supposed to call me. I -- I don't really care
23 what time of the night or day it is. But they

1 call me. Because if I've got a crew that's out
2 there and they're waking up and getting out of bed
3 and going to fix this problem, I want to be there
4 for them.

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

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

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

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

20 A You know, as -- as time affords itself,
21 just being able to -- to sit and meet with them,
22 go to some of the training events, some of the
23 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.

1 It's -- it's very hard to see over the
2 phone what's actually going on out there and what
3 someone is really complaining about.

4 And you know with all our constituents in
5 the county, we have to go out and meet with them a
6 lot. And that -- that's very important, to be
7 able to go out and step away from -- from the desk
8 or the phone for a few minutes and get out and --
9 and see the constituents, hear the problem, and
10 form my own decision.

11 Q Okay.

12 BY MS. HUDSON:

13 Q Okay.

14 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

23 And, me, personally, I -- I came up with

1 the idea that we need to make sure the employees
2 know we see when they do something good.
3 Oftentimes they only hear from us when they mess
4 up, and we're quick to recognize that and call
5 that out. But we don't often give them a pat on
6 the back and tell them what a good job they're
7 doing. We take it for granted.

8 We -- I instituted Employee of the Month
9 for all departments, the public works departments,
10 the engineering departments, where the supervisors
11 have to nominate an employee from their
12 department. We may have three or four. And then
13 the department head selects who's going to
14 represent the department for the month.

15 And, so, a very small gesture, but those
16 guys and -- and the ladies, they absolutely light
17 up when they are called out in -- in the morning
18 meeting and handed a little slip of paper that's a
19 certificate recognizing them for what they did.

20 And the supervisor can't just nominate
21 them. They have to include a written statement on
22 why they nominated them. So, it -- it's a big
23 boost of morale for them to stand up in front of

1 their peers that they work with day in and day out
2 and get recognized for that.

3 And then that's bled over to now the
4 supervisors. They see the effect. They -- you
5 know, they've got preferred parking spots for them
6 now for the month. A couple of supervisors even
7 reach in their own pocket and hand them a gift
8 card for a Subway or something simple. But it's a
9 positive step. And I -- I think it's paying big
10 dividends for us.

11 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

23 So it -- and -- and the big picture, it

1 does show them that we notice when they do
2 something good. And that was the whole intent of
3 that.

4 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

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

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

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

22 MS. HUDSON: Yeah.

23 MR. HOWARD: We can do that.

1 MR. CARL: Let people in our
2 community learn that these people are
3 getting the job done.

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

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

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

17 They don't -- they don't see the other
18 nine and a half hours of the day and they don't
19 see them out there in the middle of the night.
20 All they get is that ten-second window. So I try
21 to stress to them the importance of that and --
22 and your perception to the public.
23 //

1 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

5 A A consensus builder?

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

8 A Well --

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

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

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

22 I do approach every situation -- if -- if
23 there's a big decision to be made in our

1 department, we include our department heads and
2 department supervisors, and we sit down and
3 discuss it.

4 Because they're doing it everyday. I
5 don't want to make a change from the office that
6 affects them without them having some input in it.

7 And just being able to sit down and --
8 and have a nice rational peaceful, you know,
9 discussion about things goes a long ways to
10 getting their honest opinion, getting them to open
11 up.

12 You could certainly come in and be
13 heavy-handed about it and kind of push your way
14 and this is what I think and this is what we're
15 going to do. But if you're doing that to the
16 people that have to get it done, they're going to
17 shut down. And -- and they're not going to help
18 you make that successful. That's been my
19 experience.

20 Q So the carrot as opposed to the stick?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Okay.

23 //

1 BY MR. CARL:

2 Q If you woke up tomorrow and you had this
3 job, what are some of the changes that you're
4 looking at making? And I'm going off strictly
5 here.

6 A Yeah.

7 MS. LUDGOOD: I was hoping you
8 would. I had written it down --

9 MR. CARL: Well, he kind of
10 alluded to it a while ago, and that's
11 what got me thinking about it.

12 A Well, you know, there's some -- some
13 things that we've already implemented that I --
14 I'd like to keep, you know, in keeping with the
15 Employee of the Month, with the -- the Chili Cook
16 off that we had this year. That was small, but it
17 was a huge success. All of those kind of factor
18 into the morale and keeping the employees
19 together.

20 We've got employees in the north end of
21 the county that never see the employees in the
22 south end of the county. They don't even know who
23 they are. So any time we can bring them together

1 for a short period of time, it builds a sense of
2 community and camaraderie between the employees
3 and, I think, give us an overall better product at
4 the end of the day.

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

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

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

19 BY MS. HUDSON:

20 Q You think that would be much more
21 efficient?

22 A I -- I -- I think there is -- there's
23 some potential that it could be much more

1 efficient. Sometimes we have a redundancy factor
2 in there just because we have three locations.

3 And -- and it may be we have a --
4 something in the north end that we hardly ever
5 use, but we use it a whole lot in the south end or
6 in the middle.

7 You know, the -- the -- the demands of --
8 of each camp are vastly different. Vastly
9 different. Just in the people that we serve. The
10 type of job requests and work requests that we get
11 in vary greatly.

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

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

23 A No, not -- not at this time. I don't --

1 I don't really have anything. I mean, the -- the
2 way we're operating now is very good. We get a
3 lot accomplished. And that's a huge credit to --
4 to our employees. They do a lot with -- with a
5 little on a daily basis.

6 Q What about staffing?

7 A Well, I --

8 Q Is that a major issue?

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

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

22 Right now we have -- we might have a crew
23 with a Gradall, a Gradall operator, and maybe two

1 trucks and -- and the flagging crew. And they're
2 going out because that's what they have available
3 at their camp. And it's not the most efficient
4 operation. There's a lot of time -- idle time in
5 there waiting on trucks to get back to load and
6 that sort of thing. So there's some things there
7 that we can improve on.

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

15 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

22 Say camp 3 had a Gradall crew that was
23 down for the day. They didn't really have

1 anything to do. Well, they would get reassigned
2 to help out in other capacities within that camp,
3 where it might be better to send them to camp 2
4 where they have a lot of ditches that need to be
5 cleaned out.

6 And -- and given the current set up of
7 our system and -- and how we operate between
8 camps, it's -- it's difficult to move personnel
9 and equipment across camp boundaries than it would
10 be if it was just countywide Gradall crews.

11 BY MS. HUDSON:

12 Q Okay. Thank you.

13 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

14 Q Do y'all still have safety meetings where
15 everybody comes and it's done camp by camp?

16 A It's done department by department. They
17 have monthly safety meetings.

18 Q And, so, there's never a time, other than
19 the way you're doing it now, where every single
20 person is sitting in the same --

21 A Yeah. It's -- it's very rare. It's very
22 rare for the whole camp -- the whole public works
23 department to get together.

1 Q Do you see any value in that?

2 A In bringing them all together?

3 Q Uh-huh.

4 A Sure. Sure I do. Like I said, it --

5 it -- we're all one big family. But if you don't

6 see them -- if you never interact with them, you

7 don't really know them anymore. And it -- and

8 it's harder to interact when you do come together.

9 And -- and if we have a storm or we have

10 an event that requires us all to get together

11 and -- and get things done, I think they'll work

12 better if they know each other. So any time I can

13 get them together and let them interact and let

14 them mingle -- because a lot of these guys have

15 transferred around. And -- and they may have been

16 in one end of the county for several years and

17 then moved and needed a transfer to the north end

18 of the county. Well, they left behind a whole

19 group of guys and ladies that they worked with for

20 a number of years and they haven't seen them

21 since.

22 So something like the -- the Chili Cook

23 Off I had, I had over a dozen people come up to me

1 the next day and say that was fantastic. I -- I
2 got to see these guys that I hadn't seen in three
3 or four years.

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

10 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

11 MS. LUDGOOD: I'm done.

12 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

22 Like I said, you know, in my previous
23 experience, I relied on someone telling me they

1 did something and -- and it got me in a -- in a
2 position I didn't want to be in again.

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

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

12 Q Okay.

13 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

21 A Yes. It's -- like metrics, to -- to
22 gauge, you know, just what we're getting done and
23 how fast we should be getting it done so we have a

1 way of -- of gauging are we falling behind. Are
2 we, you know, staying ahead.

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

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

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

20 So I think that if we can measure that
21 and know, you know, it takes 20 lawn mowers spread
22 across the county to mow everything on a regular
23 basis. Well, that's good. That's what we need to

1 know. We need to know we've got to have 20 lawn
2 mowers that run all the time.

3 So I -- I think -- like I said, that's --
4 that's one thing I've asked the supervisors to go
5 through now is, you know, identify each task you
6 have and identify what it is you define as an
7 optimum crew to get things done and set a time
8 table for it.

9 If you want to -- if you want to mow camp
10 2, that's fine. But let's say we want to mow camp
11 2 in a week and a half. How many lawn mowers
12 would it take to do that.

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

19 A True.

20 Q But I think that was one of the things
21 that was mentioned in the report was those
22 standards are available kind of as a guide as we
23 move forward.

1 MS. HUDSON: To measure
2 productivity?

3 MS. LUDGOOD: Uh-huh.

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

7 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

11 A As long as your equipment is operating
12 and --

13 Q -- and your operators come to work --

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

16 Q It's true. Rain --

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

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

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

10 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

20 A That's correct.

21 Q What can we do? As a county, what can we
22 do to encourage; A, the employees that we have now
23 to step up and move up into those positions; or,

1 B, how do we recruit and hire those people?

2 Because right now with the construction boom going
3 on, a truck driver is becoming very hard to come
4 by.

5 A Very hard. And we see that. And I
6 mention trucks a lot because that is the case and
7 we are short on truck drivers.

8 But in general, our equipment operator
9 position, we're very low all the way across the
10 board. We don't have that generation of laborers
11 and our PSW, public service workers moving up that
12 want to advance into a CDL position for whatever
13 reason.

14 And, so, I think it's -- it's becoming
15 crucial that we recruit, that we find people out
16 there looking to be a truck driver and looking for
17 a stable local career.

18 BY MS. HUDSON:

19 Q Are we not incentivizing enough? I think
20 that's the --

21 A I -- I -- I think -- I think that the
22 starting salaries are -- are just too low. We
23 can't attract someone, especially with the boom

1 that's going on in Mobile. There's a lot of
2 construction. All the contractors are busy. The
3 big building projects have come up -- and if -- if
4 a person has a CDL, they can go find a good job in
5 Mobile right now. And -- and the county just
6 isn't attractive to that person looking for a job.

7 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

8 Q Well, you know, do we have 18 year olds
9 with CDLs or do you have to be 21?

10 A No, you don't have to be 21. You get
11 a -- if you're 18, you can get a CDL.

12 Q Okay.

13 A Yeah. I would -- I would think if
14 you're -- well, I mean, if you can get a driver's
15 license, you can pass a CDL.

16 BY MR. CARL:

17 Q I thought the county had a reg -- and I
18 may be wrong, but I want to say that Ricky said
19 that there was an age requirement.

20 A Well, there might be. I'm -- I'm not
21 aware of that. But --

22 Q Well, when you go to get a CDL, then the
23 problem is keeping them.

1 A Well, usually what we have is the ones
2 that do show some initiative that come in the door
3 as -- as a laborer or a public service worker, and
4 they work with us and we see they have the
5 potential and they show some initiative, we go
6 through the steps and we train them and we put
7 them in a truck and we guide them through the
8 process of the CDL test and -- and get them the
9 CDL. And then within four to six months, they've
10 found another job.

11 And -- and the county is a great stable
12 place to come and train and get your CDL and then
13 go make money somewhere else. So we don't have --
14 we don't have the incentives or -- or whatever is
15 needed to keep them and retain them.

16 BY MR. CARL:

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

19 A Yeah, there's no question. I mean -- I
20 mean, that -- it is what it is right now. And --
21 and -- but I -- I think some strong consideration
22 into the starting salaries or incentives for, you
23 know, continuing education or -- or passing a

1 test, things of that nature might go a long way.

2 BY MS. HUDSON:

3 Q That's a great idea.

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

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

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

22 And -- and we're coming up with a list
23 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 them blow the

1 horn. And, you know, it's -- it's just a -- it's
2 a great interaction.

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

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

14 MS. HUDSON: I think,
15 Commissioners, unless you have any
16 other questions you'd like to ask,
17 what I'd like to do at this time is
18 to see if Neal has any questions of
19 us. Do you --

20 MR. CARL: I'm good.

21 MS. LUDGOOD: I'm good.

22 BY MS. HUDSON:

23 Q Any questions?

1 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 drug out long
11 enough.

12 MS. HUDSON: Yeah. It has. 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

1 great job. We appreciate it. We
2 appreciate all you do for the county.

3 MR. HOWARD: Thank you. My
4 pleasure.

5 MS. HUDSON: We notice. We pay
6 attention.

7 MR. HOWARD: Thank you.

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

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

14 MR. CARL: Thank you.

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

17 MR. HOWARD: Thank you.

18 9:21 a.m.

19 (Recess taken.)

20 - - -

21

22

23

1 9:40 a.m.

2 INTERVIEW OF ROSEMARY SAWYER

3 - - -

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

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

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

9 MS. HUDSON: I'm sorry.

10 THE COURT REPORTER: G-I-n?

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

12 THE COURT REPORTER: Thank you.

13 MS. HUDSON: You're welcome.

14 MR. CARL: I called her Gin, too.

15 MS. HUDSON: Ginn not Gin.

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

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

20 MS. SAWYER: Right.

21 BY MS. HUDSON:

22 Q Well, thank you for joining us today and
23 your interest in this position. What we will do

1 first is to give you an opportunity to introduce
2 yourself and tell us about whatever you want us to
3 know about you, and then we'll start. We'll do a
4 series of questions relating to the position and
5 get your responses. So we'll go ahead and begin.

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

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

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

20 So fast forward to today, for the last
21 five years I've served as the Assistant City
22 Engineer for the City of Mobile in its permitting
23 section, and over engineers, our inspection staff.

1 And a big part of that is co-managing our
2 MS4 program also. And I took over the program in
3 August of 2014. That was a new assignment handed
4 to me. And our -- our program was under a consent
5 decree in 2014. We were lifted from the consent
6 decree in 2016 and we were deemed to have a -- a
7 satisfactory program, which is the best rating you
8 can get from ADEM.

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

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

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

22 Also I've served as flood plane manager.
23 I do a lot of things as the Assistant City

1 Engineer. And I've been with the city for 13
2 years.

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

9 Q Okay. Thank you very much.

10 BY MR. CARL:

11 Q Okay. Rosemary, is that what you go by?

12 A That's right.

13 Q Not Ginn, right?

14 A No. Well, you can call me that.

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

21 A All right.

22 Q -- as informal as that may seem.

23 A Okay.

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

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

11 Q Good. Simple enough.

12 A Okay.

13 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

19 A We make a point -- I mean, we've got --
20 I've got -- I'm thinking of one in particular
21 right now. I'm making sure that they are
22 involved. We have important meetings, important
23 things that are going on in our department with

1 developers, with officials, bringing them in,
2 including them in meetings and also making a point
3 to mentor them and share with them similar
4 situations that have happened in the past; try to
5 work with them, talk to them about why we do
6 things the way that we do.

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

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

22 And that's how I would approach it if I
23 were the county engineer and mentoring employees:

1 Just share my experiences, let them understand my
2 experiences. Even in the consulting world, things
3 that can happen if we aren't doing what we need to
4 do, following our policies, adhering to the design
5 standards and just letting them understand why we
6 do the things that we do.

7 Q Okay. Thank you.

8 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

18 A I'm honest with people. I try to be very
19 personable. And I am, just by my nature, a people
20 person.

21 And I communicate both with e-mail and in
22 person depending on what the issue is. Sometimes
23 it's appropriate to call someone and let them know

1 what's going on. And then depending on the issue,
2 if it's with a developer or perhaps, you know,
3 another department head, let them know via e-mail,
4 follow-up if it's a complex issue, the bullet
5 points that we've -- but typically just try to be
6 very honest and simple, especially on engineering
7 issues. Sometimes things can be really complex.
8 Just try to be as straightforward and break things
9 down as much as I can for people.

10 Q Okay.

11 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

23 Because we have had a lot of changes in

1 the last eight years in our right-of-way
2 department and our permitting section. And, so,
3 I've got experience handling that.

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

9 We were met with resistance. Nick
10 appointed me to take over the city engineering --
11 to take over our right-of-way department. We made
12 staff changes, and there was some resistance. But
13 just explaining to our employees why we needed to
14 make the changes and just being honest with people
15 and just continuing to be on point with our
16 message about why. We were able to provide for
17 better -- better customer service. We were able
18 to have better documents, better standard
19 drawings. We had a better website. We were able
20 to articulate what our designs standards were.
21 And we were more business friendly. And just to
22 be consistent also.
23 Q Okay. Thank you.

1 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

2 Q Okay. If you are some -- as the county
3 engineer, some of your current responsibilities
4 that you're doing at the city now would be
5 transferrable. Some out of your other life, your
6 pre-City of Mobile life would be transferred.

7 Have you given any thought to what you'd
8 have to bring out that you haven't used in a while
9 and what you would do?

10 And then this would be like learning the
11 roles and the context where we have some more
12 vital issues that we are trying to address. So
13 that's what you would be stepping into. So just
14 kind of respond to how you would approach that.

15 A That's a really good question, because
16 you are absolutely right. I am at the City of
17 Mobile, and this is an interview for the county
18 engineer.

19 And in my previous life in consulting, I
20 did do roadway transportation projects. And I'm
21 accustomed to needing to design those on time and
22 in budget. And that's a very important part of
23 what, you know, the Pay-As-You-Go projects are,

1 what your program is. That is the important part
2 of getting your consultant to get those designs in
3 on time and -- and get those contractors also to
4 deliver those within the budget and on time.

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

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

20 I utilized everything I've done the first
21 12 years of my career, knowing that knowledge
22 to -- to apply to the last 13. I've learned flood
23 plane management, 44CFR. And I'm not going to sit

1 here and quote a bunch of boring federal

2 regulations that --

3 BY MR. CARL:

4 Q Thank you.

5 A Yes, I'm sorry. I -- I want you to make

6 it through the rest of the day. The reality is,

7 yes, ma'am, you've got a very valid point. But

8 what I did with my first 12 years was to apply

9 that knowledge to learn a new set of standards.

10 And I've built on that knowledge and I have put a

11 lot of thought into, as county engineer, I am

12 going to learn what the county process is to do

13 things. But the city does have a capital

14 improvement project program. We have got our CIP.

15 We have --

16 BY MS. HUDSON:

17 Q Which was modeled after ours.

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

19 Q I had to throw that in there.

20 A And part of my role doing the

21 right-of-way permitting, I coordinate with

22 contractors to get their -- excuse me -- the

23 utilities to their contractors to get their --

1 their infrastructure out of our way when the
2 resurfacing comes when we get money from the
3 county to do resurfacing or to do projects. So I
4 understand the process.

5 And -- and just one more thing. You
6 mentioned morale and the change in your last
7 question the commissioner mentioned. You know, I
8 was on staff, you know, when Nick Amberger came in
9 as the city engineer. He was very successful in
10 coming in from ALDOT and it was a completely
11 different organization and experience. He's been
12 very successful. And I think I can do the same
13 thing and use my experience to benefit your
14 organization. And I really would hope you
15 consider -- I would like to do that. I hope you
16 consider me to do to that. And I hope I've
17 answered that completely.

18 BY MS. HUDSON:

19 Q Well, Rosemary, you mentioned your
20 familiarity with the county process, especially
21 with Pay-As-You-Go and so forth. But if you're
22 appointed to this position, what kind of things
23 would you hope to accomplish in the first year,

1 whether it's through, you know, the issue of
2 morale or staffing or programing or whatever?
3 What comprehensively would you like to attack or
4 accomplish your first year?

5 A I do not have specific goals. I would
6 want -- I would definitely want to improve morale.
7 I can understand -- if I were fortunate enough to
8 come in, coming in as an outsider, so to speak. I
9 mean, I'm from the city of Mobile. And I think it
10 needs -- this position does need to be somebody
11 with Mobile experience.

12 I would want to get into the position and
13 evaluate everything that's there. But you do have
14 a very good structure in place and a very good
15 staff. But I think a breath of fresh air, so to
16 speak, some new blood, would be a very good thing
17 for the organization.

18 But you do have good people. You have
19 good processes. And the Pay-As-You-Go program is
20 very effective and it's envied across the state.

21 Q So what you're saying is you would look
22 at everything comprehensively and come up with
23 your objectives?

1 A The objectives once I'm in the position.

2 Q Okay.

3 BY MR. CARL:

4 Q What do you think employees are looking
5 for in work, and life, today? And how do you get
6 the best out of those employees?

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

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

21 And just at a basic level, understanding
22 what all your employees do and letting them know
23 how vital that is to the function of the city, of

1 our storm water management program, that's how we
2 approached it. They -- they understood how they
3 fit into the big picture and they were really
4 appreciated.

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

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

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

19 BY MR. CARL:

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

23 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.

1 Q Right.

2 A And, so, I think there was resentment
3 with some of our inspection staff, with some of
4 our engineers. And just calling our inspector in
5 and being -- try to be as positive as possible,
6 but let that employee know that it's not
7 acceptable to be disrespectful to the engineer.
8 And I think it's -- unfortunately it's a common
9 practice in our field. A mentality sometimes with
10 our field staff -- and I'm not saying at the city,
11 but as institutional issues with the field staff,
12 that the engineer -- it's their field versus the
13 engineer, but letting them know that that wasn't
14 acceptable.

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

21 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

22 Q Okay. Thank you.

23 //

1 BY MS. HUDSON:

2 Q Rosemary, how did ensure that your
3 engineers, the people who work and are subordinate
4 to you, actually followthrough, that they're --
5 how do you measure accountability and
6 productivity? Do you have measures in place,
7 performance measures?

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

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

20 BY MR. CARL:

21 Q Can the public view that time frame?

22 A Right now it is not. The only reason
23 they cannot is it's a software --

1 Q Well, can --

2 A -- with the developer. We intend for it

3 to be.

4 Q Presently are you over that department?

5 Does inspection fall under your domain?

6 A For the engineering part, yes. Build

7 Mobile is the one who's doing interface. But the

8 field inspectors are -- and right-of-way

9 permitting is under my purview.

10 BY MS. HUDSON:

11 Q So this electronic program, it measures

12 the productivity. You can identify the

13 individual?

14 A Absolutely.

15 Q And, so, when it's time for the annual

16 review, then that's basically part of what's

17 included is --

18 A Absolutely.

19 Q -- how productive they were in getting

20 reports or permits or whatever out on time?

21 A Absolutely. And, likewise, you can see

22 which of the engineers doing the permit reviews

23 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

1 will have a team-building session and talk about
2 what we need to do to accomplish it. And then we
3 will assign specific responsibilities. And I will
4 let the engineers and technician do -- perform
5 their role in our activities. And then I will
6 follow up. We'll have follow-up meetings and make
7 sure that we're progressing like we're supposed
8 to.

9 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

10 Q Do you manage a budget now?

11 A I manage the budget for the MS4 program.

12 Q Okay. And what is your role in the
13 development, implementation, and administration?
14 I mean, do you sit down and figure out what it is
15 and then watch it?

16 A Yes, I do. I absolutely do. And then
17 also for the permitting section, we've already --
18 I've already provided to the city engineer the
19 additional personnel that we would like to have in
20 our permitting section for the next fiscal year.

21 Q How do you like dealing with budgets or
22 is that something you enjoy or is it something you
23 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 BY MR. HUDSON:

6 Q What partnership or alliances do you
7 believe will be viable to you in achieving your
8 goals in the new role?

9 A A partnership with ALDOT, with other, you
10 know, cities across the county, also to continue
11 with the South Alabama Regional Planning
12 Commission involvement there, just -- just
13 continuing with other engineering organizations,
14 consulting, AGC, road builders, just partnerships
15 within the engineering community.

16 Q Okay.

17 A I'm thinking -- I was about to say my MS4
18 hat, but those days are, you know --

19 Q I just wanted to follow up by asking you:
20 What do you feel has been your biggest challenge
21 in your role so far? What has been your biggest
22 challenge?

23 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.

9 MS. HUDSON: Commissioners,
10 anything else?

11 MR. CARL: You got all mine.

12 BY MS. HUDSON:

13 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

1 new positions that were created that, you know,
2 were merged into one. And, so, that's taken a lot
3 of time. But, at this point, after the interviews
4 I think that the decision, we will be making a
5 decision very soon and it'll be approved in an
6 upcoming meeting.

7 A Okay. Great.

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

10 MS. LUDGOOD: I'm fine.

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

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

21 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

22 10:13 a.m.

23 (Recess taken.)

1 10:44 a.m.

2 INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW BROWN

3 - - -

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

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

17 MS. LUDGOOD: Can you hold that
18 thought?

19 MS. HUDSON: Absolutely.

20 10:44 a.m.

21 (Recess taken.)

22 10:46 a.m.

23 //

1 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

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

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

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

23 When it was time to go to college, they

1 said we're going to choose a college for y'all.
2 You're going to pay your way through and we're
3 going to move there with you. And, so, they chose
4 Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola. When I
5 was 16, we picked up and moved down here.

6 And as a 16-year-old, it was a little bit
7 of an abrupt change, but it's one of the best
8 things that's ever happened to me. We absolutely
9 love it down here on the Gulf Coast.

10 None of us have ever been back to Iowa.
11 Very few of us have ever even gone back and
12 visited Iowa. Everyone comes down here and visits
13 us because of the great resources we have down
14 here on the Gulf Coast.

15 So I went to Pensacola Christian College.
16 I paid my way through college for that. I worked
17 as an engineer with a land planning-type firm, so
18 we did more subdivisions, commercial developments,
19 and things of that nature.

20 But through my semester of college, I
21 said, well, I'm going to sit for the LSAT and, you
22 know, just see what happens. I -- I received a
23 good score on that and received a full-tuition

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

1 in the engineering field.

2 I was recently looking at a -- a manual
3 from the Alabama Department of Transportation that
4 they used to train engineers in 1970. And as I
5 went through that manual, it was amazing how
6 little of what we do as transportation engineers
7 has changed. I mean, there -- there's some
8 outside things that have changed, but the core
9 things we do are almost identical to 50 years ago.

10 But what has changed and what continues
11 to change is all the type of the laws, the rules
12 and the regulations, the environmental
13 requirements that can inundate everything we do in
14 the county engineering field.

15 And county engineers unfortunately are
16 stuck where -- with the technical side of
17 engineering and the subjective interpretation of
18 laws and regulations. And they're required to
19 manage that.

20 And, unfortunately in the public sector,
21 what I've noticed is that because engineers are
22 fearful of the potential liability, there's a
23 horrible tendency to over-design our projects. We

1 say, well, we -- we -- we don't want to risk being
2 wrong on something so we're just going to design
3 our project to comply with every regulation that's
4 ever been passed for the past 100 years. And they
5 drive their project costs. And it -- it -- it
6 frankly takes away what we should be doing as
7 engineers, which is engineering a project,
8 value-engineering a project, engineering up for
9 what the project actually needs.

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

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

22 So as a design engineer, I think my -- my
23 legal background -- I was at the office at 6:40

1 last night working with the county engineer to
2 navigate a situation with a contract. And he
3 turns to me because my legal background on some of
4 those issues.

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

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

20 Another opportunity over the past six
21 months, I've been inundated to the Restore
22 project. And, of course, we have another ten
23 years of Restore money flowing our way.

1 Obviously a good part of that or I think
2 some part of that is going to be spent on
3 infrastructure. And I would assume Mobile County,
4 having the engineer in a position that is very
5 familiar with the process -- I essentially oversaw
6 the process for Baldwin County on the
7 infrastructure side, working with the county
8 engineer. But all of that paperwork that had to
9 be filled out and the coordination with ALDOT for
10 our capacity projects -- and I want to commend
11 you, Commissioner Ludgood, for the very thoughtful
12 representation you gave to Mobile County while
13 serving on that committee. I know all of y'all
14 have served on that committee.

15 And I think also just the process moving
16 forward with those projects, of course, there was
17 a huge milestone passed a couple of weeks ago when
18 the Restore Council passed that. But there's
19 still significant hoops that we have to go through
20 to make sure these projects get off the ground and
21 make sure that there are no hurdles that are
22 encountered, that there's nothing that delays
23 these projects.

1 I know there's a dirt road paving project
2 that was part of that. We have very similar dirt
3 road paving projects that went through a CF
4 process that's going to be very similar to what
5 Restore is going to require for Mobile's dirt road
6 paving projects.

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

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

18 Sometimes I think being an outsider from
19 Baldwin County, I observed that some -- some folks
20 in Baldwin County may turn their nose up a little
21 bit at Mobile County. I can look over here and I
22 see a lot of exciting things happening that I
23 would be honored to be part of and my family would

1 be honored to be part of. So I'll -- I'll -- I
2 guess I'll leave that as that.

3 Q Very good. Thank you. Commissioner
4 Carl?

5 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

20 And they told me as I came in that,
21 listen, you know, there are some issues with this
22 section. They are obviously disenfranchised a
23 little bit. They've had so much management, they

1 feel like they don't have any consistent
2 leadership in terms of no consistent vision in the
3 design section.

4 And, so, that was my first big challenge.
5 And I'm not going to pretend I didn't make any
6 mistakes in those first couple of months. But
7 my -- basically my approach to that was to slowly
8 gain buy-in from those design section members, all
9 of which are older -- were older than me, some of
10 which had more experience in the field than I did,
11 and slowly build a team.

12 And there was kickback initially. I'm
13 not going to pretend that there wasn't. I
14 received great marks from my management on my
15 first annual review. But I erased everything on
16 my annual review and I sent it to the design
17 section members and allowed them to fill it out
18 anonymously, electronically, submit them to
19 someone else in the design section. And they all
20 got put in an envelope so I could read: What do
21 my members think about my performance? And it was
22 scathing. I remember feeling a little bit hurt
23 after those first three months.

1 And, you know, I said, I've got to keep
2 working at this. I've got to keep working at
3 building the -- this buy-in. And, you know,
4 initially some of the changes I had implemented
5 were a little bit too much topped out.

6 So instead, my approach shifted a little
7 bit to say, okay, here's an outline of what I
8 think needs to take place here. You know, we're a
9 little disorganized in maybe this aspect of what
10 we do. And then I brought that into our weekly
11 staff meetings and I said, you know, here's an
12 idea that I have. What do y'all think? And then
13 we, as a team, built out the idea. And
14 essentially it became their idea. And some of
15 those ideas are -- are -- are flying right now in
16 the design section.

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

23 And I can tell you that before I was --

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

8 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

20 And, so, we implemented a new file folder
21 structure. Well, that had impact to people who,
22 they can find their thing in their messy server
23 space, but no one else can.

1 And as soon as we started making those
2 changes, there was incredible kickback. And, so,
3 that's when I dialed it back and said, okay,
4 y'all, you know, how can we do this as a team?
5 What are y'all's recommendations? And that --
6 that's the biggest example.

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

12 Q Okay.

13 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

1 to bear the burden and it's my job to pass on the
2 praise.

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

16 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

21 A Sure. And I'm sorry, I forgot to mention
22 this: We do annual reviews at the county. And
23 certainly I work hard to give feedback whenever

1 there's a challenge throughout the entire year.
2 But I'm often teased by -- by management because I
3 give the longest and most detailed annual
4 evaluations of anybody in the highway department,
5 maybe anybody in the county, because I -- I
6 believe feedback is crucial.

7 You can't expect someone to grow, you
8 can't expect someone to develop unless you give
9 them honest feedback. You can't just give
10 everybody five stars and say great job, great job,
11 great job because they're never going to grow in
12 their position. And I give very detailed
13 feedback. Sometimes the print in the PDF have to
14 be shrunk down really low because I feed it all.

15 But it always starts with the positive
16 things. Here are the things you're doing a great
17 job. And then there are always a couple of things
18 that they can do better on. There's always things
19 I think I can -- I can do better on. And I always
20 communicate that to them. I say, listen, I have
21 areas to improve on and you have some areas to
22 improve on. And here's what those are.

23 And, then, I set usually two or three

1 goals for them for the coming year that we'll then
2 review at the end of that year.

3 MS. HUDSON: Go ahead.

4 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

17 A Sure. That's a great question. And I
18 grew up as a pastor's kid and found myself in just
19 a huge variety of diverse circumstances really
20 throughout my entire life, whether it was
21 participating as a kid with my dad in ministry,
22 you know, knocking on doors for VBS and -- and
23 things of that nature.

1 I have been involved in some different
2 board positions that involved very diverse groups
3 of people on that where I've had great
4 relationships with people from all backgrounds.

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

15 Q Thank you.

16 BY MR. CARL:

17 Q And you spent some time in India?

18 A That's right. My third year in law
19 school, it turned out they had an exchange program
20 with India and students from there had always come
21 over, but we had never sent nor had ever wanted to
22 go the opposite direction. They didn't have
23 electricity or had electricity but no heating and

1 cooling in their dorms. You had to hand wash your
2 clothes or send them out to have someone else wash
3 them. And I thought: Why would I miss this
4 opportunity on the last semester of law school to
5 do this exchange program?

6 And it was one of the most impactful
7 experiences of my entire life. I wouldn't -- I
8 wouldn't change it for anything. I stumbled
9 across a little church over there that was a lot
10 like my dad's church over here. And just -- it
11 was just so neat to engulf myself in that culture
12 over there for three months.

13 MS. HUDSON: A man who likes
14 challenges.

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

18 BY MS. HUDSON:

19 Q Should you be appointed to this position,
20 Matthew -- and I don't know how much you know
21 about the Mobile County engineering department and
22 the public works relationship and kind of how it
23 fits into the theme of the whole county

1 commission. But what can you bring to this
2 position? The first year, what would you want to
3 accomplish or try to accomplish your first year on
4 the job?

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

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

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

21 So I think the first three months would
22 be learning, making sure I'm getting to know the
23 staff really well and gain their trust.

1 The second three months, we should be in
2 budget season at that time. And, so, I would be
3 getting feedback from y'all as commissioners. And
4 then I'd also give you some of my ideas based on
5 what I had observed those first three months, and
6 maybe recommending some small changes at that
7 time.

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

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

22 For instance, a -- a resurfacing project
23 is a great example. We look at what are the

1 safety impacts that are taking place on this road?
2 Have there been -- in the past five years, have
3 there been any off-the-road accidents? And if
4 there hasn't, then we need to say, okay, let's not
5 fix something that's not broken.

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

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

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

22 And you may have guardrail on a project,
23 which is expensive. Guardrails cost a lot of

1 money. And that guardrail may have been in place
2 for 20 years and never been hit. There's no
3 reason to replace that guardrail in that
4 situation.

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

12 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

17 A Sure. Absolutely. We -- we resurface
18 about 40 to 60 miles of road every year in Baldwin
19 County. We divide those up into groups. And we
20 used to have a situation where the budget would
21 get passed, we would start the design phase, and
22 it would result in all of our projects, 60 miles
23 of roads, getting all bunched up in the spring,

1 which means you have less competition from the
2 contractors which drives the prices and it just
3 creates a problem for our CE&I guys as well. So
4 we started --

5 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

6 Q For your what?

7 A I'm sorry. Our construction, engineering
8 and inspection --

9 Q Okay.

10 A -- to -- to schedule all of that in --

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

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

15 MS. LUDGOOD: It's okay.

16 MS. HUDSON: It's good.

17 A The -- so what I said is: I said, okay,
18 let's identify the pocket. Let's create a group
19 that we know the commission is very comfortable
20 with. And let's start the design of that group
21 early so that way on October 1st we're in position
22 to -- to move forward with that project as quickly
23 as possible. And that meant cutting out

1 unnecessary steps. It meant being very upfront,
2 communicating with the commission on what our
3 plans were, what we were shooting for. And they
4 wanted that, too. They want our projects to be
5 spread out through the year. It just helps
6 everything flow so much better.

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

14 BY MS. HUDSON:

15 Q All right. Interesting. Okay, all
16 right.

17 MS. HUDSON: Commissioner Carl?

18 BY MR. CARL:

19 Q We run into that problem over here.
20 Everything seems to -- especially for the school
21 project, it always falls within the time that
22 schools are in session. And it has to do with
23 organization of the contractors, and it gets a

1 little hairy sometimes. It's hard to pave the
2 entrance into a school when moms are trying to get
3 in and pick up and drop off.

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

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

16 And this is that change comes. You bring
17 the team together. You say this change is going
18 to happen. We're going to make this change
19 happen. And instead of the focus of being, oh,
20 here's the drudgery of this change, they're --
21 people are micromanaging what we do and, you know,
22 there's all these things that come up. You then
23 change the focus to, hey, here's a challenge.

1 Here's an opportunity for us to take on this new
2 challenge and do an excellent job executing it for
3 the people that we serve.

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

11 Q Good. Thank you.

12 MS. HUDSON: Making change fun.

13 MR. BROWN: That's right.

14 MS. HUDSON: Okay. Commissioner
15 Ludgood?

16 MS. LUDGOOD: Okay. Let's see.

17 He's answered so much.

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

20 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

21 Q Are there any specific strategies that
22 you could point out that you've used to build
23 morale? I know you talked about making sure you

1 have meaningful evaluations where people know what
2 their expectations are. And I like that word:
3 Pass the praise. I'm going to use that. I'll
4 give you credit for it when I use it. But I like
5 that. Can you think of any other strategies that
6 you use to try to build morale?

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

20 I don't want them to ever think that I
21 expect y'all to be in here today but I'm going to
22 just go in here, whatever, and have this meeting
23 for me. And then they're all up wondering, hey,

1 so is -- you know, is he at a meeting or has he
2 just forgot to set his alarm last night? And I've
3 seen that in management.

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

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

22 And then I think a final thing is, you
23 know, this is part of the millennialist atmosphere

1 that we live in today. But I think 100 years ago,
2 people were intent to get a paycheck to support
3 their families. You know, we had to work in coal
4 mines and did incredibly hard work day in and --
5 and day out.

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

16 And I'll just mention one other thing
17 with this: This is also where it's important to
18 make sure you don't have -- you're not
19 overstaffed. And I -- I don't know anything about
20 the current situation in Mobile County or anything
21 like that. But if -- if -- and this is a little
22 bit counterintuitive. Momentum is crucial to
23 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 MS. HUDSON: Yeah, you are.

15 MS. LUDGOOD: Yeah.

16 MR. CARL: You know, and I always
17 compare it to one's body, the later
18 you can run it, the stronger it is.
19 And business is that way, too.
20 Government is not. But the later you
21 can run it, just like a lawnmower, I
22 mean, the later that gas is compared
23 to oil ratio, the faster and smoother

1 it will run. And there is that
2 breaking point where it's -- but in
3 government we have a tendency of
4 overstaffing. It's because we think
5 hire more and we'll fix the problem.
6 And reality a lot of times is just
7 restructure and management. I'm
8 sorry. I got off track here. But I
9 like that.

10 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

11 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

16 A Sure.

17 Q And how do you monitor that?

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

20 A Okay. I owe much of this to my previous
21 boss, the county engineer for Baldwin County. And
22 he is now the county engineer for Jefferson
23 County.

1 Early on in my appointment with Baldwin
2 County, he made us all read a book called
3 "Branding For The Private Sector" -- or "For the
4 Public Sector". And he had a huge focus on
5 eliminating waste, and that you can't improve what
6 you don't track.

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

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

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

22 And that consultant has to verify that
23 they're on schedule or let us know if there's

1 anything that they're aware of that could possibly
2 set that projects off schedule. Then they --
3 there is something, they have to work with our
4 project manager -- and then I'm CC'd on all of
5 these communications as well -- to revise the
6 schedule, explain why the schedule is being
7 revised. So that way, we're tracking, okay,
8 what -- what caused this schedule to be revised?

9 And, so, that's a way for me to keep
10 track of the individual projects and each project
11 manager within my section to see: Are their
12 projects staying on schedule; when they're getting
13 bumped off schedule; what's causing those; and
14 then is there a way for us to correct this in the
15 future.

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

19 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

21 MR. CARL: To track --

22 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

23 Q 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, I -- 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 likes
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 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.

1 Q So he designed it. He designed OPPM?

2 A I don't think he -- I think someone
3 else -- I think he got it from one of these
4 books --

5 Q Okay.

6 A -- that he was reading.

7 Q I like it. I want to go find it. That's
8 why I was asking.

9 MR. CARL: We had a shot at hiring
10 him. You know that.

11 MR. BROWN: Oh.

12 MR. CARL: First wave.

13 MR. BROWN: He's a -- he's a great
14 individual.

15 MR. CARL: Yeah.

16 MR. BROWN: He's been a great
17 mentor.

18 MR. CARL: I had a chance to talk
19 to him one on one and get to know him
20 a little bit.

21 BY MR. CARL:

22 Q I'm going to get off script here a little
23 bit. I'm looking at your personal references here

1 and I see some pretty strong people that we all
2 obviously respect: Raul Richardson, Barry Booth,
3 Rusty Glover. Those are three that just stand
4 out.

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

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

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

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

20 Raul. I worked with him briefly on a
21 board and have just -- he always sends me a Happy
22 New Years greeting and we correspond back and
23 forth. He's a very nice individual. And, so,

1 he's going to speak to -- just to basically my
2 ability to get along and work with people and
3 communicate with people.

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

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

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

21 Q Yeah.

22 A And to -- so that way I keep interacting
23 with South Alabama Lawyers Association, lawyers

1 associations here in Mobile. Whenever they reach
2 out and say, hey, we need an attorney to help out
3 with this, that's something that I have my name in
4 the hat. I've done some wills for veterans and
5 the underserved in Summerdale, like the Habitat
6 For Humanity down there. It's not something I do
7 as much of, but when the opportunity arises I jump
8 in to stay a little active on the legal side.

9 Q Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. HUDSON: Okay. Anything else?

11 MS. LUDGOOD: No.

12 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

21 Now, I don't know if some of that work
22 gets shifted other directions in Mobile County.
23 But the project that we were dealing with last

1 night, the contract -- and I don't want to say too
2 much about it since there's -- obviously all of
3 this is on the record.

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

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

14 And in coming into the office every day,
15 you have Restore funding, you know, suddenly and
16 all of the nuances associated with that. There's
17 always a new challenge. And that means you
18 cannot -- you cannot get into the role of, hey,
19 I'm going to go in and I have this checklist that
20 I do every day and then I go home. Because you
21 can't do the checklist on -- on the challenges and
22 the different circumstances that you're confronted
23 with every day.

1 So it's very challenging. It requires a
2 lot of commitment. But at the same time, I
3 wouldn't be able to handle a job where there was
4 just a checklist that I had to check off every day
5 and then go home. It's what makes the job a lot
6 of fun and worth doing.

7 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

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

10 MS. HUDSON: Yes.

11 BY MR. CARL:

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

20 MS. LUDGOOD: Four. They have
21 four.

22 BY MR. CARL:

23 Q Four?

1 A There -- there certainly is some of that
2 and some -- some -- I've talked to people and some
3 people say they think it's worse in Baldwin
4 County. Some people say they think it's worse in
5 Mobile County.

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

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

17 Q Thank you.

18 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

21 A One question that I always have and this
22 is an important thing to me: I don't mind if
23 someone has a -- has a critical viewpoint of

1 something that I've done or a critical position as
2 long as I know where they stand so that way I can
3 try to adjust and make changes. So I -- I -- I
4 think y'all have an annual evaluation system here
5 in Mobile County. But my question would be:
6 Between those annual evaluations, if I were
7 selected for this position, how can I expect to
8 receive feedback from y'all as commissioners in
9 terms what you think I am doing right, what you
10 think I could be doing better, or what I'm doing
11 completely wrong? How -- how will you expect to
12 give me that type of feedback? And, you know,
13 know what I would expect in that area?

14 Q I think that's where communication comes
15 in and is so important, and really establishing
16 rapport, a one-on-one relationship with each
17 commissioner. Because, as Commissioner Carl
18 mentioned, you know, our districts are different
19 and, you know, our priorities can be different.
20 But we feel we need a lot of feedback; we need
21 communication. And we need our engineer to help
22 us understand, you know, because our team members
23 that are out there working in the field, they are

1 the eyes and ears. And they get a lot of
2 important feedback that needs to come to us. And,
3 so, I think establishing that communication
4 network with the commissioners would be vitally
5 important for whoever is selected for this
6 position.

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

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

20 Because what I found was at the
21 end when it came time to do the
22 evaluation -- because at that time we
23 only evaluated two positions, and

1 that was the county engineer and the
2 county administrator. And everything
3 else was done kind of downstream from
4 us.

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

18 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

19 MR. CARL: I'm pretty easy to deal
20 with. Whatever is on my mind usually
21 comes out of my mouth. And I like to
22 deal with people that way. You know,
23 if you think I'm wrong, I'm wrong.

1 If I'm right, I'm right. We just
2 move on. We can either fix it or
3 come to a certain type of agreement
4 that -- I'm more of a hands-on type
5 of management style. So --

6 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

13 I'll explain the way it started.
14 Commissioner invited me to a political meeting.
15 I -- I did. I thought it was pretty neat. It was
16 fun meeting new people. I started going to more.
17 Pretty soon they were asking me to take a
18 leadership position. I made the mistake of
19 getting involved in a countywide referendum
20 regarding the school tax and unfortunately made
21 some enemies in -- in that process.

22 Thankfully over the time -- now, that was
23 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

1 learned from that mistake and I'll move on.

2 Q Okay.

3 MS. HUDSON: Okay. Anything else?

4 (No response.)

5 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

6 MR. BROWN: Thank you-all.

7 MS. HUDSON: Thank you very much.

8 We appreciate your time and your

9 interest. And we would like to wish

10 you the very best. And we've been

11 asked by others, you know, how soon

12 this process will take place. All of

13 the interviews are this week. And we

14 don't have any exact date to make a

15 decision, but we anticipate that it

16 will be very soon.

17 MR. BROWN: Thank y'all so much.

18 I appreciate it.

19 MS. LUDGOOD: Okay. Thank you.

20 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

21 MR. CARL: Thank you, Matthew.

22 11:31 a.m.

23 (Lunch recess taken.)

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

1 want us to know.

2 And then we're going to go
3 through and do a series of questions
4 that we basically posed to the other
5 candidates as well. We veer off
6 sometimes, as the commissioner will
7 mention, about, you know, if it's
8 something that we want to ask a
9 little more in depth. But, anyway,
10 that's how we've been handling it.

11 And then we give you an end chance to
12 ask us if you have any questions for
13 us. So --

14 MR. BARCLIFT: That sounds good.

15 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

18 A Well, you know my name is Matthew
19 Barclift. You may not know it now, I grew up in a
20 small town, came down to south Alabama to study
21 engineering. I graduated from South Alabama in
22 2003 into a very bad economy.

23 The first job I was able to get -- I

1 graduated in May, did not get to start until
2 August or September -- was with Alabama DOT. And
3 it was in Grove Hill, Alabama. And, so, for the
4 first two years I drove 87 miles one way. So
5 it -- it was 6:00 in the morning until 6:30 in the
6 night. It was -- it was a long -- a long trip.
7 But I was grateful for the employment.

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

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

19 Shortly after that, y'all -- you may
20 know, I had a significant heart condition that I
21 had a major surgery for. It was only God's
22 providence -- I had three intraoperative strokes.
23 And it is only God's providence that I am sitting

1 in front of you today whole and healthy. But it
2 gives you a -- a different perspective on how you
3 approach things in life.

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

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

18 Q Well said. Thank you.

19 BY MR. CARL:

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

23 A Yes, sir.

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

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

10 MS. HUDSON: We are.

11 BY MR. CARL:

12 Q Do you understand that?

13 A Yes, sir.

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

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

19 A My leadership style. I try to be a
20 lead-by-example. But also try to be an empathetic
21 leader. I -- I want people to -- I want people to
22 want to do a good job, to -- I want that to be --
23 I want there to be an intrinsic motivation.

1 When -- when people have -- for example,
2 the people -- some of the people who work for me
3 in the file room have had some medical issues and
4 they -- they need some flexibility in their
5 schedule. And I always try to work with them and
6 make sure they understand that they can -- if
7 they're getting the job done, that we can work
8 with the flexibility in that.

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

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

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

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

22 A Please don't do away with Tom Waters.

23 //

1 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

2 Q Okay. So when you identify a real
3 up-and-comer in your division who may be, you
4 know, a new employee, a younger employee, but a
5 person who, just based on your observation, is
6 like somebody we want to keep, somebody that we
7 really want to grow and grow in our organization,
8 what do you do to try to develop those employees?
9 And conversely, the ones who are struggling, how
10 do you work with them?

11 A With the -- we'll start with the first
12 part. When I see somebody that's really up and
13 coming, I want to make sure that they -- that they
14 understand that I'm looking at them to say that I
15 recognize their talent and I recognize their
16 ability. It's very important from the leadership
17 perspective to let them know that you see a talent
18 there.

19 We had a young lady that we hired out of
20 inspection services and she's very talented and
21 she -- she really took to the technology side of
22 it. So when I was speaking with her, I -- I asked
23 her -- I talked to her about where she wanted

1 to -- where she wanted to go and where she wanted
2 to be. And then we tried -- I tried to start
3 finding ways to move her in that direction.

4 We ordered some -- we -- we try to set a
5 path. If you can give somebody a clear path to
6 get from A to B, it makes it a lot easier for them
7 to get there. And, so, I said if we can -- if we
8 can -- I bought some -- we bought some books. And
9 I said whenever things get slow here, I said,
10 you're trying to advance your knowledge. Here.
11 We've provided these resources for you to be able
12 to increase what you're doing. And in increasing
13 that, you're gaining skills. You're gaining
14 abilities. And those abilities will transfer --
15 will eventually translate you to certification and
16 things that we can -- we can check boxes on, which
17 allows them to have a clearer path of progression.

18 It's much more difficult in my mind
19 sometimes to -- to deal with -- with people who
20 are underperforming. Because they talk about the
21 carrot and the stick. And you can't stick
22 somebody into a good work ethic. And you can't
23 stick somebody into a better performance.

1 And, so, you've really got to find what
2 makes them tick. You've got to help -- they need
3 to be invested in it. And, so, you have to find a
4 way with people who are struggling to be able to
5 get them invested in the right ways.

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

15 Q Okay. Thank you.

16 A You're welcome.

17 BY MS. HUDSON:

18 Q Matthew, should you receive the
19 appointment for either of these positions -- and
20 you can answer them separate if you want to --

21 A Yes, ma'am.

22 Q -- because they're different jobs. But
23 what would you intend to do and accomplish in your

1 first year? Any changes? Any -- you know, you've
2 been around long enough. You've had an
3 opportunity to observe and to see, you know, how
4 things operate. So tell us what you would do, if
5 anything, to change the way it's currently
6 operated in either department.

7 A Yes, ma'am. Let's start with the county
8 engineer side. The statutory -- a lot of those
9 statutory responsibilities falls to the county
10 engineer whether that be signing the subdivision
11 plats or whether that be making determinations in
12 the dirt road program.

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

20 We're finding with the Pay-As-You-Go
21 program that the traditional way of doing things,
22 the design-bid-build is becoming very burdensome,
23 cumbersome. The process is being extended

1 greatly.

2 And I will give you an example. On the
3 agenda for your consideration on Monday will be
4 authorizing to advertise and receiving bids for
5 MCR 2012-307, which is Half Mile Road. That's a
6 2012 project. So it was approved in 2012. So
7 we've been working on it 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016,
8 2017. That's five years.

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

19 Too often the engineers are at odds with
20 the consultants who are at odds with the
21 contractor. We have a budget we're trying to keep
22 them under. But the engineer gets paid more if
23 the -- if the price is overrun. And the

1 contractor is the insurance sometimes into what
2 the consulting engineer has designed on the basis
3 of a budget that they're having to stick to.

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

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

17 I think it could also help our budget.
18 At that point the contractor -- he handles
19 qualified QBS, qualify qualification-based
20 selections. And, so, instead of the consultants
21 having to say, well, I've got to do this for
22 so-and-so to get this project assigned to me, they
23 present us a list of qualifications and we make a

1 decision or you make a decision based on their
2 qualifications.

3 And then there should be a bidding
4 process on the back side of that where they
5 present to us what the cost is. I think you can
6 see a significant cost reduction. And then the
7 engineer, it will -- if not -- you know, if not,
8 the county will only pay me this. The engineer
9 will be determining the pay schedule in the sense
10 -- by -- with the contractor by setting those
11 project costs. We could -- we -- I think we could
12 deliver quicker projects on lower budgets if we
13 move into a direction like that.

14 Q When you say quicker, how much? Are you
15 talking half the time?

16 A You know, I -- I point to the bridge.
17 And ALDOT is working towards this design-build --
18 design-build. They are talking about, you know,
19 whereas five or six years ago somebody told me
20 I -- we would be lucky if we saw it my lifetime.
21 Here we're talking about they want to have
22 somebody selected by the end of the year, designed
23 within a year, and constructed within five or six

1 after that. And when you're talking about a -- a
2 billion dollar bridge project versus the 1.25
3 million dollar Half Mile Road project, I've got to
4 think that there are some ways to find some
5 improvement in that. And, again, I -- that is not
6 a slight against our staff. Our staff are doing
7 the best they can in the process.

8 Q But it's a process.

9 A It's a process.

10 Q And that would have to be changed
11 legislatively?

12 A It may have to be changed legislatively.

13 I -- we would need to consult with legal staff.

14 I -- I believe we did the roof in kind of a -- a
15 design-build.

16 Q We did. We did.

17 A I mean, if -- if we can extend that to

18 this, it would be a -- a tremendous -- a -- a

19 tremendous boom to the county. It seems like

20 we've had -- not everybody was real popular --

21 real happy with the roof. But, as I see it, we

22 had two or three projects where we tried to fix

23 it. And it wasn't until we went with this

1 design-build that we got a solution that works.

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

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

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

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

23 Q Interesting. Okay.

1 A They're -- the dirt road -- excuse me.
2 I'm a -- I'm longwinded. When I -- when I used to
3 mentor college students, I always told them that
4 they could have change incrementally, internally,
5 or they could have external forces that would
6 force the change upon them.

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

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

1 struggle.

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

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

16 A It's -- it's always -- it's always the
17 problem.

18 Q Probably the \$64,000,000 question.

19 A And -- and -- and more taxes is the
20 easiest answer. I don't have a good answer beyond
21 that right now. But that would be something that
22 I would look at and say, well, how can we fund?
23 How can we find money to do that? If we -- you

1 know, if we're able to take money -- if we're able
2 to save money in other ways through the
3 Pay-As-You-Go and other areas, we may find sources
4 that we didn't know about before or get -- a
5 repurposed source. But I think it's important
6 because they are citizens, too. And -- and a lot
7 of them didn't ask to be put in that situation.

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

11 Public works director: We have, I think,
12 an impending crisis coming. It comes --

13 Q A what?

14 A An impending crisis coming. And it comes
15 on the heels of what we look at as a great boom to
16 the area, that is this economic boom we're
17 experiencing. Our Equipment Operator I starts out
18 at \$13.13 an hour according to the pay scale from
19 the personnel board. When this new Wal-Mart
20 Distribution Center -- if I'm reading the news
21 reports correctly, they're going to start people
22 at \$15.50 an hour. I think that we could have a
23 serious workforce crisis in the next four to five

1 years if we don't.

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

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

20 But we may need to consider outside
21 sources for some of our maintenance needs because
22 we just don't -- we've lost over the last four or
23 five years 40 to 50 easily of our workers out

1 there who found other employment because people
2 are in demand for the construction right now.
3 They -- they find jobs elsewhere.

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

11 But to get to the -- we may have to look
12 at operation and maintenance contracts. We may
13 have to look at setting aside a portion of our
14 maintenance budget and saying -- and looking five
15 to ten years and saying, okay, we have this
16 segment of dirt roads in this area of the county.
17 You know, Contractor A, you know, here is our
18 schedule. You need to be -- you need to inspect
19 this road, you know, once every two weeks. It
20 needs to be graded at least every so often. You
21 know, you need to document the cases. And, if so,
22 we will pay you X number dollars for the operation
23 and maintenance of this road.

1 Under that kind of thing, it will
2 probably be more expensive than what our current
3 people or our operators are paid. Because I -- I
4 think we're underpaying our operators right now.

5 But it's also going to take some
6 liability off the county and let us share that
7 some with the contractors out there.

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

17 But I -- there isn't a perfect system.
18 But I think we'd have to look at other
19 alternatives. Because I think what we are doing
20 now is not sustainable. It's -- it's worked for a
21 few years. And when the gas tax went up in '92,
22 you know, it allowed us to do a lot of things that
23 we had not done before. But it's not gone up

1 since then. And we are -- we are, generally
2 speaking, maintaining roads in 2018 with 1992
3 dollars.

4 MS. HUDSON: Commissioners?

5 MR. CARL: That's it? Okay.

6 MR. BARCLIFT: You can do the
7 math.

8 BY MR. CARL:

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

12 A The biggest changes in work situations.

13 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

16 A Just change in general. And -- and there
17 has been -- part of the biggest change in -- in
18 working with the inspections department was
19 spending a lot of time. I wanted to spend a lot
20 of time out there. It's hard to manage people, I
21 think, without getting to know them on some level.

22 And, so, one of the biggest changes in
23 taking over inspections was getting out there and

1 getting to know them. And you need to be able to
2 respond to their concerns in a way that makes them
3 feel like you understand what they're dealing with
4 and what they're going through. And it was -- it
5 was drinking out of a firehose.

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

21 BY MR. CARL:

22 Q Thank you.

23 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

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

21 I feel like being flexible with them when
22 we talk about people needing -- you know, they
23 need to work through their lunch because they need

1 to go early to see their son or daughter's event,
2 whether it's a softball game or a play or
3 something. If you work with them doing some
4 flexibility on that. If they see the people
5 working hard getting rewarded and they see it
6 being recognized, that helps. Those are the
7 things that help build the morale of the
8 departments.

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

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

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

18 Q Okay.

19 A And, so, we'll -- a lot of times they'll
20 be separated by, so that can get their areas.
21 There is still communication between the two.
22 It's oftentimes that the inspectors say, hey, we
23 need this from the people up front. And I can --

1 I can talk to the people up front and say: Hey,
2 this is what we've got to do.

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

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

12 A Some more than others. Some more than
13 others. I encourage an open-door policy. You
14 know, I tell people, I say: Listen. I said: If
15 you need to come vent on me to me, I said, come
16 and do it. I said: We'll -- we'll get in the --
17 we'll get in the office. We'll close the door.

18 I -- I was down there yesterday and
19 somebody said: I need to talk to you. And we
20 went into Tom's office. And I said: We're going
21 to close the door. I said: Tell me what you need
22 to tell me.

23 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

1 capabilities? What do you do?

2 A So in our -- in our file room side,
3 OnBase has a tool that will allow us to see how
4 many files have been indexed by any -- or pages
5 have been indexed by any given person.

6 And, so, in my performance evaluation of
7 the employee there, I normally -- we will look at
8 what they've done the previous year and any other
9 previous year, which will break it down. And we
10 set goals for them to achieve. So, you know, if
11 you achieve this, you're doing -- you're -- you
12 know, by standard level of work, if you can get
13 here, I feel like you're really exceeding your
14 expectations.

15 Inspections is very similar. When the --
16 they do their inspections on the tablets or the
17 people up front write the permits and it's tagged
18 with their name. And, so, I can go -- we can go
19 back and readily identify through the software
20 what they're doing. Whether what means they're --
21 if they've messed something up, that means we can
22 identify that, too. And we've had counseling
23 sessions on that before where you need to be a

1 little more careful.

2 We had a meeting with the OnBase
3 representative last week. And she was talking
4 about a -- another piece of their software that
5 will allow us to integrate our public works
6 into -- I -- I think we've only begun to scratch
7 the surface of what public works can do for us in
8 terms of reporting. I think it has all the
9 abilities to measure the metrics that we need to.

10 Where we need to go now is with
11 implementation. We need to make sure that we are
12 using the tools to their greatest effectiveness.
13 And, frankly, we need to train our guys that are
14 boots on the ground. If they understand how the
15 software is being used to measure their
16 performance, whether that means they should check
17 a box, they should make sure that the field is --
18 is filled out, you know, better. If they know
19 that that's being measured and they know that that
20 will help document what they're doing, I think
21 that we tie incentives to them achieving more and
22 doing more as documented through the software. We
23 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

1 the mornings, I would set my phone on the side of
2 the desk and I wouldn't touch it until I had
3 worked on the computer, until I had finished some
4 things. I tried to change the way people saw what
5 I was doing. I -- I wasn't -- I don't think I was
6 doing a bad job before.

7 We have this little saying out in
8 inspections, that perception is reality. Because
9 if people don't understand what's going on, it's
10 only what they've perceived that is their reality.
11 If they see me drive my county vehicle home at
12 7:30 at night and stop at the grocery store and
13 they see my blue tag at the grocery store, they
14 go, hey, he's using a county vehicle for personal
15 purposes. They may report me; they may not.

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

22 But that's we -- perception is reality.
23 We have to be mindful at all times that -- of the

1 way people are -- are perceiving what we're doing.
2 We have to put our best foot forward. And when
3 people have -- we want people to understand we are
4 doing the best we can.

5 Sometimes that's being aware of how it
6 appears that you're doing something. And
7 sometimes that means stepping out and doing things
8 in a way that people can see them.

9 With the flood maps, we could have -- we
10 could have sat back and allowed that FEMA meeting
11 to be all. That was all we were mandated to do.
12 We could have allowed it to be all we did. And
13 people would have said, man, the county didn't do
14 anything.

15 But we stepped out and did something
16 different. And I reached out to the community and
17 made an effort to do that. And, so, that's --
18 that's what I have learned, is sometimes you've
19 got to step out more than you realize. Doing --
20 just doing your job and doing it well isn't
21 enough. You've got to step out with it.

22 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

23 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

1 Q Oh, yeah. Do you manage a budget right
2 now?

3 A Yes, ma'am.

4 Q Could you tell us a little bit about how
5 you ensure that costs are controlled?

6 A So we get a monthly report and -- and
7 more recently have been given access to
8 ONESolution.

9 Q What's ONESolution?

10 A ONESolution is our budget
11 software that --

12 Q Okay.

13 A -- the finance department uses.

14 Q Okay.

15 A I think the controlling of the budget
16 really has to start at the beginning of the
17 budgeting process. One of the -- I -- I asked --
18 when I started in inspections, I asked them what
19 they didn't like about what had happened there
20 previously, about the leadership previously. And
21 one of the things they said was we weren't
22 involved in any of the budgeting and finance
23 process.

1 So we started at the -- at the beginning
2 of the budgeting process. And I said: Hey, guys,
3 tell me what you want to accomplish in the next
4 budget year. And, so, each of them looked at some
5 training they wanted to do. They might look at
6 equipment that would make our jobs more efficient.

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

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

20 For example, the last two years there was
21 an encumbrance of a hundred and something thousand
22 dollars from the Kronos software that was in the
23 inspections department's budget. And I received

1 assurances from the -- from the finance department
2 that there was some -- something going on behind
3 the scenes that I wasn't aware of. But it jumped
4 off the page when I saw that large encumbrance.

5 But I go back up through the line items.
6 I know which ones -- I know which ones should be
7 about right on. I know how this one should be
8 about right on. Our bill is \$1,000 at the
9 inspection's office every month. And, so, I'm
10 able to quickly look through those numbers and go:
11 That's about right. That's about right.

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

17 And -- and usually I'll finish by looking
18 at the bottom line and going: Okay. We are
19 halfway through the year, we are less than halfway
20 through the budget. Things are more or less on
21 schedule. Or I will look at it and go: Okay. We
22 need to go back and figure out what's going on
23 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
3 out about a person when you're sitting -- when
4 they're able to relax a little bit to sit down
5 to -- to eat, fellowship, and -- and to just -- to
6 get to know them. Because it's important to know
7 them as a person to be able to understand how they
8 think and how they operate. And, so -- so a
9 one-prong approach would be to try to -- let's get
10 some people together in a social setting. Because
11 it won't -- it -- it won't be just -- just me.
12 I'll be me and person A and person B. But person
13 A and B will probably need to get along too and
14 need to interact.

15 The second -- the second approach will be
16 to identify the key stakeholders, the ones that
17 are very important, and sit down and have some
18 goal meetings. What do they want to accomplish in
19 their department? How can I help them accomplish
20 their goals in that department? How can I help
21 them operate more efficiently? What are we not
22 doing now that's hindering their functions and
23 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:

1 Q You talked about some of them when you
2 talked about the first year. Is there anything
3 that you'd --

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

7 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

22 I think that we could put some of those
23 professional services contracts into place so that

1 if we -- you know, if personnel leaves suddenly,
2 that we don't -- that we not be put in a lurch by
3 people with expertise not being there; but, two,
4 that we've got a chance to look and see and to
5 draw on outside -- outside perspective on how
6 we're doing things.

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

16 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

17 Q As kind of a backstop.

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

20 MS. HUDSON: Any written up
21 questions?

22 MS. LUDGOOD: Huh-uh.

23 BY MS. HUDSON:

1 Q Well, we'll turn it around to you. Do
2 you have any questions of us?

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

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

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

14 BY MR. CARL:

15 Q I'd like to see somebody that's excited
16 and motivated about the opportunity and the
17 chance. And I would like to see somebody that can
18 pull all of the departments together and function
19 as one, whether it be road and bridge, whether it
20 be engineering, whether it be accounting.

21 Everyone has always looked towards road and bridge
22 because of Mr. Ruffer, you know, just like -- or
23 engineering because of Mr. Ruffer. And he's been,

1 you know, a strong leadership role there. We need
2 somebody that is capable, I feel like, are wanting
3 to do that. I mean, the people have got to work
4 with you. So --

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

11 Q Y'all become a team --

12 A Yes, sir.

13 Q -- instead of everyone having their own
14 little sections?

15 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

21 And I think the morale issues is
22 important to me, that in working with our staff
23 members as well as commissioners and department

1 heads, just to work as a cohesive member of our
2 county team. I think that's just vitally
3 important.

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

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

11 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

1 something --

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

4 MS. LUDGOOD: Right.

5 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

17 A I'm sorry to hear that.

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

23 BY MS. HUDSON:

1 Q We want somebody, in a nutshell, that
2 embraces the challenge --

3 A Yes, ma'am.

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

6 A Absolutely.

7 MS. HUDSON: Anything else?

8 MR. BARCLIFT: I just want to take
9 the opportunity to say: Thank you,
10 guys. There are good changes going
11 on with the staff in the county. I
12 think there is a general uplift, a
13 positivity. And I think a lot of
14 that comes from you guys. And I
15 appreciate the efforts that you're
16 making to -- to reach out and to keep
17 everybody involved and -- and to be
18 down among with us, too. And I thank
19 you for this opportunity. And I'm
20 looking forward to the change,
21 whether I'm in either of these two
22 positions. I've got some things that
23 I'm -- I'm not done with the changes

1 in my little realm right now. So
2 there are more things coming and I am
3 excited about it, whether it's in
4 this position or the one where I am
5 now.

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

8 MS. LUDGOOD: Yeah.

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

11 MR. BARCLIFT: Thank you.

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

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

17 MS. HUDSON: Thank you, Matthew.

18 2:32 p.m.

19 (Brief recess.)

20

21

22

23

1 2:34 p.m.

2 INTERVIEW OF RICHARD SPRAGGINS

3 - - -

4 MS. HUDSON: For the record, our
5 next interview for the County
6 Engineer and the Public Works
7 Director is Richard Spraggins.
8 Spraggins, right?

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

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

16 MR. SPRAGGINS: Well, I appreciate
17 the opportunity.

18 MS. HUDSON: And the way we've
19 been conducting these interviews is
20 we're giving the candidate an
21 opportunity to basically introduce
22 yourself, tell us whatever you would
23 like for us know about you, and then

1 we will move on to a round of
2 questions.

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

6 MR. SPRAGGINS: Okay.

7 BY MS. HUDSON:

8 Q So go ahead and let's begin.

9 A All right. Thank you. I grew up in
10 Alexander City and went to college at Georgia Tech
11 for a couple of years and transferred to the
12 University of Alabama where I graduated.
13 I came to work to Blount County straight
14 out of college. And the county engineer that was
15 there was ready to retire. And he promised to
16 stay two more years. And -- but I needed four
17 years in order to qualify to take my PE exam. So
18 they hired another retired county engineer, and he
19 stayed there long enough for me take the exam. He
20 retired October the 31st. And I took my exam on
21 November the 1st, and the county was without a
22 county engineer for a few months until I found out
23 my results of my PE exam, which I passed.

1 And, so, I started there in March of '81
2 as the county engineer and retired in February of
3 2012.

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

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

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

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

1 So that's the quick run through of that.
2 While I was county engineer back in the early
3 '80s, I saw a need, being a young engineer and not
4 really knowing all of the footsteps that you
5 followthrough on a lot of these DOT projects. I
6 was the chairman of the committee that developed
7 the first manual for county engineers. And we did
8 that.

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

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

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

23 We -- I've been on a lot of committees

1 with ACCA to do some things, the joint bid
2 program. I've been to the legislature to kind of
3 promote changes in our subdivision roads that have
4 gone through in the past, visited with several of
5 those legislatures over the years.

6 And that's kind of a quick run through
7 of -- of what I've done in the last 35 to 40
8 years.

9 BY MS. HUDSON:

10 Q A lot of experience.

11 A Close your eyes and it's over with,
12 right?

13 Q It's not that fast.

14 BY MR. CARL:

15 Q It's moving at a high speed. We have a
16 list of questions that they provided us on, so if
17 you see us look down or read a question, we're
18 trying to keep things moving. And from this, you
19 will hear us ask some side questions. It really
20 has worked well so far. So you're being asked the
21 same questions that we've asked everyone else.

22 A Okay.

23 Q But the first one here is: How would you

1 describe your leadership style? And give us an
2 example of how you apply that style.

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

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

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

19 Q Okay, all right. Thank you.

20 A Yes, sir.

21 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

22 Q In the years when you were really in the
23 county engineer's role, how did you provide

1 feedback to your employees and how did you
2 recognize their achievements?

3 A Well, it -- it was kind of a -- a general
4 thing. I would let the commission know, hey,
5 we -- we completed this particular project. I
6 wouldn't necessarily name anybody by name. But
7 I -- I would just say: Hey, we -- we've done
8 this. And I think these -- the department or
9 these particular individuals if I did want to
10 recognize someone, I would want to say: I
11 appreciate you recognizing these at a -- at a
12 commission meeting to say: Hey, a job well done.

13 MS. LUDGOOD: Can I go?

14 MS. HUDSON: Sure.

15 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

16 Q So when you have had employees that you
17 recognized were either one of two things, that
18 they were going to be a real go-getter and really
19 was a contribution to the department, I'd like to
20 know kind of how you took them and nurtured them.
21 And then on the flip side, if you've had some that
22 were hired who were struggling, how would you
23 manage those two types?

1 A Okay. Well, the -- the ones that were
2 doing real well, I -- I would make sure, you know,
3 go through and -- and double check with them and
4 see if there was anything they needed to do, or
5 that they had missed and -- and all.

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

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

19 Q Okay.

20 BY MS. HUDSON:

21 Q Okay. One thing, maybe two things,
22 because you're an applicant for both positions,
23 that we would need to know is: What would be your

1 short-term and long-term goals for any changes in
2 the department or either department? What do you
3 see or think that needs to be done on the
4 short-term and then even on the long-term to
5 improve, whether it's efficiency or the cost
6 effectiveness, whatever. What do you see where
7 you could come in and, you know, play a role in
8 making that happen?

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

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

20 Long term, I think we've got to look
21 ahead to see what's -- what's out there that's
22 coming to us. I know that Ricky Ryan has been
23 working on trying to develop the OnBase program so

1 that we can have our consultants submit their
2 plans electronically rather than by paper so that
3 we can maybe not have to make so many corrections
4 over and over again with these -- with these
5 consultants. And that's a short-term type thing.

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

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

22 I think we could -- we've got a pretty
23 good relationship, it seems like, with the public.

1 I don't know if y'all get very many calls or -- or
2 I don't hear about too many. You may that I don't
3 hear about.

4 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

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

18 You'll see a lot of that on -- if you go
19 to some of these national conventions where
20 they've got -- they've got a color chart on their
21 roads where they're green, yellow or red. And --
22 and you can plot that and you can see which roads
23 are in bad need of repair or -- or are in good

1 repairs based on the color. And I -- I would like
2 to see something like that happen.

3 BY MS. HUDSON:

4 Q So keep an inventory of road conditions
5 based on a color-coding type of system?

6 A Yes, ma'am. You can go out maybe once --
7 once a year or once every two years and -- and try
8 to -- or maybe every three years or something and
9 rotate around the county and -- and -- and
10 re-grade the roads that -- that are out there
11 and -- and then come back in with a computer
12 program. And then it would plot how you graded
13 those roads.

14 Q So those are unpaved --

15 A Well, they would be paved roads.

16 Q These are all -- okay.

17 A Yes, ma'am.

18 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

19 Q And there is software that can do that
20 for you?

21 A Ma'am?

22 Q There is software that can do that for
23 you?

1 A Yes, ma'am.

2 Q Okay.

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

11 BY MS. HUDSON:

12 Q All we have now, we have that rating
13 system that --

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

21 BY MR. CARL:

22 Q And at this point we don't really have a
23 lot of input, or I don't, into the roads that are

1 being resurfaced unless it's a major project. And
2 then it has to go on the Pay-As-You-Go. But if
3 it's a neighborhood street or something, you know,
4 that's -- Richard and Chris puts that list
5 together.

6 A Yeah.

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

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

15 MS. HUDSON: Uh-huh.

16 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

17 Q What's the name of that? Do you know the
18 name of that?

19 A No, ma'am, I don't. I -- I can --

20 Q But it's called pavement management?

21 A It's asset management I guess is --

22 Q Asset management?

23 A -- is what it's called. Yes, ma'am.

1 They -- they called it asset management. And you
2 may see it in the pavement preservation-type
3 stuff. So --

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

6 MS. HUDSON: We are.

7 MR. CARL: Mark Twain --

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

10 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

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

1 three years. We didn't even get it every year for
2 a while.

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

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

19 And that kind of taught me a little
20 something, that I needed a backup plan to be
21 there, to have a second project sitting on the
22 shelf waiting for that.

23 And -- and now that's helped me here.

1 In -- in both projects in your district,
2 Commissioner Carl, the -- the Dog Road project
3 from -- from Scott Dairy on up to Cottage Hill is
4 basically in line -- was in line for our next
5 federal aid project through the DOT. But because
6 of the right-of-way issues that we've got out
7 there, I saw a need to -- to change. And, so, we
8 flipped over your Pay-As-You-Go project on Three
9 Notch Road from -- from Dog Road to McDonald over
10 to a DOT project. And we were able to get that
11 one processed a whole lot quicker. We're -- we're
12 to the point, all we lack now is just the Corps
13 permit and then we'll be ready to have that one in
14 the --

15 Q Which one is that one?

16 A Three Notch. From Dog Road over to -- to
17 McDonald.

18 Q Can you change the Pay-As-You-Go programs
19 up?

20 A Well, you've got to use the Pay-As-You-Go
21 money to do the matching. But --

22 Q Okay.

23 A But -- but -- but yes, sir.

1 Q Okay.

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

13 Q Thank you.

14 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

15 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

23 A I would try to continue to try to find

1 out the problems or the issues that -- that our
2 employees are having, whether it's on the roads or
3 in the office. If I can help solve them, I'll do
4 so. If -- if -- if I can't, I'll -- I'll come
5 to -- to y'all and say, hey, this is an issue
6 we've got out there. I'd like to sit down with
7 y'all and try to develop a plan to -- to improve
8 the -- the morale that's out there.

9 Q Uh-huh.

10 BY MS. HUDSON:

11 Q Richard, in the position of either the
12 county engineer or public works director, you
13 would be in a position of I guess more of a
14 heightened communication with a number of
15 different entities, whether it's commissioners or
16 directors of other departments or even outside
17 organizations or entities. How would you go about
18 trying to establish a good rapport in
19 communication with these different entities?

20 A Well, it -- I kind of started that when I
21 came -- came to Mobile with -- with the -- with
22 the DOT. I -- I just went over there and just sat
23 down and met them face-to-face and said: Here I

1 am. Here's what I'm trying to do. And I wanted
2 you to know if I can help you, let me know.

3 And -- and I've done that with some of
4 the -- you know, with -- with Bill Melton and --
5 and Tyler. I've -- I've sat down and talked with
6 them a little bit.

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

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

19 A Well, I hope I have a good relationship
20 with all three of you. And -- and -- and
21 that's -- that goes with it. The -- like I would
22 want to sit down with each of you. If there's
23 a -- an issue in your district that I'm working

1 on, I'll come to you and let you know what the
2 problems are and -- and what my solution is to the
3 problem.

4 Q Okay, all right.

5 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

10 Q Yeah. What do you believe are the most
11 critical steps to take when managing any change?
12 And what are some of the pitfalls to avoid?

13 A Some of the critical steps would be to
14 let that particular department or those particular
15 employees to be aware that, hey, this is fixing to
16 happen and these are the reasons why.

17 I -- I -- and I think that goes with --
18 on the pitfalls. If you don't let the people
19 that's -- that's affected by the change know
20 what's coming or -- or what's going to be
21 affected, then -- then you're going to have a
22 problem from the very beginning.

23 //

1 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

7 A Well, I -- I'm -- I'm most proud of --
8 of -- of what the county was able to accomplish
9 while I was in Blount County as far as the number
10 of projects that -- that were completed. We
11 completed a 506-foot bridge there in -- in the
12 southern end of the county. And obviously with
13 federal money being only 200, \$300,000 a year,
14 and -- and this -- this project was close to
15 \$1,000,000, I was able to work with our probate
16 judge slash commission chairman.

17 And back in the '80s when this was being
18 done, the DOT would allow counties to swap federal
19 aid funds or borrow from one to the other. And he
20 and I went around to several different counties
21 and -- and borrowed their federal aid with the
22 understanding that we'd never pay it back.
23 Because they couldn't spend it. And we were able

1 to get several -- we got some from Clay County,
2 some from Bibb, some from Walker. I don't
3 remember how many others. But -- but that --
4 that's kind of an achievement I'd like to say I
5 was able to bring more money into the county than
6 what they would normally receive.

7 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

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

22 That's kind of one thing I guess I -- I
23 don't like to do is -- is have a bunch of stuff

1 sitting on my desk waiting for me to -- to take
2 action on. My desk may look like a nightmare when
3 you come up there and -- and -- and visit me,
4 but -- but any incoming mail that I receive, I
5 basically take care of within the next couple of
6 hours. I -- I want that -- if it came to me
7 and -- and if it's got to go to somebody else, I
8 don't want to be the person holding up the process
9 ever how far it has to travel.

10 Q So you do ongoing evaluations. You
11 monitor the performance?

12 A Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

13 BY MR. CARL:

14 Q This is my last question. I'd better
15 make it a good, hadn't I? How do you enlist
16 support of your staff to establish a common
17 approach to solving a problem?

18 A Well, I look at their strengths and their
19 weaknesses. And I -- I -- we're all working there
20 together to try to come up with a solution to
21 something. I would want to -- to ask those
22 employees: What do you think? What can I do?
23 What can we do as -- as a team to -- to resolve

1 this issue? And, so, I would try to do that
2 within -- within the departments.

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

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

17 MR. SPRAGGINS: It's about that
18 time.

19 MR. CARL: Yeah.

20 MS. HUDSON: It's springtime.

21 MR. SPRAGGINS: Yes, ma'am.

22 MS. LUDGOOD: I'm done.

23 //

1 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

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

17 Q You got busy.

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

1 developed and all of that. We did. We spent
2 two-thirds, a little over two-thirds of our money
3 in that first three years. But that was a scary
4 time.

5 Q Yes, it was. I hate to hear that. But
6 you've done an incredible job. And it's not
7 escaped our notice --

8 A Well, I appreciate it.

9 Q -- on the work you've done.

10 MS. HUDSON: And I guess we'll
11 just end by asking you: Do you have
12 any questions of us?

13 MR. SPRAGGINS: Well, I know
14 you've got some more interviews to
15 do. I know -- I assume you'll try to
16 make a decision, but -- but whatever
17 your decision, I'll -- I'll support
18 you in every which way I can.

19 MS. HUDSON: Well, thank you.

20 MR. SPRAGGINS: I want to continue
21 to do that. And I appreciate the
22 opportunity to be here.

23 MS. HUDSON: Well, we certainly

1 value you as an employee and --

2 MR. SPRAGGINS: Well, thank you.

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

6 MR. SPRAGGINS: Yes, ma'am. Thank
7 you.

8 MS. LUDGOOD: Thank you.

9 MR. SPRAGGINS: Yes, ma'am.

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

15 MR. SPRAGGINS: Right.

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

22 MR. SPRAGGINS: Okay. That'll be
23 fine.

1 MS. HUDSON: All right.

2 MR. SPRAGGINS: Thank y'all.

3 MS. HUDSON: Thank you very much.

4 3:07 p.m.

5 (Brief recess.)

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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.

1 MS. HUDSON: Oh, okay. All right.
2 And you've met Commissioners Ludgood,
3 Mr. Carl and myself.

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

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

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

14 MR. DAILEY: I will say that, yes.

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

18 MR. DAILEY: Oh, really?

19 MS. HUDSON: Yeah.

20 MR. CARL: My mind has gone.
21 There's one in Portland that,
22 whatever county Portland is, I think
23 they're all females.

1 MS. HUDSON: All females.

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

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

6 MS. LUDGOOD: I think they have
7 five.

8 A As my application said, I graduated NC
9 State in 1989. I got my professional engineers
10 license for the state of Alabama in '92 or '3 or
11 something. I can't remember the exact date. And
12 I've been a practicing engineer ever since then.

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

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

19 And, at that time, my father wanted me to
20 come help run the construction business. At that
21 point, I moved back to my hometown and have been
22 running the construction business for the last 20
23 something years.

1 All of my wife's people are from Mobile.
2 And my child, my youngest child is fixing to start
3 college. And my wife says: I'm ready to move
4 back home.

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

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

13 MS. LUDGOOD: We wouldn't either.

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

19 I'm a certified credentialed professional
20 with Alabama Department of Environmental
21 Management. I have been asked to be on the Board
22 of Engineers twice. I turned it down both times
23 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.

9 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

10 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

11 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

1 work. And I did some grant writing. I help with
2 grant writing with the City of Camden. I've done
3 that on several occasions. And anything to -- to
4 help out wherever I'm at.

5 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

6 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

15 A Okay.

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

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

22 A I'm not a micro-manager. I like to
23 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.

1 Q Okay. Thank you.

2 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

13 A Employee morale affects every aspect of
14 every company, whether it's public or private,
15 especially nowadays.

16 At my company now, I do little things
17 from time to time. I take the employees and have
18 little cookouts for them from time to time. I
19 don't know if y'all are -- would allow such things
20 as that. But if like maybe twice a month I could
21 do little barbecue cookouts or something for the
22 employees to show their appreciation for, you
23 know, meeting certain goals or, you know, or if

1 someone is not tardy for work or good attendance
2 to work or -- there are a million different ways
3 and we could come up with all sorts of things to
4 show and -- our appreciation for employees that --
5 that appreciate their jobs and that value their
6 jobs.

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

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

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

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

1 in a while. You know, just do anything.

2 Q Okay. Thank you.

3 BY MS. HUDSON:

4 Q How would you go about establishing a

5 rapport and building a relationship with the

6 commissioners as well as people who don't report

7 to directly to you, either other department heads,

8 other outside organizations and groups that you

9 would go be dealing with outside, you know, just

10 on a regular basis? How do you go about

11 establishing a kind of rapport and relationship

12 building?

13 A Okay. I have found in the long run,

14 brutal and total honesty works the best in the

15 long run. We may not always be best chums, but if

16 I tell you the truth every single time you ask me

17 a question, the hard truth, then it always comes

18 back that I felt like I did what was right. And

19 then in the end I think that you -- y'all as

20 commissioners, I mean, y'all aren't fly-by-night.

21 I mean, you've got -- this is Mobile County, you

22 know. And this is the second biggest metropolis

23 in the state of Alabama. I mean, so y'all had to

1 have stuff going right to get here anyway. So --

2 Q That's the best compliment I've been paid

3 lately.

4 A So, in other words, I guess what I'm

5 saying is: Y'all have got some sense. So, in

6 other words, if I tell you the truth, y'all have

7 got to see that for what it's worth. Because if I

8 sugarcoat stuff or tell you what you want to hear,

9 eventually I'm not going to be able to deliver on

10 what I tell you when I tell you what you want to

11 hear.

12 Q What about --

13 A All right. Outside offices, ADEM,

14 underground utility companies, ADEM, boy, that's a

15 big one there. They are --

16 MR. CARL: Well, they are here

17 quite frequently.

18 A (Comment redacted.)

19 BY MS. HUDSON:

20 Q You're brutally honest.

21 MR. CARL: Don't put that one the

22 record.

23 A I can work with anybody. I have gotten

1 along with ADEM in the past. I don't know what
2 y'all's relationship with ADEM is now. But I will
3 do everything in my power to make it better and
4 certainly not make it worse.

5 But if I see that they're doing something
6 that I feel like goes above and beyond what I feel
7 like is best for Mobile County, then I'm going to
8 bring it to y'all's attention and -- and then look
9 for direction from y'all on which way you want to
10 go if that's what y'all want me to do.

11 BY MR. CARL:

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

18 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

19 Q And, as you're answering that, you will
20 be coming in from, you know, basically other --
21 you've been in different counties. How would you
22 help to manage that change and get people
23 accustomed to you and your style and all of that?

1 Because we've had the same engineer for 40
2 something years.

3 A What is his name?

4 Q Joe Ruffer.

5 A Yeah. I -- I knew Joe Ruffer.

6 Q Okay. So basically you'd be coming
7 behind him after all of those years. And part of
8 the change would be, you know, getting used to a
9 different person. But how would you manage that?

10 A The biggest change that I probably faced
11 in the work environment was -- let me see -- would
12 have to be the formation of ADEM.

13 MR. CARL: The formation of what?

14 MR. DAILEY: When ADEM was formed.

15 MR. CARL: Oh, okay.

16 A Everything turned topsy-turvy. And, at
17 first, the counties, all they -- all -- all they
18 had to do was get their different watersheds, a
19 different permit for all of their different
20 watersheds. And then ADEM left -- left the county
21 alone. All right.

22 Well, then they moved to where if you
23 disturbed more than five acres, you had to get a

1 permit. Well, now if you disturb more than one
2 acre, you've got to get a permit.

3 And then the Corps of Engineers came
4 along. And if it was a navigable waterway, a blue
5 line on a topo map, you had to get a permit from
6 the Corps of Engineers, which was never a problem.

7 But then the Corps of Engineers got out
8 of that. So we had to go back to ADEM again. And
9 then we started having to go through these
10 cultural resources assessments and these
11 archeological digs on all of these sites before we
12 could have a project.

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

18 MS. HUDSON: Or a milk bottle.

19 MR. CARL: Or a tortoise.

20 A -- or a yellow belly snail darter,
21 you're --

22 MR. CARL: I'm sorry? A yellow
23 belly what?

1 MR. DAILEY: A snail darter.
2 MS. HUDSON: Okay.
3 MR. DAILEY: That was a --
4 MR. CARL: Is that a real critter?
5 MR. DAILEY: He's a real critter.
6 MS. HUDSON: A yellow belly
7 snail --
8 MR. DAILEY: A yellow belly snail
9 darter. It's a salamander type.
10 MR. CARL: Okay. I'm sorry. I've
11 never heard of that one.
12 MS. HUDSON: Wow.
13 MR. DAILEY: And they had people
14 over there trying to literally move a
15 yellow belly snail darter.
16 MR. CARL: I'm writing that one
17 down.
18 MR. DAILEY: And --
19 BY MS. HUDSON:
20 Q Well, I mean, was there a lot of them?
21 A Yes, ma'am. And we couldn't -- couldn't
22 move the project because they found some pottery
23 and some other stuff on the hills. So we ended

1 up, rather than taking the cheapest route of just
2 taking -- we had to make a long sweeping curve.
3 It ended up costing us about four times as much
4 money. And it took me a long time to get used to
5 that.

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

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

10 MR. CARL: Also called the
11 plantation pecker.

12 MS. HUDSON: Right.

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

16 MS. HUDSON: Noisy.

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

20 BY MS. HUDSON:

21 Q And that's a bad thing?

22 A Yes, ma'am. I -- I'm not -- I'm all for
23 saving the environment. I really am. But it's

1 like the tail wagging the dog. That was the
2 hardest thing for me to adjust to.

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

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

9 A But I've got -- gotten pretty good at it.
10 That's the reason why I went on and got certified
11 as a credentialed professional with ADEM.

12 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

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

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

23 //

1 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

4 A About \$3,000,000.

5 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

6 Q So I would imagine you had to be
7 creative.

8 A Oh, yes, ma'am.

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

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

22 We never had a system as good as y'all,
23 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?

1 A Talk to everybody.

2 Q To everybody.

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

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

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

21 Once they get to thinking like that, then
22 you can start having a rapport with them and then
23 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 MR. CARL: Yeah. Middle of the
8 night, middle of the storm, all of
9 it. Calls, e-mails, grocery store,
10 the mall, wherever you are.

11 BY MS. HUDSON:

12 Q We have a lot of calls wanting us to
13 maintain private roads. We get a lot of that.
14 And then some of them are very, very sad
15 situations because they're in deplorable
16 conditions. People can hardly get up and down.
17 But, you know, the law doesn't allow it.

18 And, of course, there is concern even if
19 it did, you know, where would the money come from
20 to maintain a road -- I mean, to take over a road,
21 you know, that we're using our dollars to try to
22 maintain what we've got. So there's a lot of that
23 that we hear from people.

1 A Yeah. We run into that everywhere.

2 And -- and the sad part about it is, there's some
3 of them you really wish you could help and then --
4 but if you help one --

5 MR. CARL: You help them all.

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

7 And -- and there'll be a newspaper man or somebody
8 behind every tree. And it's just --

9 BY MS. HUDSON:

10 Q It's a tough situation.

11 A Yes, ma'am, it really is.

12 MR. CARL: Is it my turn? I'm
13 sorry. It's your turn.

14 MS. HUDSON: Is it mine? You were
15 last.

16 MR. CARL: I don't know.

17 MS. HUDSON: We started our
18 follow-up questions.

19 MS. LUDGOOD: You asked the last
20 one. That was my last notes were
21 your questions.

22 MS. HUDSON: Okay.

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

1 goal.

2 MS. HUDSON: You're right. You're
3 right. Okay. Yeah. So it's you.

4 MR. CARL: Okay. So it is me.

5 All right.

6 BY MR. CARL:

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

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

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

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

23 MR. CARL: Fair enough.

1 A And let them decide how -- how to
2 proceed. Don't take the matter into your own
3 hands. You need to tell the people you work for.

4 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

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

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

11 Q So which one was Chilton County?

12 A That was a unit system.

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

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

17 Q The district --

18 A The county engineer.

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

23 MS. HUDSON: They get on the

1 equipment themselves?

2 MS. LUDGOOD: Uh-huh.

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

7 MS. LUDGOOD: No.

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

11 MS. HUDSON: Oh, yeah.

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

15 MS. HUDSON: Easy in some respect.

16 MR. DAILEY: Correct. Correct.

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

22 MR. DAILEY: For a --

23 MS. HUDSON: -- and public works.

1 MR. DAILEY: For the county
2 itself, I think that the unit system
3 really works better.

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

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

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

12 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

18 A We do monthly evaluations on every
19 employee.

20 MS. LUDGOOD: Monthly?

21 MR. DAILEY: Yes, ma'am.

22 MS. LUDGOOD: Okay.

23 //

1 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

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

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

21 Q But how do you actually measure? Do you
22 look at the work output for each individual in
23 terms of work that they're directed to do and

1 what's been completed? I mean, how --

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

3 I've been in that type of -- this type of stuff my

4 whole life. And I can go behind a motor grader

5 man and within 15 minutes I can tell you whether

6 or not he knows what he's doing or not.

7 And I can sit behind him or go behind him

8 the day after he does a road and say: Well, he

9 did a jam-up job on this road. So I ain't worried

10 about him on the motor grader. He does all right.

11 If go behind somebody else and the road

12 is shaped like this (demonstrating), where all the

13 water runs right in the middle of the road, then I

14 know he's got to have some training.

15 And if I do some training and then --

16 then the road looks like this (demonstrating),

17 well, he's got to have a little more training.

18 But then if I come back after three

19 months and the road looks like this (indicating)

20 then we did good.

21 MS. LUDGOOD: I have one like the

22 first one in my district. I do.

23 MS. HUDSON: We need some more

1 drains.

2 MS. LUDGOOD: And one like this

3 and they call me.

4 BY MS. HUDSON:

5 Q And that make senses in public works.

6 But on the engineering side of things --

7 A All right. On the engineering side of

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

9 engineering. Do y'all have people that draw your

10 plans up for your different projects or do y'all

11 hire consultants to draw your plans up?

12 Q Some of both, depending on the size.

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

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

15 project done up. Overlay projects are pretty easy

16 to get done up. I mean, it's not a whole lot of

17 checking.

18 And if two weeks down the road, I say:

19 How are we coming on the overlay project? Because

20 the -- the commissioners really want to get this

21 thing bid out. Well, I've just got the title page

22 done. Whoa now. Is -- is there some kind of

23 problem? Man, I've been working myself to death.

1 That's all I can get done on it.

2 Okay. Well, then explain to me why
3 that's all you can get done. I'm not the kind of
4 person that's just going to jump all over him to
5 start with. I'm going to let them tell me why
6 they can't do the work.

7 And then if they -- if they can't tell me
8 why they can't do the work, then I'm probably
9 giving it to somebody else and tell them I want
10 this done by so-and-so.

11 And then that person will get mad. And
12 then the next time I give them work to do, okay,
13 is there going to be problem? Are you going to be
14 able to get it done? You know, it -- you know,
15 and my surveyors -- do you y'all have surveyors?

16 MS. LUDGOOD: We do it by
17 contract. We don't have any in-house
18 anymore. We contract those out.

19 A All right. Well, that's probably a
20 good -- a good thing because surveying equipment
21 nowadays is so expensive.

22 But when I was the county engineer, we
23 did all of our plans. We didn't contract anything

1 out. And we had to draw all of it. And you just
2 had to get it done. And it's just a matter of
3 finding the right motivation for that person. And
4 if that person cannot be motivated to do the work,
5 then it's either find somebody that'll do the work
6 or either that -- and if that person cannot be
7 motivated to do the work, then that person needs
8 to be replaced.

9 BY MS. HUDSON:

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

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

23 Q Okay.

1 BY MS. LUDGOOD:

2 Q And, I mean, we get that, that you've got
3 to observe and give them time and all of that.
4 But I think basically what you're saying, based on
5 your experience, you just learned down the years,
6 you can spot a really good employee and you can
7 spot one that's more challenging. I think that's
8 what you're saying.

9 A Yes, ma'am.

10 MS. HUDSON: Okay. Questions,
11 Commissioners?

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

14 MS. LUDGOOD: Okay.

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

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

21 MR. DAILEY: Well, it's been a
22 very candid interview, very different
23 that any one I've ever been to. And

1 I haven't been to a job interview in
2 25 years.

3 Do you know when you will be
4 making your decision?

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

12 At one time when Mr. Ruffer was
13 still here, he was public works
14 director as well as the county
15 engineer. And we've basically
16 divided those positions. And, so,
17 the scope of work and job
18 responsibilities had to all be
19 re-written through a personnel board
20 and go through that process. And,
21 so, now we've finally gotten all of
22 that back so that we can interview
23 people. And then the decision should

1 be coming soon after all of the
2 interviews end.

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

5 MS. HUDSON: The county
6 commission.

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

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

11 MR. DAILEY: Yes, ma'am.

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

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

16 MS. LUDGOOD: Yes.

17 MR. DAILEY: All right. And
18 then --

19 MS. LUDGOOD: You set your agenda,
20 the things you need approved. You'd
21 be responsible for working with your
22 staff to create the items that need
23 to be on the agenda, the stuff that's

1 going out for bids, subdivisions.
2 You have primary responsibility for
3 developing those.

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

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

11 MR. DAILEY: Goodness.

12 MS. HUDSON: A few less than 50.

13 MS. LUDGOOD: Because we have
14 design and --

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

17 MS. HUDSON: Okay. Any other
18 questions?

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

21 MS. LUDGOOD: No.

22 MR. DAILEY: Okay.

23 MS. HUDSON: Is that a deal

1 breaker?

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

6 MS. HUDSON: Uh-huh.

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

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

14 MS. HUDSON: We have a good
15 benefits package.

16 MR. DAILEY: It sounds like it.

17 MS. HUDSON: We do.

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

22 MS. LUDGOOD: So we have an
23 subsistence allowance that basically

1 for every day you come to work you
2 get an additional \$10. It's
3 something really that originated with
4 law enforcement and then we expanded
5 it to everybody. So basically it's
6 your lunch money.

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

9 MS. HUDSON: Yeah. Kind of.
10 Okay. Well, Mr. Dailey, again, we
11 appreciate your time this afternoon.
12 Thank you for sharing with us.

13 4:08 p.m.

14 (Recess taken.)

15 4:30 p.m.

16 MS. HUDSON: I move to be
17 adjourned.

18 MR. CARL: I second.

19 MS. HUDSON: We stand adjourned
20 until Thursday.

21

22

23 - END OF PROCEEDINGS -

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2

3 STATE OF ALABAMA)

4 COUNTY OF CONECUH)

5

6 I hereby certify that the above and
7 foregoing transcript of proceedings was taken
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10 by means of computer-aided transcription, and
11 that the foregoing represents a true and
12 correct transcript of the proceedings given by
13 said witness upon said hearing.

14 I further certify that I am neither of
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