



Levy County Board of County Commissioners Agenda Item Summary Form

1. **Name and Title:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager
2. **Department:** Board of County Commissioners
3. **Meeting Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2026
4. **Requested Action:**
Appoint two elected officials, one representative from the Williston Municipal Airport, and five local industry leaders representing key sectors of Levy County's economy to the Economic Development Advisory Board.
5. **Cost & Funding Source:**
There is no cost associated with this item.
6. **Justification of Request:**
The BoCC recently updated Code of Ordinances Chapter 27, Economic Development to include a nine-member Economic Development Advisory Board.

The following individuals have expressed interest in being appointed to the Economic Development Advisory Board.

Economic Development Advisory Board

Seat	Candidate
Two elected officials representing Levy County municipalities	Rissa Johns Bruce Greenlee
One sitting County Commissioner	Desiree Mills (Already Appointed)
One representative from the Williston Municipal Airport	Benton Stegall
Five local industry leaders representing key sectors of Levy County's economy	Carmel Leah Gamble Joe May Ryan Edrington Tara England Barney Edward Suor Sarah Eastman Alison Adkins Sam Gaw



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Candidates

1. Rissa Johns

Dear Ms. Harper,
I hope you are doing well.

I would like to express my interest in being considered for appointment to the newly established Levy County Economic Development Advisory Board.

As the Mayor of the City of Chiefland and Community Relations Manager for Suncoast Credit Union, I have had the privilege of working with local governments, businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders to strengthen our communities and create meaningful partnerships. These experiences have given me a unique perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing Levy County and the importance of thoughtful, collaborative economic development.

I believe successful economic development is about more than attracting new businesses—it is about supporting the businesses we already have, investing in workforce development, encouraging entrepreneurship, and creating opportunities that improve the quality of life for residents throughout Levy County.

Throughout my career, I have worked to connect organizations, promote workforce readiness, support financial education, and advocate for initiatives that strengthen local economies. My experience in both municipal leadership and the private sector has allowed me to see firsthand how collaboration between government, business, and community partners can lead to long-term success.

I would be honored to serve on the Economic Development Advisory Board and contribute to helping shape a strong, sustainable future for Levy County. Thank you for your consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to be considered and look forward to the possibility of serving in this role.

Sincerely,
Rissa Johns
Mayor, City of Chiefland

2. Bruce Greenlee

Full Name: Bruce A. Greenlee

Email Address: greenleeb63@gmail.com

Phone Number: 352-316-2615

Residential Address: 492 E. Main Street, Bronson, FL 32621

Place of Employment or Business Name: Heavy B's BBQ and the Mayor of Bronson

Brief Statement of Interest: Mr. Greenlee most importantly is committed to the responsible growth of Levy County. He would also like to champion responsible, well-planned growth as new development opportunities continue to emerge throughout Levy County.

310 School Street, Suite 112, Bronson Florida 32621

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E-mail: levybocc@levycounty.org Website: www.levycounty.org



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3. Benton Stegall

Good Afternoon Mrs Mary-Ellen,

I don't mind representing the airport on this development committee, I appreciate the county taking the lead on this front and capitalizing on the momentum we have going at the airport.

Let me know what else you need from us or if you have something else in mind.

Thank you,

Benton

4. Carmel Leah Gamble

Full Name: Carmel Leah Gamble

- Email Address: gamblel@cf.edu
- Phone Number: 352-949-0445
- Residential Address: 615 SW 4th Ave., Trenton, FL, 32693
- Place of Employment or Business: College of Central Florida, Jack Wilkinson Levy Campus

5. Larry Joe May Jr

Maypop@live.com

(352) 538-3866

18551 NE Hwy 27 Alt

Williston, FL 32696

Ajax Building Co

I would like to serve the citizens of Levy County. I am born and raised here and been here for 55 years. With my history of daily decision making and handling millions of dollars in budgets I feel I am a great candidate.

Thanks,

Joe May

6. Ryan Edrington

LivingCedarKey@gmail.com

863-669-5503

757 3rd St, Cedar Key, FL 32625

Living Cedar Key - Golf Cart Tours

Statement of Interest

I would like to be considered for appointment to the Levy County Economic Development Advisory Board because I care deeply about the future of our county and want to contribute to its long-term success.

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As the owner of Cedar Key Golf Cart Tours and founder of Living Cedar Key, I have dedicated my career to bringing more visitors to Levy County and encouraging them to stay longer, support local businesses, and experience everything our community has to offer. Over the past several years, I have invested thousands of hours researching tourism trends, analyzing visitor data, testing marketing strategies, and building partnerships with local businesses to help increase tourism and economic activity.

This isn't just my profession—it's how I provide for my family. My family's future is directly connected to the success of my business, and my business succeeds only when Levy County succeeds. Because of that, I have a genuine personal investment in creating a stronger local economy and helping businesses throughout our county thrive.

I believe tourism is one of Levy County's greatest economic opportunities. Every visitor who comes here supports our restaurants, hotels, shops, fishing guides, charter captains, aquaculture industry, and countless other local businesses. Thoughtful economic development has the potential to create jobs, strengthen existing businesses, attract new investment, and improve the quality of life for everyone who lives here.

If appointed, I would bring an entrepreneurial perspective, practical marketing experience, and a collaborative mindset. My goal would be to represent the interests of Levy County as a whole by supporting initiatives that encourage sustainable economic growth, strengthen our business community, and increase opportunities for residents and future generations. It would be an honor to serve on the Economic Development Advisory Board and help shape a prosperous future for Levy County.

7. Tara England Barney

Tara England Barney lives in Cedar Key Florida and, since retirement, has become actively involved with the community. Her long-time career has prompted a special interest in the area economy, particularly since its unique blend of aquaculture, tourism, and residential needs has been the target of 4 significant hurricanes in the last several years, one of which, Helene, brought record damage to the Cedar Key community. Tara has been active in the City of Cedar Key's resilience and sustainability planning initiatives as well as the Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce. She has successfully solicited various grants to assist the local business community in its recovery efforts.

Other areas of service to the Community include:

- President of the Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Key National Wildlife Refuge
- Volunteer with local kayak trail development initiatives
- Board of Directors of the Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce
- Cedar Key Women's Club
- Archer Elementary PTA (grandchildren's school)

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Tara retired as the CEO of the Evansville Regional Economic Partnership; the Evansville, Indiana Region's Chamber and Planning organization serving 4 counties in Southwest Indiana and Western Kentucky. In this role she led an organization of 30 professionals and served over 1,200 member organizations. Barney led the Partnership's predecessor organization, the Southwest Indiana Chamber in March 2018 as its President & CEO. On April 1, 2021, the Southwest Indiana Chamber merged with the Growth Alliance of Greater Evansville and the Economic Development Coalition to form the Evansville Regional Economic Partnership. In 2026 EREP will celebrate its fifth anniversary as the region's business and community advancement organization.

She served in a similar position with the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce for seven years. The Quad Cities Chamber is a business and economic development organization serving a bi-state metropolitan area of 400,000 on the Mississippi River Illinois and Iowa border. Prior to her role at the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, she was the President/CEO of the Iowa Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce. The latter organization merged with the Illinois Quad City Chamber in 2010, thus achieving a long-standing interest of the business and civic community to have a single, regional business organization overseeing economic and community development.

She has more than 30 years of extensive experience in the chamber, economic and community development industry. When residing in Ohio, Tara held various roles in economic development with the Cities of Columbus and Toledo in both the public and private sector.

Tara holds a BA degree in Public Administration from Miami University and a M.P.A. from the John Glenn College of Public Policy at Ohio State University where she was the recipient of the Pacesetter Award.

In October 2021 Tara was awarded the prestigious Woman of Empowerment Award from the Junior League of Evansville and in July 2022 she was recognized as one of the top 250 most influential business leaders in Indiana. In 2023 she was named Woman of the Year by the Southwestern Indiana Girl Scouts.

Tara was previously involved in the following organizations:

- Board of Directors for the Louisville Branch of the St. Louis Bank of the Federal Reserve
- Member of the YMCA Board of Directors (President of the Association Board in the Quad Cities)
- Member of the BridgeLink Board of Directors
- Member of Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives Board of Directors
- Trustee of ACCE Benefits Trust (national role)
- UE Advisory Board for the Center for Innovation & Change
- Evansville Regional Sports Commission (Indiana)

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Tara has two adult children: Jordan Callaham of Gainesville, Florida and Jake Barney who resides in Denver, Colorado. Together with their spouses, they are the parents of Weller, Beckett and Hugo; all great kids!

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

Lee County/Fort Myers Florida Economic Development Office Sept 1999 ▪ Aug 2002

Business and Aviation Business Recruitment

Directed the County's recruitment and expansion of select industry sectors targeted to build a sustainable regional economy. Recruited financial services/call center and aviation support target areas. Represented Lee and Collier Counties at international trade and sales events including the London and Paris Air Shows, BIO National, and numerous regional and national trade association meetings. Developed and tracked prospects, negotiated incentives, and located projects for both new and existing business.

Prior to 1999:

City of Toledo - Manager of Downtown Development

Central Ohio Breathing Association, Columbus - Vice President of Development

Columbus Santa Maria - Executive Director/CEO-Administrator-Board Member

Columbus Area Sports Corporation - Executive Director

Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease, LLC, Columbus - Special Projects Manager

City of Columbus, Ohio - Assistant to the Finance Director

8. Edward Suor

Mary-Ellen –

I was very pleased to see your progress on insourcing Levy County's economic development initiatives, at yesterday's informal meeting. Your leadership shows, kudos. Pursuant to the public notice (attached), I am requesting a seat on your new Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB). Please see requested details below:

- Full Name: Edward W. Suor,
- Email Address: EdWSuor@VPNSystems.com
- Phone Number: (352) 678 – 7475
- Residential Address: #190 SE 110th Terrace, Williston, Levy County, Florida.
- Place of Employment or Business Name: Vantage Point Network Systems, Inc. (FL Corp #P21000061449)
- Brief Statement of Interest: Interested in bringing "value added" businesses to Levy County.

9. Sarah Eastman

sarah@ucsmith.com

352-339-4812

6630 NW 30th St. Chiefland, FL 32626

Self employed as a Realtor under local brokerage, United Country Smith & Associates.

I'm interested in serving on this economic development advisory board as I am very vested

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and care deeply about the future of Levy County and economic factors that affect it. As a local Realtor, I see firsthand the reasons why people choose to move here or move away from here, and I could provide valuable insight into how economic development factors of this county affect the buyers and sellers I come across. I am also married to a local hay farmer, so I care deeply for preserving our agricultural-based community while also seeing the need for economic development in this county. As a local Realtor that is also involved in our local farming industry, I could bring a balanced view to the board. Thank you for your consideration!

10. Alison Adkins

Good afternoon,

I am interested in being considered for an appointment to the Economic Development Advisory Board.

- Alison D. Adkins
- adeloach@cfec.com
- 352-317-0905
- 11431 NW 94th Ter Chiefland, FL 32626
- Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- I have been involved in the past and still interested.

11. Sam Gaw

Email Address: samigaw@gmail.com

Phone Number: 352-440-4572

Residential Address: 1841 NE 152 Ct, Williston, FL 32696

Place of Employment: Gulf Coast Supply & Manufacturing – Director of Marketing

I have spent my career working in manufacturing, sales, marketing, business development, and artificial intelligence, with a strong focus on helping businesses grow while strengthening the communities they serve. Through my role at Gulf Coast Supply & Manufacturing, I work closely with contractors, manufacturers, distributors, and business leaders throughout Levy County and across the Southeast, giving me a broad perspective on economic development, workforce needs, housing, infrastructure, and business expansion. I am passionate about the future of Levy County and would be honored to contribute my experience, strategic thinking, and collaborative approach to help identify opportunities that encourage responsible economic growth, support local businesses, attract new investment, and improve the quality of life for our residents.

Thank you for your consideration. I live in Williston and go to church in Bronson. I would welcome the opportunity to serve Levy County in this capacity.