

# TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES

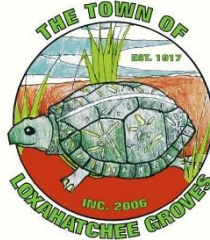
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

155 F. ROAD, LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FL 33470

## TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

### AGENDA

APRIL 28, 2026 – 6:00 PM



**Lisa El-Ramey, Mayor (Seat 2)**

**Manish Sood, Vice Mayor (Seat 5)      William "Joe" Stephens, Councilmember (Seat 1)**

**Anita Kane, Councilmember (Seat 3)      Paul T. Coleman II, Councilmember (Seat 4)**

#### Administration

Acting Town Manager, Valerie Oakes, CMC

Town Attorney, Jeffrey S. Kurtz, Esq.

Acting Town Clerk, Kenthia White, FRP

Community Standards Director, Caryn Gardner-Young, MPA, AICP

Public Works Director, Craig Lower

**Civility:** Being "civil" is not a restraint on the First Amendment right to speak out, but it is more than just being polite. Civility is stating your opinions and beliefs, without degrading someone else in the process. Civility requires a person to respect other people's opinions and beliefs even if he or she strongly disagrees. It is finding a common ground for dialogue with others. It is being patient, graceful, and having a strong character. That is why we say "Character Counts" in Town of Loxahatchee. Civility is practiced at all Town meetings.

**Special Needs:** In accordance with the provisions of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), persons in need of a special accommodation to participate in this proceeding shall within three business days prior to any proceeding, contact the Town Clerk's Office, 155 F Road, Loxahatchee Groves, Florida, (561) 793-2418.

**Quasi-Judicial Hearings:** Some of the matters on the agenda may be "quasi-judicial" in nature. Town Council Members are required to disclose all ex-parte communications regarding these items and are subject to voir dire (a preliminary examination of a witness or a juror by a judge or council) by any affected party regarding those communications. All witnesses testifying will be "sworn" prior to their testimony. However, the public is permitted to comment, without being sworn. Unsworn comment will be given its appropriate weight by the Town Council.

**Appeal of Decision:** If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Town Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he or she will need a record of the proceeding, and for that purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes any testimony and evidence upon which the appeal will be based.

**Consent Calendar:** Those matters included under the Consent Calendar are typically self-explanatory, non controversial, and are not expected to require review or discussion. All items will be enacted by a single motion. If discussion on an item is desired, any Town Council Member, without a motion, may "pull" or remove the item to be considered separately. If any item is quasi-judicial, it may be removed from the Consent Calendar to be heard separately, by a Town Council Member, or by any member of the public desiring it to be heard, without a motion.

**TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**ROLL CALL**

**ADDITIONS, DELETIONS AND MODIFICATIONS**

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

*Public Comments for the regular meetings may be received by email, or in writing to the Town Clerk's Office until 12:00 PM (Noon) day of the meeting. Comments will be forwarded to the Town Council for informational purposes, however, they will not be read into the record. Town Council meetings are livestreamed and close-captioned for the general public via our website, instructions are posted there. Town Council meetings are livestreamed and close-captioned for the general public via our website, instructions are posted there.*

**REGULAR AGENDA**

1. Selection of Negotiator for the Town Manager's Contract

**TOWN STAFF COMMENTS**

**Acting Town Manager Valerie Oakes**

**Town Attorney Jeff Kurtz, Esq.**

**Acting Town Clerk Kenthia White**

**Community Standards Director Caryn Gardner-Young**

**Public Works Director Craig Lower**

**TOWN COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

**Councilmember William "Joe" Stephens (Seat 1)**

**Councilmember Anita Kane (Seat 3)**

**Councilmember Paul Coleman II (Seat 4)**

**Vice Mayor Manish Sood (Seat 5)**

**Mayor Lisa El-Ramey (Seat 2)**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Comment Cards:**

Anyone from the public wishing to address the Town Council, it is requested that you complete a Comment Card before speaking. Please fill out completely with your full name and address so that your comments can be entered correctly in the minutes and give to the Town Clerk. During the agenda item portion of the meeting, you may only address the item on the agenda being discussed at the time of your comment. During public comments, you may address any item you desire. Please remember that there is a three (3) minute time limit on all public comment. Any person who decides to appeal any decision of the Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made which included testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations in order to participate should contact the Town Clerk's Office (561-793-2418), at least 48 hours in advance to request such accommodation.





selection and engagement of independent counsel to represent the Town in connection with potential negotiations concerning the accelerated retirement of Town Manager Francine Ramaglia.

**Attachments:**

Proposals from each firm.

April 14, 2026

Honorable Lisa El-Ramey, Mayor  
Honorable Manish Sood, Vice Mayor  
Honorable Joe Stephens, Councilmember  
Honorable Anita Kane, Councilmember  
Honorable Paul Coleman, Councilmember

c/o: Ms. Kenthia White  
Executive Assistant/Legal Specialist  
Town of Loxahatchee Groves  
155 F Road  
Loxahatchee Groves, Florida 33470

Re: Proposal for Special Legal Services

Honorable members of the City Council:

Please accept this proposal for serving in a special capacity to resolve a pending issue between the Town and your outgoing Town Manager. I have served in the public sector in the State of Florida since 1998 and I am Board Certified by The Florida Bar in both City, County & Local Government Law, as well as Labor & Employment Law. Additionally, I have served as an arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association (AAA), the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), the National Mediation Board, as well as numerous individual arbitrator panels throughout the state. Investigating employment issues and resolving employment disputes is a large part of my practice.

The rate for my legal services will be billed at \$250.00 per hour at increments of one-tenths. I will submit an invoice at the conclusion of this matter, unless it unexpectedly becomes protracted, at which point I will invoice monthly. There will be no charge for overhead (i.e., copies, computer time, mileage, tolls, etc.), and if any unexpected hard costs arise (court reporter, etc.), I will seek pre-approval. I do not require a retainer with government clients.

I assert that there are no known conflicts of interest in this matter and I agree to immediately disclose any possible conflicts which may come to my attention. I further agree to maintain confidentiality in accordance with applicable laws and ethical standards.

Should this meet with your approval, I will be honored to serve the Town in any capacity needed.

Respectfully Submitted,



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JAMES D. STOKES

Attorney at Law

Board Certified Specialist:

- *Labor & Employment Law*
- *City, County & Local Government Law*

Certified Inspector General Counsel

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**James D. Stokes, P.A. (Stokes Law)**  
Special Counsel; Special Magistrate; Arbitrator

**Brevard County Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller**  
Special Counsel to the Inspector General (2024 - present)

**Space Coast League of Cities** (General Counsel, 2025 - present)

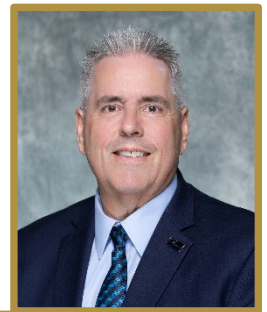
**Local Government Experience:**

- **City of Sebastian** (City Attorney, 2025 - present)
- **City of Titusville** (Interim City Attorney, 2025)
- **City of Naples** (Interim City Attorney, 2023 - 2024)
- **City of Port St. Lucie** (City Attorney, 2018 - 2023)
- **City of Sebastian** (City Attorney, 2017 - 2020)
- **City of Greenacres** (City Attorney, 2015 - 2018)
- **City of West Melbourne** (Interim City Attorney, 2006 - 2008)
- **City of Palm Bay** (City Attorney, 2006 - 2011)
- **City of Pompano Beach** (Assistant City Attorney, 2002 - 2006)

**Muller Mintz, P.A. (Miami, Florida)**  
(1998 - 2002) Associate Attorney, Senior Associate (1998 - 2002)

**Franscell, Strickland, Roberts & Lawrence, P.C. (Pasadena, California)**  
(1995 - 1998) Associate/Graduate Attorney (1995 - 1998)

**Office of the City Attorney | City of Los Angeles**  
Certified Legal Intern (1995)



**Riverside County Sheriff's Department (California)**  
Deputy Sheriff (1988 - 1992)

**China Lake Police Department (California)**  
Police Officer, Corporal, Detective Sergeant (1983 - 1988)

**Ridgecrest Police Department (California)**  
Reserve Police Officer (1982 - 1986)

**CERTIFICATIONS**

- **Board Certified Specialist** | Labor & Employment Law, Florida Bar (2004 - present)
- **Board Certified Specialist** | City, County & Local Government Law, Florida Bar (2008 - present)
- **Certified Inspector General Counsel** | Association of Inspectors General (2025 - present)

**LEGAL MEMBERSHIPS**

- **The Florida Bar** (admitted to State & Federal Courts)
- **State Bar of California** (admitted to State & Federal Courts)
- **Florida Municipal Attorneys Association**
- **Association of Inspectors General**



**BOARD CERTIFIED SPECIALIST** | Labor & Employment Law  
**BOARD CERTIFIED SPECIALIST** | City, County & Local Government Law



## APPOINTMENTS & POSITIONS

### **Permanent Arbitration Panels:**

- Arbitration Panel Member; Federal Aviation Administration *(since 2020)*
- Arbitration Panel Member; State of Florida & PBA *(since 2020)*
- Arbitration Panel Member; Miami-Dade County & IAFF *(since 2019)*
- Arbitration Panel Member; Broward County & IAFF *(since 2019)*
- National Mediation Board; Railroad & Airline Labor Panels *(since 2016)*
- American Arbitration Association; Commercial and Large Complex Panels *(since 2014)*
- Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service; Labor Panel *(since 2013)*
- American Arbitration Association; Labor Panel *(since 2012)*

### **Special Counsel:**

- City of Palm Bay; Code Enforcement Board Attorney *(2015 - 2020)*
- City of Palm Bay; Planning & Zoning Board Attorney *(2014 - 2020)*
- Town of Palm Shores; Ethics Matter
- Town of Melbourne Beach; Misconduct Matter
- Miami Beach Housing Authority; Ethics Matter

### **Special Magistrate Appointments:**

- Florida Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC); Impasse Resolution *(2013 - present)*
- City of Boynton Beach; Red Light Camera Adjudication *(2013 - present)*
- City of Edgewater; Code Compliance *(2017 - 2020)*
- Town of Grant-Valkaria; Code Compliance *(2015 - 2020)*
- City of Indian Harbour Beach; Code Compliance *(2014 - 2020)*
- Town of Palm Shores; Code Compliance *(2013 - 2020)*
- Town of Golden Beach; Code Compliance *(2003 - 2010)*
- City of Hollywood; Vehicle Impoundment and Code Compliance *(2003 - 2006)*

## COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

### **U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary**

- Civil Rights Coordinator, Seventh District *(2017 - present)*
- Assistant District Legal Officer, Seventh District *(2015 - present)*

### **U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps**

- Regional Director, Region 067 (Florida's Space Coast & Treasure Coast) *(2022 - 2025)*
- Regional Director, Region 065 (Florida's Southeast Region) *(2021 - 2022)*
- Regional Public Affairs Officer, Region 061 (Florida's Gulf Coast) *(2020 - 2021)*
- Public Affairs Officer/Commanding Officer, David McCampbell Battalion *(2016 - 2020)*
- Instructor/Coordinator, JAG Legal Academy *(2016 - present)*

### **Diocese of Orlando, Ordained Deacon** *(2008 - present)*

- Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church *(2010-2014)*
- Saint Joseph Catholic Church *(2008-2010; 2014-2023)*

## EDUCATION

### **Southwestern University School of Law** (1995) | Juris Doctorate

Los Angeles, California

- American Jurisprudence Book Award *(Contracts)*
- American Jurisprudence Book Award *(Remedies)*
- Dean's Merit Award

### **University of Notre Dame** (2014) | M.A., Theology

South Bend, Indiana

### **University of Redlands** (1993) | B.S., Business & Management

Redlands, California

## COLLEGE TEACHING POSITIONS

Adjunct Professor | Labor Law & Employee Standards (Aviation Management Program)  
**Florida Institute of Technology**, College of Aeronautics (2012 – 2020)

Academy Instructor | Law Topics for Law Enforcement Officers  
**Broward College**, Institute of Public Safety (2003 – 2007)

## INSTRUCTIONAL & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

*Government vs. Government – the Chapter 164 Dispute Resolution Process*  
 Annual Conference, Florida Municipal Attorneys Association  
 July, 2025 | Boca Raton, Florida

*Land Use, Technology & Government*  
 Environmental and Land Use Law Section, Florida Bar  
 October, 2020 | Webinar

*Preemption in Land Use Regulations*  
 2018 Land Use Seminar, The Florida Bar  
 May, 2018 | Orlando, Florida

*Mediation in the Public Sector (2 sessions)*  
 Florida Dispute Resolution Center, 25th Annual Conference  
 August, 2017 | Orlando, Florida

*How To Prepare For Arbitration: An Arbitrator's Perspective*  
 Florida Public Employers Labor Relations Association  
 February, 2017 | Orlando, Florida

*The Public Employees Relations Act*  
 17th Labor & Employment Law Annual Update and Certification Review  
 January, 2016 | Orlando, Florida

*So They Say You Can't Do That In Mediation? The Local Government Perspective.*  
 35th Annual Local Government Law in Florida, The Florida Bar  
 May, 2012 | Saint Augustine, Florida

*Diversity Issues & Tolerance for the Law Enforcement Officer (8 sessions)*  
 Winter Park Police Department  
 January, 2012 | Winter Park, Florida

*Social Media in the Public Sector Workplace*  
 Space Coast Public Personnel & Risk Management Association  
 February, 2010 | Viera, Florida

*501(c)(3) Corporations in the Public Sector, A Good Tool or A Risky Business?*  
 Annual Conference, International Municipal Lawyers Association  
 October, 2009 | Miami, Florida

*Attendance Issues: Aren't Employees Supposed To Attend And Ask To Leave?*  
 Annual Conference, National Public Employers Labor Relations Association  
 April, 2008 | Clearwater, Florida

*Privileges, Exemptions and Ex Parte Communications.*  
 33rd Annual Public Employment Labor Relations Forum, The Florida Bar  
 October, 2007 | Orlando, Florida

*Conducting Workplace Investigations: Weingarten, Bill of Rights, and Other Issues.*  
 31st Annual Public Employment Labor Relations Forum, The Florida Bar  
 October, 2005 | Orlando, Florida



324 South Hyde Park Avenue, Hyde Park Plaza, Suite 225, TAMPA, FL 33606-4127  
 Telephone 813-251-1210 • Facsimile 813-253-2006

April 13, 2026

**Sent By E-mail Only** [[voakes@loxahatcheegrovesfl.gov](mailto:voakes@loxahatcheegrovesfl.gov); [kwhite@loxahatcheegrovesfl.gov](mailto:kwhite@loxahatcheegrovesfl.gov)]

Valerie Oakes  
 Acting Town Manager  
 Kenthia White, FRP  
 Executive Assistant/Legal Specialist  
 Town Administration  
 Town of Loxahatchee Groves  
 155 F Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470

Re: Town of Loxahatchee Groves – Potential Representation for Contract  
 Negotiations with Town Manager Francine Ramaglia  
 (ANB File No. 0700(T))

Dear Ms. Oakes and Ms. White:

Please accept this letter as Allen Norton & Blue's proposal to assist the Town of Loxahatchee Groves with respect to contract negotiations with Town Manager Francine Ramaglia. We appreciate the Town considering our firm for assisting with its legal needs in that regard. In this letter, I have spelled out in more detail our background and our current rates. I have also included our firm's standard representation agreement as an attachment for review. Once you have had an opportunity to review our background and terms with the Town, let us know if the Town would like to retain our services.

By way of background, Allen, Norton & Blue, is a labor and employment firm that has exclusively represented employers for over 50 years. We have offices in Tampa, Miami, Orlando, and Tallahassee. We provide general employment and labor representation including employment litigation and arbitration services to our clients. We do not engage in any practice other than labor and employment law on behalf of management. Through our focus, we remain current and up to date on all labor and employment issues that affect our clients. We represent numerous public-sector clients. In that respect, I currently provide labor and employment law consultation and representation to Okeechobee County, Desoto County, Hendry County, Glades County, the Hendry County Sheriff's Office, the Lake County Sheriff's Office, the Sumter County Sheriff's

ALLEN, NORTON & BLUE, P.A.  
 PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

Affiliate of Worklaw® Network: The Nationwide Network of Management Labor and Employment Law Firms

Valerie Oakes  
Kenthia White, FRP  
April 13, 2026  
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Office, the Village of North Palm Beach, the Town of Lantana, the City of Sebring, the Town of Lake Placid, the City of Avon Park, the City of Tampa, the City of Orlando, the Town of Lady Lake, the City of Eustis, the City of Tavares, the City of Winter Garden, the City of Longwood, the City of Lake Mary, and over thirty other public employers. Our firm also serves as the labor and employment counsel for the State of Florida, the Governor's office, and most of the Sheriffs in the state.

The firm has an AV rating from Martindale Hubbell, which is the highest rating given. In addition, nearly all the partners in the firm, me included, are certified by the Florida Bar as specialists in labor and employment law. The firm is also a member of the Worklaw Network, a nationwide association of management-oriented labor and employment law firms. Our firm's participation in the Worklaw Network provides us with access to information, expertise, and contacts throughout every state in the country regarding all aspects of labor and employment law. For further general information on our firm, and the specific attorneys within each of our four offices throughout the state of Florida, please visit our [firm's website](#) and also [my profile](#) on the firm's website.

I am writing this as our formal engagement letter, which sets forth the terms of our representation. We have found that it is beneficial to our firm and our clients to reach a clear understanding of the extent of the services we are being asked to perform on behalf of the client and the nature of the financial commitments the client is making in connection with those services.

Should the Town choose to retain this firm and the undersigned, we will invoice the Town monthly based on costs incurred on the Town's behalf according to our billing rates. We charge for professional services rendered based on the number of hours we spend working on your file, in six-minute increments, multiplied by our regular rates. Our current hourly rates are \$300.00 per hour for attorneys and \$150.00 per hour for paralegals. These hourly rates are subject to an automatic 5% annual increase. We are very cognizant of the high cost of legal services and it is our commitment to provide high quality professional services in a cost-efficient manner.

Our proposed agreement to represent the Town is subject to all of the terms and conditions contained in the Standard Fee Agreement Addendum, which is attached and incorporated into this letter by reference. This Standard Fee Agreement Addendum explains the exact nature of the charges that will be billed, payment terms, and other matters involving the representation. It is an integral part of our proposed arrangement to represent the Town.

Of course, if the Town decides to retain us, it may discharge us at any time and for any reason. In such event, however, we would be entitled to compensation for services rendered and expenses incurred through the date of discharge. Likewise, we reserve the right to terminate our representation at any time for any reason (including non-payment of fees).

Valerie Oakes  
Kenthia White, FRP  
April 13, 2026  
Page 2

Should you have any further inquiries concerning our firm, our firm’s practice, or our attorneys, please feel free to contact me at the Tampa office number listed above, or via e-mail at [bkoji@anblaw.com](mailto:bkoji@anblaw.com). After you have had a chance to review this letter, should the Town elect to retain our services, please have the Town return a signed copy of this letter, acknowledging agreement to its terms.

Sincerely,

**s/ Brian Koji**  
Brian Koji

I agree with the terms and conditions set forth in this letter and the attached Standard Fee Agreement Addendum,

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosure: *Professional Association Fee Agreement Addendum*

**ALLEN, NORTON & BLUE, P.A., PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION  
STANDARD FEE AGREEMENT ADDENDUM**

This Standard Fee Agreement Addendum (the "Addendum") sets forth the terms and conditions upon which Allen, Norton & Blue, Professional Association (the "Firm") will provide legal services to a client and bill for those services. This Addendum accompanies an Engagement Letter ("Engagement Letter") addressed to a client who has engaged this law firm to represent it. This Addendum is an integral part of the Engagement Letter and together with the Engagement Letter is a contract between the Firm and the client identified in the Engagement Letter (jointly, severally, and collectively, the "Client").

1. **Professional Undertaking:** The attorney signing the Engagement Letter has primary responsibility for the Client's file and may, in his or her sole discretion, utilize other attorneys and legal assistants in the Firm who can accomplish the work. If at any time the Client has any questions, concerns, or criticisms concerning the utilization of other attorneys or legal assistants, or any other matters, the Client should contact such attorney.
2. **Fees and Billing:** The Firm will charge for professional services rendered based on the number of hours the Firm spends working on the Client's file, multiplied by the Firm's regular rates. Statements are rendered monthly and are due upon receipt. Many factors are taken into account in billing for services rendered. The attorney in charge is responsible for reviewing and approving all bills for services rendered. Hourly rates for attorneys and other members of the Firm's professional staff are based on their years of experience, specialization in training and practice, and level of professional attainment. This rate schedule is adjusted by 5% on an annual basis.
3. **Costs:** Hourly rates do not include costs such as travel, lodging, meals, telephone calls, facsimile charges, express or other delivery charges, courier services, court reporter services, deposition transcripts, filing and recording costs, title searches, expert consultants (such as engineers, accountants, actuaries, etc.), process service, photocopying, on-line legal research and, if needed, staff overtime. These costs and advances will be billed in addition to fees. The Firm will not, however, engage the services of expert consultants without the prior agreement of the Client.
4. **Security for Fees and Costs:** Florida law provides the Firm with the right to impose a lien upon documents, money and other intangibles and materials coming into its possession to secure the payment of its fees and expenses, which is called a retaining lien in transactions and a charging lien in litigation. The Firm may assert such lien rights in appropriate circumstances.
5. **Uncontrollable Forces:** Neither the Client nor the Firm shall be considered to be in default of this Agreement if delays in or failure of performance shall be due to Uncontrollable Forces, the effect of which, by the exercise of reasonable diligence, the nonperforming party could not avoid. The term "Uncontrollable Forces" shall mean any event which results in the prevention of delay of performance by a party of its obligation under this Agreement and which is beyond the reasonable control of the nonperforming party. It includes, but is not limited to fire, flood, hurricanes, earthquakes, storms, lighting, epidemic, war, riot, civil disturbance, sabotage, and governmental actions.

Neither party shall, however, be excused from performance if performance is due to forces which are preventable, removable, or remediable and which the nonperforming party could have, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, prevented, removed, or remedied with reasonable dispatch. The nonperforming party shall, within a reasonable time of being prevented or delayed from performance by an uncontrollable force, give written notice to the other party describing the circumstances and uncontrollable forces preventing continued performance of the obligations of this Agreement.

6. **Choice of Law and Forum Selection:** The Engagement Letter and this Addendum shall be governed by the internal laws of the State of Florida. Inasmuch as the Firm's offices are located in Miami-Dade, Leon, Orange, & Hillsborough Counties, Florida, the Client agrees that venue for any litigation involving the Engagement Letter, this Addendum, or the representation of Client shall be exclusively located in one of the counties named.

7. **Termination:** Although the Client has the right to terminate the Firm's representation at any time, the provisions of the Engagement Letter and this Addendum shall continue to apply after such termination. The Firm also has the right to terminate representation of the Client for any reason, subject only to the Rules of Professional Conduct, and provided that the Firm will give the Client reasonable notice of such termination, in order that the Client may have the opportunity to arrange other representation.



**Brian Koji**  
Shareholder

Tampa Office  
813-251-1210  
[bkoji@anblaw.com](mailto:bkoji@anblaw.com)

For over 25 years, Brian has devoted his practice to all aspects of labor and employment law. His work includes counseling employers on such issues as labor relations, employee discipline and discharge, wage and hour, handbook and policy development, FMLA, ADA, EEO, Affirmative Action compliance, workplace privacy, First Amendment, due process, employment investigations, social media issues, and many other areas.

Brian is certified by the Florida Bar as a Specialist in Employment and Labor Law. He has defended and represented employers in state and federal courts, arbitration forums, and before administrative agencies. Brian also has extensive experience representing employers in labor relations matters, including in collective bargaining negotiations, impasse resolution proceedings, unfair labor practice hearings, and grievance arbitrations.

Brian also spends a great deal of time counseling employers on litigation avoidance techniques, through such activities as conducting on-site management and employee trainings, producing client webinars, developing proactive policies and procedures, handling employer investigations, and providing pre-defense reviews of anticipated or planned personnel actions.

#### Court Admissions

- ❖ United States Supreme Court
- ❖ Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals
- ❖ D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals
- ❖ Federal Circuit Court of Appeals
- ❖ U.S. Court of Federal Claims
- ❖ All Florida Federal Courts
- ❖ All Florida State Courts

#### Education

- ❖ Duke University School of Law, J.D.
  - Moot Court Board and DELPF Law Journal
- ❖ University of Central Florida, B.S.B.A.
  - Economics, *summa cum laude* honors

#### Selected Memberships, Awards, and Recognition

- ❖ Board Certified by the Florida Bar in the area of Employment and Labor Law
- ❖ ABA, Section of Litigation
  - Co-chair of Employment and Labor Relations Law Committee, 2012-2015
- ❖ Academy of Florida Management Attorneys
- ❖ Selected to *Best Lawyers in America*, 2013 to present, in the areas of Litigation, Employment and Labor Law representing Management
- ❖ Selected to *Florida Super Lawyers*, 2014 to present

#### Selected Publications

- ❖ Contributing editor of Florida Law Chapter in *Employment at Will – A State by State Survey*, 2013-2020 Supp. (BNA Bloomberg Books)
- ❖ Contributor and Author, *ABA Model Jury Instructions, Employment Litigation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (2005)

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Johneeka M. Simpson | Johneeka.Simpson@gray-robinson.com | D 954.761.7500  
401 East Las Olas Boulevard, Suite 1000, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301 | T 954.761.8111 | F 954.761.8112

April 14, 2026

Valerie Oakes, CMC  
Acting Town Manager  
Office of the Town Manager  
Town of Loxahatchee Groves  
155 F Road  
Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470  
voakes@loxahatcheegrovesfl.gov

Re: Engagement Letter

Dear Ms. Oakes:

We are pleased that you have asked GrayRobinson, P.A. to serve as your legal counsel. I appreciate the confidence you have placed in our Firm, and I look forward to working with you.

It has been our experience that things go more smoothly if both our client and we have a clear understanding in writing of the scope of the engagement and the role we have agreed to play. Consequently, our representation is limited to the matter as described below. This engagement letter will also govern all subsequent matters in which we may become involved on your behalf unless a separate arrangement is made that differs materially from the terms of this engagement letter.

### **Scope of Representation**

GrayRobinson, P.A. will represent the Town of Loxahatchee Groves in the preparation and negotiation of a separation agreement with Francine L. Ramaglia.

### **Billing, Fees and Expenses**

Our Firm will charge for our professional services on an hourly basis. I will perform most of the legal work on this matter and serve as lead attorney. My current rate is \$\$325.00 per hour. We reserve the right to utilize other members of the Firm whenever, in our discretion, we deem it appropriate. If requested, we will be glad to provide you with a schedule of rates presently in effect for all individuals performing work on this matter. Our hourly rates vary and are subject to change in the future; generally in August of each year.

In addition to our professional services, we will bill the Town of Loxahatchee Groves for all disbursements and out-of-pocket expenses made or incurred. These typically include such items as document reproduction, travel expenses, long distance telephone calls, mailing charges, facsimile charges, messenger services and filing or recording fees. We may also use computerized research or other technology services to assist in handling your matters. Those services will be used when we believe that it is appropriate to do so. Expenses incurred or advanced on your behalf will be itemized on our billing invoice. Please note, if we anticipate that substantial expenses will be incurred, we will require that you pay the vendor directly and/or we may require a deposit from you in order to cover such expenses.

You will be billed periodically, usually monthly. We are happy to discuss our billing invoice with you at any time and will welcome the opportunity to address any questions you may have. In the event you should disagree with

or question any amount, you agree to communicate such disagreement or question to us, in writing, within thirty (30) days of the invoice date. Any disagreement you may have with a bill that is not communicated to us within that period shall be deemed waived.

### **Retainers**

We may request an advance Retainer for any professional fees and/or costs associated with this matter. The Firm also reserves the right to require an additional or increased Retainer in the future based upon the scope of service anticipated. Retainers will be held without interest in the Firm's Trust Account until disbursed. Such funds may be applied in payment of professional fees owed or expenses incurred. Additionally, you may be required to replenish the funds as they are used.

### **Dispute Resolution**

Should there arise any dispute concerning fees and costs earned and owed to the Firm and, if it becomes necessary for this Firm to retain an attorney or otherwise utilize the Firm's own attorneys to collect such fees and costs, the prevailing party to such dispute will be entitled to recover its attorney's fees, costs and expenses necessarily incurred. In addition, Town of Loxahatchee Groves and this Firm each hereby waive any right to a jury trial for any controversy, dispute or claim arising out of or related to this Firm's representation of the Town of Loxahatchee Groves and/or this Agreement, and we further agree that venue for any lawsuit brought thereon shall be Broward County, Florida, where this agreement is deemed made and finally executed.

### **Advance Waiver**

Because of the relatively large size of our Firm and our representation of many other clients, it is possible that one or more of our present or future clients have or will have matters adverse to the Town of Loxahatchee Groves. Our acceptance of your current representation will preclude us from accepting future representations adverse to the Town of Loxahatchee Groves, which involve matters substantially related to the work we perform in the course of this engagement. However, as a condition to our undertaking the representation described in this letter, each agrees that our acceptance of this engagement shall not preclude us from representing other clients in the future who may have interests adverse to the Town of Loxahatchee Groves with respect to matters not substantially related to the specific matter or matters for which you have engaged our services.

We agree, however, that your consent to, and waiver of, such representation shall not apply in any instance where, as a result of our representation of Town of Loxahatchee Groves, we have obtained proprietary or other confidential information of a non-public nature, that, if known to such other client, could be used in any such other matter by such client to a material or potential material disadvantage to Town of Loxahatchee Groves.

### **No Representation of Corporate Affiliates**

This will also confirm that unless we reach an explicit understanding to the contrary, we are being engaged by and will represent Town of Loxahatchee Groves, and that we are not being engaged to represent any of your parent companies, subsidiaries, affiliated entities, officers, directors, members, partners, shareholders or employees.

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence**

As part of our commitment to providing efficient and high-quality legal services, GrayRobinson may use advanced technologies, including generative artificial intelligence (AI), to assist in legal research, document drafting, and other related tasks. The use of such technologies is supervised by our qualified attorneys and is intended to enhance, not replace, the legal judgment and expertise that we bring to your case.

Please be advised of the following:

- **Human Oversight:** All work products generated by AI tools are carefully reviewed and validated by licensed attorneys in our firm. We do not rely on AI-generated content without human oversight.
- **Confidentiality:** We take your privacy and confidentiality seriously. Any information shared with or processed by AI tools is subject to the same rigorous confidentiality and data protection standards as all other information handled by our firm.
- **Limitations of AI:** While AI tools can assist in streamlining certain processes, they are not infallible. The final responsibility for the accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness of any legal advice, document, or strategy rests with our attorneys.
- **Client Consent:** By engaging our services, you acknowledge and consent to the use of generative AI tools as part of our legal services. If you have any concerns about the use of AI in your case, please inform us, and we will discuss alternative approaches to meet your needs.

### **Termination**

Unless previously terminated, our representation will terminate as follows: (1) if this is the only matter in which we represent Town of Loxahatchee Groves, our representation will terminate upon our sending our final invoice for services rendered in this matter; and (2) if we represent Town of Loxahatchee Groves in more than one matter, our representation of each matter will terminate upon sending the final invoice for that matter, and the attorney-client relationship will terminate completely (absent any new or subsequent engagements) upon our sending the final invoice in the last open matter.

### **Client Review**

I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this engagement agreement. Likewise, you have the right to have this agreement reviewed by an outside party or other professional prior to signing. You understand that the Firm is not engaged until the signed original engagement agreement is returned to us, including any requested advance Retainer.

### **Entire Agreement**

These terms, and the attached Additional Understanding Regarding Representation and Privacy Policy, which are incorporated by reference, constitute our entire Agreement for the representation of Town of Loxahatchee Groves in this matter. There are no other arrangements or agreements regarding our representation of you which are not expressed in this Agreement. Any modification of the Agreement must be in writing, by mail, fax or e-mail. The Agreement is binding on you and on GrayRobinson, and the respective legal representatives and successors of each.

If the terms of this engagement as set forth in this letter meet with your approval, please indicate by having the extra copy of this letter signed in the space provided below and return it to our offices.

We appreciate the confidence and trust you have placed in us as your legal counsel, and I encourage you to communicate with me if at any time you have questions on the status or progress of your matters. I look forward to working with you and your staff on any matters you deem appropriate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Valerie Oakes, CMC  
April 14, 2026  
Page 4

Very truly yours,

Johneeka M. Simpson

The terms of this representation are accepted  
this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

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By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Attached: Additional Understanding Regarding Representation  
Privacy Policy

## **Additional Understanding Regarding Representation**

### **Payment of Invoices**

In the event that our invoices are not timely paid, or that payment terms satisfactory to us are not established, we reserve the right to renegotiate the terms of this engagement and/or to pursue our other remedies, including the right to charge you interest of 1½% per month for any invoice which has not been paid within 30 days of the date the invoice is mailed or emailed to you. We also reserve the right to withdraw as your counsel in the event you fail to honor your agreement with respect to our legal fees or for any just reason as permitted or required under the Florida Code of Professional Responsibility or as permitted by the rules of courts of the State of Florida. In the event of our withdrawal, you will promptly pay for all services rendered by us prior to the date of withdrawal.

### **Electronic Data**

This will serve as our disclosure that the Firm does presently and will continue to maintain confidential and privileged information in electronic form. This practice will be followed in our work on this matter. The Firm does take measures that it understands to be reasonable and consistent with current business practices to protect that information.

### **Outcome or Result**

We will strive to do our best to meet your needs in this and any other matter we subsequently undertake for you. Either at the commencement, or during the course of our representation, we may express opinions or beliefs concerning the litigation or various courses of action and the results that might be anticipated. Any such statement made by any attorney, consultant or employee of our Firm is intended to be an expression of opinion only, based on information available to us at the time, and should not be construed as a promise or guarantee. We cannot and do not make any representations, warranties or guarantees concerning the outcome of this or any representation we undertake. We will give you our best advice, render opinions, and seek to obtain the desired result. In this regard, it is most important that we communicate regularly.

### **File Retention**

Following the termination of the representation/engagement, any otherwise nonpublic information you have supplied to the Firm (unless previously removed or destroyed by specific request) will be retained by us and kept confidential in accordance with applicable rules of professional conduct, and the Firm reserves the right to send such materials to off-site storage at any time. Any retrieval of material once the file is closed may incur an expense for which you will be responsible. The Firm's retention policy provides that we retain stored and closed files for a period of ten (10) years after which they may be destroyed. Thus, if there are any documents which you need from those we possess, we recommend that you obtain them at the conclusion of our work on this matter. Failure to do so will waive and indemnify the Firm from any liability for the destruction of materials.

# GRAYROBINSON

## PRIVACY POLICY

Attorneys, like other professionals who advise on personal financial matters, are now required by a new federal law to inform their clients of their policies regarding privacy of client information. Attorneys have been, and continue to be, bound by professional standards of confidentiality that are even more stringent than those required by this new law. Therefore, we have always protected your right to privacy and do not take lightly the confidence you place in us.

In the course of providing our clients with financial and tax planning and preparation services, employment counseling, bankruptcy activities, certain real estate services, and other certain financial services, we receive significant personal financial information about you either from you or with your authorization. If you are a current or former client of GrayRobinson, P.A. you should know that all information that we receive about you is held in extreme confidence, and is not released to any person or entity outside of this law firm, except as agreed upon by you, or as required under applicable law.

We retain records relating to professional services that we provide so that we are better able to assist you with your professional needs and, in some cases, to comply with professional guidelines. In order to guard your non-public personal information, we maintain physical, electronic, and procedural safeguards that comply with our professional standards.

Please call if you have any questions regarding this matter. Your privacy, our professional ethics, and the ability to provide you with quality legal services are very important to us.

# Johneeka M. Simpson

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## Associate

[johneeka.simpson@gray-robinson.com](mailto:johneeka.simpson@gray-robinson.com)

**T** 954.761.8111

**F** 954.761.8112

**D** 954.761.7500

### Fort Lauderdale

401 East Las Olas Boulevard Suite 1000 Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

## Focus

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Litigation

Class Action Defense

Product Liability and Toxic Tort

Labor and Employment

***First-generation attorney adeptly handling complex commercial, insurance, and class action litigation. Representing clients at the state and federal levels, leveraging invaluable insight and extensive legal experience.***

Item 1.

Johneeka M. Simpson is an associate attorney practicing out of the GrayRobinson Fort Lauderdale office. Her practice includes handling a diverse range of litigation, encompassing complex commercial disputes, class actions, product liability cases, landlord-tenant disputes, and labor and employment matters. While Johneeka is highly skilled in advocating for her clients in court through oral advocacy, she is equally committed to resolving issues outside the courtroom whenever possible.

While in law school, Johneeka participated in the Constance Baker Motley Mock Trial Competition as a member of the Black Law Students Association Trial Team. Additionally, she contributed to UF Law's esteemed Trial Practice course as a teaching assistant. Johneeka gained valuable experience as a judicial clerk for the Honorable Kristine Van Vorst in the 8th Judicial Circuit Court, focusing on statutory interpretation involving creditor's rights and remedies, as well as landlord-tenant disputes.

[Show full biography](#)

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## Affiliations

Broward County Bar Association

The Florida Bar

Young Lawyers Division

Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Bar Association

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## Credentials

J.D., University of Florida College of Law, 2021

B.S., Florida State University, 2018, *cum laude*

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## Admissions

Florida

U.S. District Court for the Southern and Middle Districts of Florida