

July 12, 2021

Zeriah K. Folston, MPA

7220 NW 128th Place

Alachua, FL 32615

Honorable Mayor and Commissioners,

I am interested in serving you and our neighbors as your Interim Director of Equity and Inclusion. I believe my local government and private sector executive level experience, education, energy, character, and love for our community make me an ideal candidate to serve as the Interim Director of Equity and Inclusion under your leadership.

As city manager, I have provided leadership and policy guidance to City Commissions in areas relating to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program, Affirmative Action (AA), Small Business Enterprise (SBE), Disability programs and Diversity initiatives. I have lead investigative complaints of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and other related matters, and propose remedial action. I've ensured diversity in contracting, proposed policies, where appropriate, for the implementation of comprehensive equal opportunity and diversity programs in adherence to equal opportunity laws, policies, procedures, and related matters. I've also managed and/or administrated proposed strategies and initiatives related to diversity and equal opportunity and related matters in employment, purchasing, services, programs, and activities.

I would love to discuss with you in more detail some specific examples of my unique experiences and passion for helping us achieve many of our organizational goals this office is responsible for.

I would love the opportunity to serve as the Interim Director of the Office of Equity and Inclusion. I'm available to expound more on the above and additional concepts and/or roles handled by this office.

Thanks for your consideration,

Zeriah K. Folston, MPA

Policy Oversight Administrator

City of Gainesville

Zeriah K. Folston, MPA
7220 NW 128th Place
Alachua, Florida 32615
Cell Ph: (352) 256-6230
Email: zeriahfolston@gmail.com

Qualifications:

Several years of Executive Level experience in public and private organizations, with expertise in the following areas:

Synergy	Equity and Inclusion
Strong Governmental Budget/Finance Skills	Economic Development
Grants and Contracts	Consensus Building
Intergovernmental Relations	Strategic Planning
Legislative Action Plans and Advocacy	Innovative Citizen Involvement

Innovative, analytical, dependable, and results-oriented professional with proven success in increasing departmental and organizational efficiency through effective business strategies. Great personality and works well with others. Experience researching, designing, and implementing strategic and complex change initiatives in both public and private companies. Excels at supervising and motivating staff to increase productivity; adaptable to changing situations. Has the ability to teach and learn difficult processes well. Strong team-working, team-building and multi-tasking skills and successfully completes projects within time and budget constraints. Comprehensive knowledge of public and private sector management principals, policies, creative problem resolution, and leading and developing multi-functional teams. Proven track record of successfully leading organizational change.

Education:

University of Central Florida **August 2006 to December 2008**
Orlando, FL

Master of Public Administration

Relevant coursework: Grant and Contract Management, Public Organization Management, Public Financial Management, Strategic Planning and Management, Analytic Techniques for Public Administration I, Managing Community and Economic Development, and Volunteerism in Nonprofit Management, Human Resource Management

University of Florida **August 2004 to August 2006**
Gainesville, FL

Bachelor of Science in Family, Youth and Community Science
Minor: Leadership

Relevant coursework: Introduction to Social and Economic Perspectives on the Community Principles of Management, Leadership Development, Evaluating Non-Profit Programs, Contemporary Family Problems and Interventions

Current & Past Boards:

International City/County Management Association (ICMA)	Term: Current
Florida City and County Manager Association (FCCMA)	Term: Current
Florida Government Finance Officers Association (FGFOA)	Term: Past

Experience:

Policy Oversight Administrator **March 2020 – Current**
Clerk of the Commission
City of Gainesville, FL

This is responsible administrative and supervisory work overseeing new and updated policies and keeping the commission and staff informed of such changes. The single position allocated to this classification reports to the Clerk of the Commission. Work is performed under limited supervision and may be reviewed upon completion. Work in this class is distinguished from other classifications by its supervision and coordination of administrative activities, latitude for discretion and decision making, interaction with high level internal and external personnel, and work of a confidential and sensitive nature.

- Researches and reports to Commission on policy and analyzes decisions surrounding local issues, social policies, fiscal policies, etc.
- Manages policy research program with a team of Executive Assistants and UF Fellows to conduct research assigned and coordinates with staff to plan the legislative work plan.
- Coordinates with department heads/staff on research and development for Commission policies and initiatives and effects of state and federal legislation on the City.
- Facilitates Commission initiative related groups and serves as a commission liaison.
- Establishes connections and programmatic resources from local and national organizations helping cities and elected officials with policy initiatives (e.g. UF, Santa Fe College, Urban League, Brookings Institution, New America, etc.)
- Researches and advises commission on best practices drawn from statewide and national associations of elected officials (e.g. National League of Cities, Florida League of Cities, and U.S. Conference of Mayors).
Attends work on a continuous and regular basis.

Chief Operating Officer **January 2019 – June 2019**
North Central Florida Diagnostics and DNA Technologies (NCF DNA)
Alachua, FL *Corporate Headquarters*
New Brunswick, NJ

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible to the CEO/Co-Founder and Co-Founder of NCF DNA. The primary responsibility of the COO is to direct all day to day operations of 70 combined staff members and to ensure continued revenue growth at our Corporate Headquarters and NJ location. The COO oversees an outstanding operational team of Directors and Managers who oversee Finance, IT, Business Affairs and Development,

Government Affairs and Development, Sales, Marketing, Nursing, Molecular Scientist, Technologist, Accessioning, Human Resources, Facilities, Supply Chain, Warehouse, Education, Call Center, Credentialing and Quality.

Current Projects: Laboratory Renovations, New Equipment Purchase, Developing and Attracting New Talent, Nurse Education (3 in house Nurses), Technologist Training, Partnership with HBCUs and Santa Fe College for Technologist Pipeline, Community Partnership with City of Gainesville, Joint Commission Preparation, Updating Policy and Procedures, Employee Feedback Process and Form.

Vice President of Government Affairs and Development

October 2018 – June 2019

North Central Florida Diagnostics and DNA Technologies (NCF DNA)

Alachua, FL *Corporate Headquarters*

New Brunswick, NJ

The Vice President of Government Affairs and Development is responsible for all local, state, and federal legislative and policy strategies to support all facets of NCF DNA. The representative with federal government officials, think tanks and influential policy organizations. Responsible for representing NCF DNA in legislative and policy matters with national governments as well as with quasi-governmental agencies by providing policy direction, developing and coordinating government affairs initiatives, and lobbying for the company's interests.

City Manager

February 2018 to July 2018

City of Palatka

Putnam County, Florida

The City Manager is appointed by the City Commission, and serves as the administrative head of the city. The primary responsibilities of the City Manager are to see that the policies of the elected council are implemented and that the entire community is being served. Palatka has approximately 10,500 citizens, 150+ employees, and a 30+ Million Budget. The City Provides a variety of services: Airport, Building and Zoning, Cemeteries (3), City Clerk, Fire Department (ISO 2), Finance Department, Natural Gas Authority, Golf Course, Parks and Recreation, Police Department, Public Works, Water, Wastewater, and Storm water.

- Recommended and Implemented the City's first Living Wage of \$11hr. This ensured no City employee made under \$11hr. The City had long-term employees making as low as \$9.05.
- Met the City Commissions desire to provide job opportunities for young professionals from Palatka within the City. My first hirer was a young millennial female as the City's Finance Director.
- Developed the City's first Policy and Procedures Committee to revamp old out dated policies.
- The City had gone over a year without an IT Director. I hired an IT Director at a cost savings to the City while increasing the qualifications and certifications of the position.
- Lead effort to bring in new City Legislative Lobbying firm. Revamped Cities Lobbying Plan.
- I hired a Planning Director for the City at a cost savings to the City while increasing the qualifications and certifications of the position.

City Manager

February 2016 to February 2018

City of Archer

Alachua County, Florida

The City Manager is the administrative head of the municipal government. He directs and supervises all the Departments of the City. He is to efficiently manage municipal services. It is the responsibility of the City Manager to carry out the policies established by the City Commission including the enforcement of municipal laws and ordinances. The City Manager prepares and submits the annual budget, budget message, and capital program in accordance with the City Charter. The City Manager recommends policy to the City Commission; coordinates with agencies at the State level and local level; and coordinates local emergency planning and management. Performs the duties of the City Clerk and City Treasurer. Performs the duties of HR, Public Works, Capital Projects, Grant, Recreation, Legislative Affairs and Economic Development management. Successfully lobbied the State for approximately \$966,000 towards community revitalization, nitrogen reduction initiatives into our local aquafer, and waste water development. The City Manager is appointed by the City Commission.

- Lead Community Engagement Efforts throughout Community
- Started first City Wide Movie Night
- Planned the first Annual Party in the Park
- Held first Business Leaders Round Table
- Managed Cities Multiple Rental facilities
- Instituted Stronger Financial Controls
- Bid Out Multiple City Contracts
- Developed Policies and Procedures
- Lobbied State and Local Governments on behalf of the City
- Advised City Officials on Legislative initiatives that would have an impact on the City.
- Navigating the City through a State Financial Audit (Audit was in place before my arrival)
- Restructured City's Health Insurance Cost at a savings to the City and benefit to the employees
- Implemented and recommend employees receive a 3% Pay Increase
- Implemented and recommend employees receive retirement through FRS
- Instituted several Capital Projects (New Pavilion Roof and Redesigned Senior Center Interior)
- Purchased \$10,000 worth of Christmas Lights
- Rebuilt 2 City Parks with two separate \$50,000 FRDAP awards
- Rebuilding City Basketball Court with FRDAP funds
- Received \$8,000 DEO Grant for Economic Development
- Received \$650,00 through Florida Legislature for Waste Water Project
- Received approximately \$208,000 for the Holly Hills Storm Water Improvement Project SRWM and TMDL Funded
- Secured \$250,000 towards Community Gym through WSPP
- Finalized PER for City's Waste Water Facility
- Implemented Rebranding Strategy
- Purchased New City Website (Launch February 2018)
- Refreshed City's Facebook Account
- Implemented New Recreation Programs for Community (educational, social, and athletic)

Assistant Supervisor of Elections
Alachua County Supervisor of Elections
Alachua County, Florida

January 2014 to February 2016

- Supervises and coordinates the activities of subordinate employees including determining work procedures and schedules; issuing instructions and assigning duties; reviewing work; recommending personnel actions; conducting performance reviews; and conducting office training and orientation.

- Assisted in the development of office \$4 million dollars budget.
- Developed, monitored and administered federal and state grant funds.
- Lobbied State on the behalf of elections related reforms. Researched and reviewed policy recommendations.
- Advised SOE on Legislative initiatives that would have an impact on the organization and voter.
- Prepares election qualifying information and forms for candidate packets. Qualifies candidates.
- Oversees the audits of election campaign reports.
- Manages personnel records and payroll for poll workers and Election Day staff.
- Oversees the election warehouse operation. Ensures all voted ballots, official papers, and supplies are processed into the central election headquarters pursuant to security procedures.
- Ensures compliance with Florida records retention law.
- Works as office liaison with municipalities providing assistance and support to city clerks in conducting local municipal elections.
- Developed and managed organizational policy changes. Developed presentations on the impact of these policies on the organization and the voter experience.
- Works as office liaison with civic groups and organizations to recruit poll workers, coordinate planned activities and to provide them with information and support as required.
- Works as liaison with other County departments to coordinate programs and activities as needed. Assists the Supervisor of Elections as needed in preparing reports, budgets, and attending meetings.

Budget Analyst

April 2010 to January 2014

Office of Management and Budget
Alachua County, Florida

- Budget Analyst for General Government \$3+ million dollars (County Commission, County Manager Office and County Attorney Office), Constitutional Officers \$83+ million dollars (Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections, Property Appraiser, Clerk of Courts and Tax Collector), Judicial Officers \$2 million dollars (including Article V Compliance), \$10 million dollars Court Services, Combined Communications Center and the MSTU Law Enforcement Fund; Previous departments: Environmental Protection, Administrative Services and Growth Management
- Monitors grants, grants funds and grant revenues. Balancing Funds and Revenue Projections
- Monitored legislative bills that would have an impact on the County's ability to collect property tax revenues.

Grants/Contracts Specialist

February 2009 to April 2011

Office of Management and Budget
Alachua County, Florida

- Facilitates County grant proposals by searching out available grant offerings at local, state, and national levels that are appropriate to the County revenue diversification effort.
- Prepares, writes, and submits grant applications
- Assists other County departments in the development, writing and review of grant applications.
- Analyzes grants and grant agreements, reviews language and makes modification and re-drafts, as required.
- Evaluates compliance with grant and grant related contract requirements.
- Assists in the preparation of the annual budget with regard to grants and grant related contracts.

- Provides periodic updates to the County Manager and Board on the status of grants in the County.
- Works with lobbyists and state and federal agencies on grant issues.

**Internship w/
Randall H. Reid County Manager**
Alachua County, Florida

August 2008 to February 2009

- Worked with the County Manager, Assistant County Manager, Legislative Affairs Director, Administrative Services Director, Growth Management Director, and the OMB Director on different initiatives
- Developed inexpensive tracking system of over 100 citizen responses with 300+ suggestions for Alternative Futures. Alternative Futures was instituted by the County Manager to encourage citizen involvement in the budget process.
- Assisted a County Commissioner while he served as President of the Florida Association of Counties. Was able to work on lobbying efforts on the behalf of the organization at the State and Federal level.

Financial Assistant
IFAS SPONSORED PROGRAMS (ISP)
University of Florida

March 2008 to August 2008

**Internship w/
Clovis Watson Jr. City Manager/ Marcian K. Brown Finance Director**
City of Alachua, Florida

June 2007 to February 2008

MARK A. CUNNINGHAM, AICP, CPM, ICMA-CM

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Personal Email: cunningham1295@outlook.com
Work Email: mcunning@scgov.net

July 12, 2021

Oscar Calderon,
Talent Acquisition Manager
Human Resources/Organizational Development Department
City of Gainesville

RE: Letter of Reference for Zeria Folston for the Executive Assistant Position at
the Sarasota County Government

Dear Mr. Calderon:

It is with great confidence that I submit this letter of reference for Zeria Folston for the position of Interim Equity and Inclusion Director. I have known Zeria dating back to 2016 when he was the City Manager for the City of Archer, Florida. As a member of the Florida City and County Management Association and past member of Board of Director, I worked closely with Zeria for five years and observed his tenacity as he sought to identify opportunities for enhancement of city services and programs at the City of Archer and Palatka. While serving in these positions, Zeria tirelessly and courageously resolved challenges with patience, high ethical standards, and a desire to accomplish goals in a timely manner. Especially as they related to the City Council's goals and objectives.

Zeria's leadership skills, provides the groundwork for contract negotiation, decision-making, and the critical thinking needed to move a city forward through stagnation and roadblocks. He accomplished this while carefully and meticulously caring for his relationships with elected officials, offering his expert advice and recommendations when needed. He regularly and consistently met with city executive staff to keep up-to-speed on projects and developments and he drew from his wealth of former experiences to address current affairs.

Zeria Folston is a friend to citizens. As noted on his resume, he remains actively involved in the Florida City and County Management Association, and the International City/County Management Association.

Zeria Folston has the talent, knowledge, experience, fortitude, and will lead a large or small city to accomplish its goals to build a vibrant, well organized, economically secure and productive city. Without reservation, I highly recommend Zeria Folston for any leadership role he chooses to seek.



Mark A. Cunningham
Assistant County Administrator