

# **County Manager**

## **Clay County, FL**

(Population 187,000)

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Located approximately 30 miles south of downtown Jacksonville, FL, Clay County is a growing and dynamic county. In 2000, its population was just over 140,000. Today the Census Bureau estimates it to be 187,000. People are drawn by the County's quality of life and many amenities. The St. Johns River (which forms the County's eastern boundary) is home to the world's largest manatee population and provides many magnificent waterfront vistas. Within a few miles, recreational opportunities abound - boating, fishing, scuba diving, water skiing and sailing as well as tennis, golf and a variety of environmental/naturalist activities. Further east are the Atlantic Ocean beaches and fabled St. Augustine. The climate is outstanding with an average year-round temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit. The County's schools are very good and crime is low. Housing comes in many varieties - the northeastern portion of the County is suburban while the southern and western areas are rural. Housing prices are quite reasonable. Most important, though, are the people. They are warm, friendly, low key and pleasant with strong conservative values. The County is simply a great place to raise a family, to work and to play.

### **HISTORY**

The recorded history of Clay County begins with the Timucuan Indians. They were the early inhabitants of the region but in 1728 were virtually wiped out by the British and their allies, the Lower Creek and Seminole Indians. Shortly thereafter the Spanish built a fort at a little north of what is now Green Cove Springs. Except for a 20 year period beginning in 1763 when the British controlled Florida, the Spanish oversaw the area from 1730 to 1819 when the United States purchased Florida from the Spanish under the Adams-Onis Treaty.

The Second Seminole War started in 1835 and Gary's Ferry (the site of present-day Middleburg) was chosen as a supply depot for the U.S. Army on Florida's east coast. In 1858, Clay County was carved out of Duval County (where Jacksonville lies). In mid-1864, Union forces established a fort at Magnolia Springs on the St. Johns River where they could send troops to apply pressure to Confederate forces located within the county. While Union troops were returning from a successful raid on Middleburg, Confederate forces under the command of Capt.

J.J. Dickinson engaged the Union troops and inflicted heavy casualties. The battle lasted 45 minutes with no casualties among the Confederate troops.

After the Civil War, tourism became a vital part of Clay County life. Northerners were drawn to natural springs that promised healing and warm winter climates that offered respite from frigid northern winters. The tourists delighted in the wildlife and vegetation found along the banks of the creeks and rivers. Dozens of hotels were built to accommodate the visitors who came by steamboat. Hotels such as the St. Elmo, Magnolia Springs, Clarendon, and the Oakland Hotel invited tourists to rest and relax in the sunny climate of Florida. Families along the St. Johns River opened their plantation homes to northern visitors. Among the visitors were Ulysses S. Grant, President Grover Cleveland (who had spring water shipped to the White House), Buffalo Bill, and Sitting Bull. The height of tourism in Clay County spanned three decades, from the 1870's to the early 1900's. Tourism in Clay County went into decline when Henry Flagler's railroad reached Miami, and south Florida became easily accessible.

Particularly since World War II, the military has had a very strong presence in Clay County. In 1939, 28,000 acres on Kingsley Lake in central Clay County were purchased by the Florida National Guard as a new training site. In heavy use during WWII, Camp Blanding was not deemed a viable permanent post after the war. It is now a training site for the Florida National Guard with over 70,000 acres, and the museum there is the largest in Clay County. During WWII Lee Field, in Green Cove Springs, was a flight-training center. One of the flight instructors at Lee Field during this time was Ed McMahon of the Tonight Show/Star Search fame. At the end of the war, the Navy converted Lee Field into a headquarters for the mothball fleet.

### **GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND COMMERCE**

The County covers 644 square miles and is bounded by the St. Johns River (and St. Johns County) to the east, Duval County to the north, Bradford and Baker Counties to the west and Putnam County to the south. The climate is considered humid, subtropical with mild winters (average temperature of 52 degrees Fahrenheit in January) and warm summers (average temperature of 82 degrees in July). The area has seasons to a limited degree. Hurricanes do occur from time to time but are actually rare in this part of Florida. For example, the area has only received one direct hit since 1871 and that was Hurricane Dora, a category II hurricane in 1964. Rainfall averages 52 inches per year and falls primarily during the period from June to September.

Per the 2008 Census, 13% of the County's population was less than 10 years old, 21% were between 10 and 24, 28% between 25 and 44 and 28% between and 45 and 64 while the remaining 10% were 65 years old and older. 84% of the population was White, 9% Black, 3% Asian and the remainder was either another race or a combination of races. The Hispanic

population was just under 7%. The median family income was \$68,500 and 22.5% of the population had college or advanced degrees.

Clay County is largely residential and many of its residents commute to nearby Jacksonville/Duval County for employment. The County's five largest employers include: Clay County School District (4,000 employees), Clay County government (over 1,000 employees), Orange Park Medical Center (950 employees), HCA Patient Account Services (560) and Clay Electric Cooperative (410).

## THE GOVERNMENT

Clay County has its own charter and is organized similarly to most other counties around the country. The Board of County Commissioners sets policy. It appoints a County Manager who oversees the following functions: Economic Development (via a contract with the Chamber of Commerce), Finance and Administration, Comprehensive Planning and Zoning, Fire/Rescue, Human Services, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, Public Building Maintenance, Roads and Streets, Solid Waste, Stormwater and Tourism. The County Sheriff (separately elected) provides police services. Other constitutional officers include: Clerk of the Courts, Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections and Tax Collector. The County's total FY 2010 - 2011 budget is \$212.4 million and breaks down as follows: General Government - \$33.8 million, Court related - \$1.4 million, Public Safety - \$68.1 million, Environment and Solid Waste - \$20.6 million, Transportation (including roads) - \$54 million, Economic Development - \$3.1 million, Human Services - \$5.2 million and Libraries and Recreation - \$9.7 million. Transfers make up almost all of the remaining budget.

The County Commission is composed of five (5) members who serve staggered four year terms. Each member represents a single district and only the voters of that district can vote for that commissioner. An election occurs in November of even numbered years. In the 2010 November election, one of the incumbent commissioners is unopposed and one is being challenged. Although elections are partisan, all of the current Commissioners are Republican as are a large number of the County's voters. The Commission Chair is selected by the Commission from among its members. The elected body is generally collegial and its members work reasonably well together. They respect and support the staff.

Over the past five years, the County has been well run and the Commissioners have been supportive of the County Manager. The current

manager is leaving of his own volition for a similar post in a county twice as large in Arizona.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

The elephant in the room is the same elephant that virtually every other jurisdiction in the country faces. The County's financial resources have declined along with property values and have been further limited by an amendment to the state constitution and by legislative action. As a result, the portion of the government overseen by the County Manager has reduced its staffing by 131 positions over the past few years and the employee count is now under 600. Further, overall, operating costs have been cut 20%. Opportunities to become more efficient are limited and yet it is anticipated that revenues will continue to decline in at least FY 2010/2011 and probably beyond. A second significant issue is balancing the County's suburban and rural interests. Since 1990 the population has almost doubled. While the influx of people has slowed dramatically with the downturn, growth will one day resume and the County needs to be prepared. At the same time, the residents of both the urban and rural areas need to feel the County cares about them and is taking actions to improve their lives. All other issues are relatively modest in comparison.

## **THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

The County Commission is looking for three things primarily: professionalism, strength and integrity. It wants a strong manager who is not afraid to delegate and to smile, who is diplomatic and strategic, and who has a sense of humor while also understanding the chain of command. While it sets policy, it expects the individual to run the County operations and do so based on management skill, an extensive and diverse knowledge base, integrity and a strong ethical core. The individual will have outstanding communications skills and be able to articulate positions persuasively. The manager will also be diplomatic and know how to make his/her point in a way that does not offend. Customer service and community relations will be extremely important to the selected individual. The manager will be comfortable in the community and mingling with people of every economic strata. She/he will be responsive to both the elected officials and the community. As a manager, the individual will do his/her homework and be prepared. He/she will also be very flexible. No two days as a County Manager are the same and different situations will require different, well thought out and prompt responses. Strong decision making skills will be important to the individual's success. The Commission also expects the manager to have strong analytical skills and to understand politics while not being involved in them. While having a broad knowledge base and being a jack of all trades is important, financial acumen is critical. The County is fiscally conservative and while it recognizes good government costs money, it does not want to pay more than is absolutely necessary for it. The manager will be team-oriented but also understand the importance of accountability. Experience in the private sector is a plus.

A Bachelors degree from an accredited college or university, with a major in administration, management or a related field, is required. A Masters degree is preferred. The ideal candidate

will have a minimum of five to ten years of progressively responsible management experience in public or private sector.

### **COMPENSATION**

Compensation is negotiable and depends on qualifications, but the starting salary is expected to be between \$140,000 and \$180,000. Associated benefits are excellent.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Qualified candidates should e-mail their resumes to **Recruit27@cb-asso.com** (faxed or mailed resumes will not be accepted) no later than November 19, 2010. All questions should be addressed to Colin Baenziger at 561-707-3537.

### **RECRUITMENT SCHEDULE**

Applications will be screened between November 23rd and December 17th. Interviews are anticipated to be conducted on January 6th and 7th with a selection being made shortly thereafter.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES**

Under Florida law, all applications become a public record upon receipt by Colin Baenziger & Associates. The County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and a drug-free/smoke-free workplace. Veteran's preference will be awarded if applicable under Florida law.