

Leadership



I arrived in this office still a work in progress, but not without a certain amount of knowledge, skills, and abilities I had acquired along the way from which to draw upon. Still, I was new to this role, and the approach I took was to humble myself, listen more than I talked, and learn from those who have been discharging these duties for much longer than I have been.

I learned my first leadership lessons by observing my grandfathers, who were both pastors. Rev. Boyce Robert Robinson and Rev. Jack Johnson Bradshaw had very different leadership styles. In a nutshell, granddaddy Robinson was beloved, while granddaddy Bradshaw was feared. Both men were highly respected. I would like to think that my style combines and balances those character traits depending upon the circumstances.

Much later in life, during my private sector days as a business development director, I came to appreciate the importance and value of having the numbers work and making hard choices when they didn't. My time in the classroom as an adjunct college professor taught me patience.

Of course, my leadership approach was shaped and tempered the most by my time as a United States Army Officer. I will not belabor the point. Suffice it to say that I was placed in charge of 15 soldiers and four tanks worth over \$8 million in my first permanent leadership assignment.

At that time, I was 23 years old.

Therefore, when I arrived in this office at age 53, I was not caught up in the title County Commissioner or overwhelmed by the responsibility nor consumed with the relative power attendant with this position. I have just been focused on doing the job.



Proudly standing with my colleagues on the Board of Commissioners in 2020. Left to Right: Commissioners Nancy Jester, Jeff Rader, Larry Johnson, Mereda Davis Johnson, Kathie Gannon, and Lorraine Cochran Johnson.

DeKalb



County

I can distill my leadership approach to a few simple ideas:

- Have clearly defined objectives
- Possess the ability to communicate your intent clearly
- Consider, Reflect, then Decide
- Surround yourself with smart, talented people who can execute and who feel empowered to tell you the truth
- Don't overthink or over-complicate things
- Practice humility
- Be strong without flexing
- Hold firm to your convictions while retaining the ability to modify as necessary when conditions change
- Be nice and respectful to other people while retaining the willingness to drop the hammer when that is warranted
- Derive pleasure from what you are doing and try to maintain a sense of humor
- Anticipate. Prepare. Adapt.
- As a leader, you cannot please everyone

There is nothing particularly original or revolutionary about what I have articulated. But I have tried to bring this operating methodology to my position as County Commissioner. I know that I do not check all of those boxes all the time, but I do aspire to. As previously stated, I am still a work in progress.

DeKalb County – District 4

Accomplishments

- Unanimously elected Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners in 2020, successfully adapted and provided steady leadership amid a pandemic
- Elected unanimously as Deputy Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners in 2018 and 2019
- Chair, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee in 2019: Instituted audit oversight for purchasing contracts in excess of \$3 million, saving taxpayers over \$5.6 million
- Chair, County Operations Committee in 2017 and 2018, adopted the No Kill Standard for our Animal Shelter

