

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
February 24, 2015
6:00 P.M.**

Present: Commission Chairman Thomas Bridges
District 1 Commissioner Robert Franklin
District 2 Commissioner David Strickland
District 3 Commissioner Jeff Jacques
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen

Staff: County Manager, Beth Thomas
County Clerk, Elaine Evans
County Engineer, John Phillips

Item 1 & 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Bridges called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. He then led the invocation and pledge to the American flag.

Item 3: Items to Be Discussed:

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked for comments from the public. There were no public comments. Chairman Bridges said that he wanted to update everyone on House Bill 170. He said that he has talked with Representative Alan Powell as well as Senator John Wilkinson and Senator Frank Ginn. He said that Franklin County would lose revenue from this bill. He said that this bill was sent back to the committee for further review. It has not as yet been passed by the House. County Manager Beth Thomas prepared an analysis of HB 170 (Transportation Funding Legislation) showing the portion that Franklin County would lose if this bill passes.

Chairman Bridges said that Representative Alan Powell asked that a letter be sent to his attention from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners stating the negative effects that HB 170 would have on Franklin County. Representative Powell stated to Chairman Bridges that this would help him in his efforts to gain support on changing the part of this bill that would negatively impact the funding to the counties. Chairman Bridges said that some form of HB 170 is likely to pass but that the Commission Board needs to be proactive in keeping Franklin County from losing revenue.

Commissioner Strickland thanked Mrs. Thomas for her analysis of HB 170 and its impact on Franklin County. He also thanked Commissioner Jacques for researching and sending

information to the Commission Board concerning the impact of this bill. Commissioner Wester said that he has also done some research on this bill. He said that Representative David Stover from Palmetto was one of the sponsors of HB 170. When the bill came out of committee, Representative Stover took his name off the bill and would not give his support because it is a \$500,000,000 tax increase to the citizens of the State of Georgia. No offset of the tax increase was included in the State budget.

Commissioner Jacques said that he would like for a letter to be written collectively from the Commission Board to include data showing the negative financial impact to Franklin County. He would like for this letter to be sent both to Senator John Wilkinson and Representative Alan Powell to let them know that Franklin County does support funding for transportation but that it does not need to be done at the expense of counties, cities and school systems. Counties, cities and school systems are already feeling the effects of significant funding decreases. Chairman Bridges then asked Mrs. Thomas to draft a letter to Senator Wilkinson and Representative Powell stating the negative effects of this bill to Franklin County. Also, to ask them to oppose HB 170 as it is currently written. This letter will come from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, signed by each Commissioner. Chairman Bridges asked if anyone had further questions or comments on HB 170. There was no further discussion.

Chairman Bridges said that Franklin County is closely watching Senate Bill 82 at this time. This bill is to change the bill that was previously passed concerning trucking firms. Trucking firms are now paying taxes to the Department of Revenue instead of directly to the County. After the trucking companies pay the taxes to the Department of Revenue, the money is then sent back to the County. Commissioner Strickland said that not all the money collected is sent back to the County, that a portion is kept by the State. Chairman Bridges said that due to this bill, Franklin County loses approximately \$175,000 per year.

Senator Wilkinson is introducing a bill in the Senate and is also working with the Association County Commissioner of Georgia (ACCG) to present data showing the negative impact to counties. Chairman Bridges asked the Commission Board to speak to as many senators and representatives as possible to get this legislation changed.

B. Proclamation for Judge Bailey (retirement) - Chairman Bridges said that the proclamation to honor Judge Bailey was signed last week. No further action is needed at this time.

C. Paul Vandiver Road – portion to be abandoned – Chairman Bridges asked County Engineer John Phillips to explain the request for the portion of Paul Vandiver Road to be abandoned. The Commission Board questioned the location for the request. Mr. Phillips said it is the entire section between Farmer’s Academy Road and Akin Road and has only two property owners. Commissioner Franklin said that he is aware that unauthorized vehicles use this area for recreational use of four wheelers and four wheel drive trucks. Commissioner Jacques asked Mr. Phillips what the recommendation of county staff is. Mr. Phillips said that staff members have looked at this portion of Paul Vandiver Road and it does not seem to serve any real public purpose. There are no houses off the roadway and only two property owners are on the road. There is also a narrow one lane bridge on this portion of Paul

Vandiver Road, which could create potential liability. The property owners wish to have this portion abandoned because trash is dumped as well as unauthorized people hanging out there.

Commissioner Strickland asked if the school bus goes down this road. Mr. Phillips said that because of the narrow one lane bridge this is not a suitable road for a school bus to go down. Commissioner Franklin said that if heavy rains come that the bridge is flooded. Mr. Phillips said that the beavers are also a problem in this area. Commissioner Jacques asked if emergency services would be disturbed if this portion of Paul Vandiver Road is abandoned. Mr. Phillips said that no problems have been identified by staff members. He also that if this portion of road is abandoned then it would come off of county roads for maintenance and no further county funds would be spent on it. Mr. Phillips said that there is a process for abandonment of the road and that is what he is seeking from the Commission Board. Chairman Bridges said for the Commission Board to be prepared to vote on this at the March regular board meeting.

D. Timber harvest consideration – Chairman Bridges asked County Engineer John Phillips to address the timber harvest consideration. Mr. Phillips said that a timber harvest ordinance has been provided in the Commission packets. He said that the most current Georgia State Law was included in this information. The Timber Harvest Ordinance for Franklin County was modeled after the State Law. The purpose of the timber harvest ordinance is for Franklin County to receive the revenue off the timber that is harvested in the County and for damage control on the roads. At times Franklin County is able to get the logging companies to repair the roads, at other times not. If the logging companies will not repair the roads then Franklin County incurs an expense in having to repair the damage. This ordinance would take care of both issues. The harvesting company would also be required to post a bond before the harvesting is to begin. This bond could potentially be used to repair the road if the harvesting company is unable or unwilling to make the repair. Mr. Phillips said that this will need to be reviewed by County Attorney Bubba Samuels before approval by the Commission Board.

Mr. Phillips said that he has discussed the timber harvest issues with the Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin, the Chief Tax Appraiser Rick Cothran and other staff members. Everyone that Mr. Phillips has discussed the timber harvest with is in agreement that Franklin County needs to have a process in place to collect revenue off of the timber harvesting. Calls are received on a regular basis from timber harvesters who want to know what permits they have to have with Franklin County before harvesting. At this time Franklin County does not require a permit to harvest timber.

Chairman Bridges said that he is in agreement that there needs to be a way for Franklin County to keep up with the timber that is harvested. Commissioner Strickland said that he also agrees that this is good. He also asked that when things are discussed and emails exchanged that all the Commission Board be copied on the email discussions. Chairman Bridges asked the Commission Board if there were any other comments or concerns. There was no further discussion. Mr. Phillips asked the Commission Board to vote to proceed with this at the next regular board meeting. Commissioner Strickland asked Mr. Phillips if County Attorney Bubba Samuels could review this before the March meeting. County Manager Beth Thomas said that there is one consideration which is HB 199 concerning timber harvesting that has not been approved yet that may modify some of the wording in the State Law. Commissioner Strickland

said that the proper wording can be put in Franklin County's ordinance. There were no further comments or concerns about timber harvesting.

E. Public Works Update – Chairman Bridges said that he appreciated the work that County Manager Beth Thomas and County Engineer John Phillips have done toward the public works projects. He then asked for an update. Mrs. Thomas said that the first update is for the sewer project. She then asked Mr. Phillips to give the update. Mr. Phillips said that this project has been in the planning stages for about five years between Franklin County, the City of Carnesville and USDA. Franklin County has received approval of funding through USDA along with a letter of conditions. County staff met with USDA and asked that the letter of conditions be revised to reduce the amount of money that would have to be generated annually from user fees. A grant application has been submitted to ARC for \$300,000. Franklin County has passed the pre-application for this grant and is now in the application phase.

Meetings have taken place between Franklin County staff and Harris Little, the Mayor of the City of Carnesville. This is a joint project between Franklin County and the City of Carnesville. Franklin County and the City of Carnesville are in agreement for the terms of the letter to USDA. Approval for this project will have to come from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners as well as the City of Carnesville Council. Mr. Phillips said that at this time the project needs to move forward with the actual design of the project and to satisfy the letter of conditions on the timetable established by USDA for funding. He said that it is time to go ahead with the design and have the engineers to develop the plans for permitting the project. It will be several months before construction can begin because of the time involved in the permitting process.

Chairman Bridges asked what the timetable would be for this. Mr. Phillips said that the engineer and design services are estimated to take approximately six months. There are also specific items required by USDA to be included in the intergovernmental agreement between Franklin County and the City of Carnesville. After the intergovernmental agreement is completed it will be reviewed by the county attorney and then will go before the Commission Board of Franklin County and the City of Carnesville Council for approval. Commissioner Strickland asked where the location of this new facility will be. Mr. Phillips said that the treatment facility will be built where the existing City of Carnesville system is now located which is located on property that adjoins Rocky Ford Park and Carnesville Elementary.

Commissioner Strickland asked how long it would take after the engineers are finished with the design. Mr. Phillips said that it would take an estimate of 60 to 90 days for the bid process. Also, the timing of the project will have to coordinate with the drying out of some of the treatment ponds on the existing site. It should be closer to the beginning of 2016 before plans will be completed. Commissioner Strickland then asked what the timetable would be for the earth moving. Mr. Phillips said that it will probably be a year of construction time. There was no further discussion on the sewer update.

Chairman Bridges asked County Manager Beth Thomas if she had any other public works items for discussion. Mrs. Thomas said that speaking as a citizen as well as the county manager she is proud of the cleanup efforts of everyone in the County. The news reports have

been positive concerning the work performed by everyone in the cleanup of the debris left from the ice storm. The water and road departments have worked extra. Volunteer firefighters have pitched in to help with the cleanup as well as citizens of the county. It is nice to have a county that works together. There is still a lot of debris on the sides of the roads. Patience is needed by everyone because if the cleanup is done totally by county forces it will be a long process. Options will be explored to help with the cleanup. Commissioner Jacques asked if a grant could be applied for to help with the cleanup efforts. Mrs. Thomas said that County Engineer John Phillips and EMA Director Lyndon Burgess explored this possibility. The money spent in our area and region was not enough to be eligible for federal funds. Commissioner Jacques then asked if money was available on the state level. Mrs. Thomas said at this point there was not. She said that the County will be exploring the most cost effective and efficient way for cleanup in the County. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Phillips along with Lyndon Burgess for proactively seeking funding for the County. Commissioner Jacques and the rest of the Commission Board expressed their agreement with Chairman Bridges.

Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas if there was any other item for discussion under public works. Mrs. Thomas gave the Commission Board a quantitative and qualitative analysis of lease options for a motor grader. The quote was from Yancey Brothers as the supplier and Caterpillar Financing. The quote is for a four year lease. Using the equity of the current motor grader owned by Franklin County, the lease payment would be \$11,452 annually for four years with a balloon payment due payment of \$193,965. The lease agreement is in arrears and Franklin County will not have to make a payment for the first year of usage. The repair cost for the current motor grader is expected to increase because it was damaged last year in a fire.

Commissioner Jacques asked if a lease could be paid for out of SPLOST funds. Mrs. Thomas said that she would research and get the answer for the Commission Board. She said that she was sure that at the end of the lease when the balloon payment is due if the County chooses to buy rather than continue to lease that the purchase of the equipment would be eligible to be paid out of SPLOST. Commissioner Strickland said that more counties are going for leasing instead of buying. Commissioner Jacques said that private industry is also gravitating toward lease to control costs. Commissioner Strickland said that he thought this was a very good way to keep good equipment while controlling costs. County Engineer John Phillips said that one of the good things with this type of lease through Caterpillar is they provide maintenance warranty. Chairman Bridges said that he has talked with other counties and this seems to be the best way to contain costs and also seems to be the direction that most counties are using for equipment. Chairman Bridges asked if there were any other questions regarding this. There was no further discussion on leasing equipment.

Commissioner Jacques asked Mr. Phillips to give an update on the design build for the jail expansion. Mr. Phillips said that a request was put out for contractors. Three responses from the request were received, two were from local contractors. The available funding will limit the project to about half of the current design. At this time Franklin County is evaluating if half of the project is completed at this time will it solve any issues or create more problems later. Commissioner Jacques asked if this was two pods at 24 beds each. Mr. Phillips said that yes, this is correct. Mrs. Thomas said that she has discussed with Sheriff Thomas and his staff that a needs assessment for a jail should be done. She said that an independent study would be most

beneficial. Mrs. Thomas also said that before the needs assessment is done that all parties involved would have to agree to the findings from the study. The cost for a needs assessment would be approximately \$25,000 to \$27,000. Mrs. Thomas said that this is the approach that she would prefer. Commissioner Strickland said that it might be cheaper to house out inmates to Stephens County and Jackson County. Chairman Bridges said that he thought this would be wise to look further into the needs for jail expansion. Commissioner Jacques agreed. There was no further discussion on the jail expansion.

Commissioner Franklin asked why Franklin County's ambulance service is not in network for insurance. Commissioner Strickland said that he thought the plan had been updated to take care of this problem. Mrs. Thomas said that currently the ambulance service is in network, the plan has been updated. She also said that she would be meeting with the insurance broker and would address any questions or problems with him. Commissioner Franklin said that he is upset that County employees are having problems like this. He asked what would happen if the bill was forgiven. Mrs. Thomas said that she would have to check the legalities before any bills could be forgiven. She also said that if the ambulance bills were forgiven the employee would still owe the deductible amount and it would still have to be paid to another provider. Commissioner Franklin said that he did not want anything going against employees' credit because of the ambulance bills. Mrs. Thomas said that instructions have been given to pull those bills so that they will not go against anyone's credit. Commissioner Strickland said that this has been taken care of and should not happen again. Chairman Bridges told Mrs. Thomas that he appreciates her being proactive with the insurance issue.

F. Hospital Progress Report – Chairman Bridges asked County Manager Beth Thomas to give an update on the hospital. Mrs. Thomas said that it has been released to the news media that negotiations are ongoing between Saint Mary's Hospital System and Ty Cobb Regional Medical Center. Franklin County is continuing to follow the progress. Mrs. Thomas said that she has spoken with the bond attorney regarding options to refinance. Commissioner Strickland said that he thought that it was stated in the bond document that a certain number of years had to pass before the bond could be refinanced. Mrs. Thomas said that the date in the document is 2020. Commissioner Jacques said that it could be done after five years but that it would be costly to the County. This will continue to be looked at. Chairman Bridges thanked Mrs. Thomas for this progress report. He also said that he appreciated the work done by staff.

Chairman Bridges reminded everyone that there is a public hearing on March 2 at 5:30 p.m. before the regular board meeting. He then asked if there were any other questions or concerns. There were no other comments or concerns. The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2015

Chairman J. Thomas Bridges

Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner

David R. Strickland, District 2 Commissioner

Jeff Jacques, District 3 Commissioner

Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner

Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk