

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
March 29, 2016
6:00 P.M.**

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

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen
MJ Kneiser, WLHR

Staff: County Manager, Beth Thomas
County Clerk, Elaine Evans

Item 1 & 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Bridges welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to the March work session. He called the meeting to order and asked Commissioner Franklin to lead the invocation and pledge to the American flag.

Item 3: *Items for discussion:*

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to speak in public comment. Matthew Ratcliffe asked to speak. He stated that he lives in Royston in the Harper Farms neighborhood. He said that his concern is that chicken houses are rumored to be built on land that borders his property. Mr. Ratcliffe said that he would like for this to be fought because of the impact to his neighborhood and stated that he would like for this issue to be looked at again. Chairman Bridges said that this is an issue that could be looked at again by the Planning and Zoning Committee. He referred Mr. Ratcliffe to Public Works Director John Phillips. Mr. Phillips gave Mr. Ratcliffe his contact information. County Manager Beth Thomas also told Mr. Ratcliffe that he is welcome to call the BOC office as well for additional information.

Chairman Bridges asked if anyone else had anything for public comment. There were no further comments or concerns from the public.

B. Hearts for Families – Chairman Bridges recognized Carmen Westbrook along with staff and volunteers with Hearts for Families. Ms. Westbrook stated that Hearts for Families is a non-profit working in the prevention of underage drinking. She then presented a power point to give education and raise awareness on social hosting. From the power point Ms. Westbrook stated that underage drinking is very real along with social gatherings where underage drinking can take place. Minors in Georgia can

be charged with possession or consumption of alcohol. Adults can be charged when caught for furnishing alcohol to them.

Ms. Westbrook said that a social host ordinance will permit officers to cite or charge the individual who allows the underage party thus filling a gap in the current State law. Alcohol use by people under the age of 21 is a major health problem. Alcohol is the most commonly used drug by youth in the United States. The use of alcohol causes more than 4,000 deaths among youths per year in the United States.

Johannasue Carroll of the Be the Change Club from Franklin County High School was introduced by Ms. Westbrook. Ms. Carroll said that the Be the Change Club is small in number but they believe that they can make a big impact on their school. Their mission is to make the school a better place by promoting school unity; encouraging smart decisions; and leadership skills. The number one goal of the club is to make a positive impact on their school. Ms. Carroll stated that there are a lot of house parties that go on in Franklin County. The teens who attend the parties get in trouble for alcohol use but the parents who provide the alcohol never get in trouble. The adults should also get in trouble for providing the alcohol. Ms. Carroll said that she and the other members of the Be the Change Club would like to see this law enforced.

After the presentation from Johannasue Carroll, Ms. Westbrook continued with her power point. Ms. Westbrook said that the federal government is onboard with the prevention of underage drinking. Alcohol creates brain change in people under the age of 21. She said that the cost to the State for underage drinking is over 1.2 billion dollars because of youth property crime; youth violence; youth traffic crashes; and youth injury.

Ms. Westbrook gave the definition of a social host as anyone who knowingly hosts or allows underage drinking parties on property that he or she owns; leases; or otherwise controls. The host possesses knowledge of the party and does not have to be present at the party to be liable. Underage drinking is illegal but Ms. Westbrook stated that a social host ordinance would close the gap in the current law. Each social host ordinance is written specific to the county and is written by the county attorney.

At the conclusion of Ms. Westbrook's power point presentation she thanked the Commission Board for allowing her an opportunity to speak. She then asked if any of the people that she has met with would like to add anything. Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook said that she met with Ms. Westbrook a while back. Ms. Holbrook said that the juvenile case load has increased and something does need to be in place. The juveniles and their families need to understand that underage drinking is not acceptable. She asked the Commission Board to consider having the county attorney draw up an ordinance and move forward with this.

Commissioner Jacques asked Ms. Westbrook if she could provide copies of ordinances from other counties so that this could be reviewed. Ms. Westbrook said absolutely. Magistrate Judge Cody Grizzle said that this ordinance could be written any way that they would like to. This ordinance can be drafted to fit Franklin County.

Commissioner Jacques said that is true, but he did not want to reinvent the wheel when something already done is available. Ms. Westbrook said that she will provide this information electronically. Sheriff Steve Thomas said that this is a good thing. Anytime that you can keep a child from taking a drink is a good thing. He said that the law can be enforced even though it is hard.

John Wilson asked Ms. Westbrook what the root cause is to all the underage drinking that is going on. Ms. Westbrook said that she has a personal opinion that is not from data. She said that she thinks that some parents allow drinking in the home because they do not want their child to get in a car and get hurt. The atmosphere seems to be lax. Mr. Wilson said that churches and schools should be helping. He asked Sherriff Thomas if they have ever had to go to a party and pick a kid up. Sherriff Thomas said that most of the time if this happens the kid will end up at the hospital. Most of the time the parents are not home, they are somewhere else with no knowledge that a party is going on.

Mr. Wilson stated that it is a good thing to try to prevent but this kind of ordinance will head toward a nanny state, where the County takes over raising the children. He said that things need to go back to the basics. Get the schools, churches and community involved in underage drinking prevention.

Daphne Farmer spoke from a middle school point of view. Ms. Farmer said that she works in a middle school and she has dealt with children at 8 o'clock in the morning who are drunk. She said that the Sheriff's Office is called along with parents. Part of the problem is that parents are working third shift, trying to put food on the table. Grandparents are also raising children more often. Parents are less visible in the home. A lot of children are raising themselves. They get themselves up for school and then go home. The two meals a day that the children eat are the two meals that are provided by the school. Ms. Farmer said that the liability does need to go back on somebody. The school system does everything possible to educate children through an anti-bullying program along with other programs through the Sheriff's Department during the summer. The main job of the school system is education. The school system is doing everything possible to educate the children.

Mr. Carroll addressed the statement from Mr. Wilson of teaching children at home, school and church. He said to look at the children who never go to church. He said that you cannot teach some children. Mr. Carroll asked the question of how much is a kid's life worth.

Chairman Bridges thanked everyone for their comments. He asked Ms. Westbrook to forward the information to County Manager Beth Thomas. Mrs. Thomas said that Ms. Westbrook has worked diligently with her although they stand on opposite ends, as she does not agree with everything in the social hosting ordinance. Ms. Westbrook said that a social host ordinance can be tweaked to meet the needs of the community. She stated that parents are the number one leaders in a child's life. When the parents are absent in a child's life, the community has to step in. Ms. Westbrook

concluded her presentation. There was a recess to remove the Hearts from Families equipment before the remainder of the work session. The recess began at 6:28 p.m. The recess ended at 6:35 p.m.

C. Mutual Aid Agreement – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the mutual aid agreement. Mrs. Thomas said that GEMA has provided a statewide mutual aid and assistance agreement. GEMA sent this as part of a periodic update. This agreement allows participating parties to help each other in times of emergencies. GEMA also provided the reimbursement rates. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to review the agreement and approve at the April regular board meeting. There was no discussion.

D. Sale of Land – Chairman Bridges said that the next agenda item is the sale of land. He asked Mrs. Thomas to explain this item further. Mrs. Thomas said that Franklin County currently owns a parcel of land on Old Chism Trail. She said that the lot is very small and there are two large boulders that block the entrance. According to Franklin County setbacks a mobile home could be placed on this lot but the entrance would be difficult. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to look at this lot and give approval to accept sealed bids to sale the land. She said that this would benefit the County as this lot could then be placed on the tax digest. Chairman Bridges asked the Commission Board to look this over for possible approval at the April meeting. Commissioner Jacques said that historically the County has sold land this way. He said that in his opinion sealed bids is the proper way to dispose of unneeded property. Commissioner Strickland asked how the County got this piece of property. Mrs. Thomas said that she did not have the history but the County has owned this piece of property since 1988. The information listed on the parcel is land market sale. Chairman Bridges said that the procedure would be followed to ask for sealed bids to sale this lot.

E. Zoning Ordinance / Map Questions – Chairman Bridges asked Commissioner Strickland to go over this agenda item. Commissioner Strickland said that he wanted Franklin County to be up to date on zoning because he did not want a situation to happen similar to what happened in Stephens County. He said that he wanted to protect the citizens as well as the businesses of Franklin County. Mrs. Thomas told Commissioner Strickland that zoning information is on the County website and she emailed him the link. She said that in December 2014 an update was done to the zoning ordinance. Commissioner Strickland said that Commissioner Jacques had mentioned this also but you can never be too careful. Commissioner Jacques asked Commissioner Strickland if there was anything specific in the zoning ordinance that needed to be addressed. Commissioner Strickland said that he has received a few calls about the old Boaz building outside of Royston. He wanted to make sure that everything is in place. Mrs. Thomas said that the Planning Director is aware of this situation and is on top of the issue, doing a phenomenal job in monitoring.

F. Sex Offender Registry – Chairman Bridges said that protocol is followed for the sex offender registry. He asked Commissioner Strickland to explain his concern. Commissioner Strickland said that he did not see a link on Franklin County's website for

the GBI but he did see it on Hart County's website. He said that his understanding is that Franklin County does not subscribe to this. Mrs. Thomas said that there is a link on the County website to the GBI sex offender registry. She said that Franklin County's website mirrors Hart County's website. The only difference in Franklin County and Hart County is that Hart County pays for a duplicate service. Commissioner Strickland asked if something could be done around Halloween and other times when kids are prevalent, if more could be done to get the information out. Mrs. Thomas suggested that Commissioner Strickland write an article for the newspaper and get the information out. Sheriff Thomas said that this information is in numerous places, websites and the *Bad and Busted* publication. He said that he and his staff do everything possible to help the citizens of the County stay informed. Sheriff Thomas said that Major Chris Looney and Investigator Corey Bullard have done a fantastic job working with the GBI to make this information available to the public on the website. Chairman Bridges thanked Sheriff Thomas for his comments.

G. T Ball issue – Chairman Bridges asked Commissioner Strickland to comment on the T Ball issue. Commissioner Strickland said that he has had a lot of calls from parents being upset about not being able to use the facilities at the Rocky Ford Park. He said that the parents feel as taxpayers they should be allowed to use the fields for practice. Commissioner Strickland said that he has talked with Recreation Director Randall Gailey and was told that T Ball is part of Little League. He said that some of the parents stated that they have paid \$70 for their children to play T Ball and he thinks this is excessive. He also said that he doesn't understand why T Ball is part of Little League.

Mrs. Thomas said that Little League has always been separate. It is a separate board and a separate entity. Several years ago the Recreation Department assisted Little League with the operations. After review it was determined that Little League cost the County around \$12,000 a year to maintain three separate locations. The County gave this back to Little League this year. Little League had control of the pricing structure anyway. Rocky Ford Park was offered to Little League free of cost. T Ball is part of Little League therefore the County is not responsible for the rules.

There are policies and procedures in place for use of the fields at Rocky Ford according to Mrs. Thomas. She said that she pays the Recreation Department \$25 per hour for lights for team practice. The team Mrs. Thomas pays for is separate from any County organization. Commissioner Strickland said that the coaches said that they been denied use of the fields. Mrs. Thomas said that she was not aware of this but she will talk with Recreation Director Randall Gailey and get an answer. Commissioner Strickland asked how the use of the fields was determined. Mrs. Thomas said that it is first come, first serve unless a reservation has been made. Chairman Bridges said that this issue seemed to be lack of communication. Commissioner Strickland agreed. There was no further discussion.

H. Water Expansion Request – Chairman Bridges asked Commissioner Jacques to go over the water expansion request. Commissioner Jacques said that for

several years the residents of Atkinson Bridge Road have requested that their road be updated. Atkinson Bridge Road is a gravel road which connects Hwy 145 and Harrison Bridge Road. The Atkinson Bridge Road residents have also requested water in conjunction with the road improvement. Right of way will have to be obtained by the residents of Atkinson Bridge Road before road or water improvements can be considered. Commissioner Jacques stated that the residents of Atkinson Bridge Road have diligently pursued right of way as the majority of the parcels have been obtained. He said that there is about a mile to the nearest connection to existing water. Commissioner Jacques said that he was contacted by several residents of Atkinson Bridge Road who are having major water issues due to wells not producing. He said that he told the residents to come before the Commission Board and state their case.

Tom Brooks said that there was a meeting in November 2014 and he understood that the Commission Board had agreed to do something. He said that John Phillips told him to get the right of way, which has been done. Mr. Brooks said that he has not heard from either John Phillips or the Commissioners. He said that the County should stay in contact with him and not the other way around. He said that he has clear right of way from the residents for water to come to Atkinson Bridge Road. He would like an answer of when they will get water.

Commissioner Jacques said that following the acquisition of right of way Atkinson Bridge Road has been placed on the priority list for the work to be performed by County forces. Mr. Brooks asked what is going on since the right of way has been done. Commissioner Jacques said that what is going on is that there is a crew of four and they are responsible for maintenance of existing water lines as well as meter reading. When the water employees are not doing maintenance or reading meters they work on water lines for new customers. Commissioner Jacques asked Public Works Director John Phillips if he had an estimate of how long it would be before the County employees could get to Atkinson Bridge. Mr. Phillips said that an estimate is instead of months it would probably be years. Commissioner Jacques said that he thought Atkinson Bridge Road is around number seven on the priority list. He said that this situation leads to a water line extension agreement which would carry water from Hwy 145 back to the last residence. There would not be a cost for materials or boring under the stream. He said that he does not like to dead end a line but this has been done in the past when the residents paid for the materials and the County does the installation. The decision to enter into this kind of agreement would come from the Commission Board with a majority vote.

Chairman Bridges said that all options needed to be looked at. He also said that there is a priority list. The priority list may need to be reviewed. Atkinson Bridge Road may need to be pushed ahead due to the need and requests from the citizens. Mrs. Thomas said that the priority list is still being worked in order. Commissioner Jacques said that the quickest way to get the water to the residents would be to do a line extension agreement. The residents would buy the material and the County employees would do the installation. Mr. Brooks said that his understanding was the residents would not have to pay for the materials only the meters.

Paul Mincey stated that his issue is the road. He said that he would be willing to hook to water if the road can be worked. Mr. Mincey said that the County does a great job keeping Atkinson Bridge Road up but people drive too fast on the road. He said that people speed down the road and stir up dust. Commissioner Jacques said that it is the goal of the County to transition as many gravel roads to paved roads as soon as possible. He said that the maintenance on a paved road is less than on a dirt road. Mr. Mincey said that signs also need to be posted on the road because of the sharp turns. Commissioner Jacques said that there are statutory speed limits on dirt roads. He asked Mr. Phillips how many dirt roads have posted speed limit signs. Mr. Phillips said that the County does not post speed limit signs on very many dirt roads. He said that the speed limit on dirt roads per the State is 35 miles per hour.

Rodney Stubbs and Paul Mincey both commented that when the road is scraped that people come down the road and make donuts. Mr. Brooks said that Atkinson Bridge Road is used by a lot of people on four wheelers. Commissioner Franklin said that this type of stuff is common, it happens on Sosby Road near where he lives. He said that he wishes the finances of the County would allow for a bigger water crew than what the County currently has. He said that the water crew recently fixed a water leak on Prospect Road. They isolated the leak. The next day they had to dig up about 20 feet of pipe. All the equipment that was being used for water line extensions then had to be moved to the problem area. When something like this happens the water employees get behind. Commissioner Jacques said that at this time he thought a water line extension would be an option for evaluation. He asked Mr. Phillips to get with Mr. Brooks and give them an estimate of the cost. Mr. Phillips affirmed that he would.

Mr. Stubbs asked if the residents of Atkinson Bridge Road would get a tax break if they bought the materials. Mrs. Thomas said that water is not a service that is tax supported. Commissioner Jacques said that the water line extension policy allows expansions to the system to be expedited from where they would fall in the priority list. He said that this is an option. Mr. Brooks said that he would look into this. Commissioner Jacques suggested that Mr. Brooks ask the residents of the road to share the cost. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Brooks and the other residents for coming before the Commission Board and bringing their concerns.

I. Financial Update

a. Budget Process – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the budget process item. Mrs. Thomas said that it is time to begin the budget process. She gave each Commissioner the budget information and asked them to review it. The kick off for the budget process will be the completed March financials. Commissioner Jacques asked if the County would be able to make it to the end of the year with revenues versus expenditures without making more adjustments. Mrs. Thomas said this question leads into the next agenda item.

b. Cash Management – Mrs. Thomas said that the County began the fiscal year with zero cash reserves. In the balanced budget there were no excess funds in the budget. As of December 2015 the budget was on target. She commended

the department heads for staying within budget. Some of the shortfall is being made up by departments not spending what was budgeted. Mrs. Thomas also requested that all departments continue conservative spending. She said that the March financials will give a truer picture of the County finances.

Last year the County took out a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) based on property tax revenue that comes in once a year. Mrs. Thomas said that she will begin to talk with the banks to get terms and rates to do another Tax Anticipation Note. She is doing this so that it will already be in place when it is needed whether it is in this fiscal year or in the next fiscal year.

c. Hospital Refinancing – Mrs. Thomas said the County is diligently working on the official statement for the public offering for the hospital bond refinancing. The bond refinancing was approved by the voters. The refinancing was scheduled to be done in the first quarter of 2016 and is on target.

1. DAC Agreement – Mrs. Thomas said that the DAC agreement is part of the hospital refinancing. Certain pieces of the operating data from 2010 to current have to be updated for the official statements. Mrs. Thomas said that the bond attorney Jim Pannell recommended that Franklin County contract with DAC Bond. She said that Mr. Pannell is very adamant that DAC Bond is the best option for Franklin County with the reporting requirements being completed before the public offering. The initial setup fee is \$1,000 and the annual fee is \$2,500 for a total of \$3,500 for the first year. Mrs. Thomas asked that the Commission Board consider approving this at the April regular board meeting. Commissioner Strickland asked about the \$2,500. Mrs. Thomas said that it is \$2,500 per year if the County continues to use them. Commissioner Strickland asked if the County would have to continue to use them. Mrs. Thomas said that this fee would only be if the County continues to use them, that it is something that will be determined next year. There were no further questions about the financial update.

J. Announcements

a. GMRC Meeting – Chairman Bridges said that the GMRC meeting will be held Thursday night in Lavonia at the Depot. Commissioner Strickland said that it will be at 6:00 p.m. Mrs. Thomas said that she is looking forward to all the Commissioners and officials in the region getting together. Chairman Bridges said that this meeting was coordinated with the City of Lavonia.

b. SPLOST V Road Improvement Project – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over this agenda item. Mrs. Thomas said that the advertisement is currently being worked on for the bids for two roads, Turkey Creek Road and Tugaloo State Park Road. This will be advertised in the *Franklin County Citizen Leader* soon. Chairman Bridges said that he is excited about these two projects, especially Turkey Creek Road. Commissioner Jacques said that safety will be enhanced, especially on Turkey Creek Road.

c. Planning and Zoning Board – Chairman Bridges announced

that the public hearing will be Monday night at 5:30 p.m. Mrs. Thomas concurred that is correct. She said that the agenda item for the Planning and Zoning Board is that there is one member position expiring at the end of the fiscal year. The expiring position is the position currently held by Daphne Farmer who is the chair of the Planning and Zoning Board and she is a tremendous asset. Mrs. Farmer has agreed to serve another five year term if appointed. A recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board has already been received to reappoint Mrs. Farmer. Mrs. Thomas said that in order to remain consistent this position will be advertised. She said that the new form will be used. Applications will be kept on file for one year of anyone who applies in anticipation of other board openings. This position will need to be appointed at the June meeting.

There was no further discussion. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2016

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