

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
August 25, 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
Road Superintendent, Ralph Herren
Water Superintendent, Bob White
County Engineer, John Phillips

Item 1 & 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Bridges welcomed everyone and called the work session to order. He asked Commissioner Jacques to lead the invocation and pledge to the American flag.

Item 3: *Items for discussion:*

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone had anything for public comment. There was no one who wished to speak.

B. SPLOST timeline – Chairman Bridges asked County Manager Beth Thomas to speak about the SPLOST timeline. Mrs. Thomas said that the reason for putting this item on the agenda is to let everyone know that a special called meeting is needed on or around September 4. This meeting is to approve the referendum for SPLOST V and general obligation debt to refinance the hospital bond to be put on the November ballot. This ballot has to be built and has to follow a very specific timeline of intergovernmental agreements between the County and the five cities. Fifty percent of the five cities populations have to be represented by the intergovernmental agreement. To get the necessary fifty percent, one of the two larger cities and all of the three smaller cities are needed for the agreement. The five cities are beginning their meetings now to approve project timelines and requests. The County does not need to have the special called meeting until after the five cities have met. Mrs. Thomas said that she anticipates having the necessary approval from the cities. Chairman Bridges asked the Commission Board to set the date for the special called meeting so that everyone would be aware of the meeting time. It was decided by majority consensus that the special

called meeting will be Friday, September 4 at 8:30 a.m. at the BOC meeting room.

C. Public Works update – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to comment on the public works update. Mrs. Thomas thanked Road Superintendent Ralph Herren; Water Superintendent Bob White; and County Engineer John Phillips for their attendance. She said that each of these gentlemen will be giving updates on specific parts of the public works department. Mrs. Thomas said that when she started the job of county manager that she had a lot to learn as she did not know much about water and roads. She said that Bob, Ralph and John had been wonderful in educating her on the basics and she wanted to publicly thank them. Mrs. Thomas then asked Ralph Herren to come forward and speak about the roads.

Mr. Herren came forward to give the update on the **roads** in Franklin County. He said that there is a total of 485 miles maintained by the County. Of the 485 maintained miles, 225 miles are paved roads and 260 miles are gravel roads. There are 66 bridges and culverts on the Georgia Department of Transportation list. Bridges are inspected every two years by GDOT. If there is anything wrong with one of the bridges the County is notified. There are 11 full time employees in the Road Department including Mr. Herren. One of these 11 employees one is a full time mechanic working strictly to maintain County vehicles. Several years ago the position of Road secretary was eliminated and the calls now come to the BOC. Mr. Herren stated that the process of getting work orders from the BOC personnel seems to work pretty good with no problems noted.

Mr. Herren said that the responsibilities of the Road personnel are to maintain dirt roads; paved roads bridges; and to mow the shoulders of the roads. Slope mowing and cutting trees and limbs that have either fallen or are about to fall is also part of the Road responsibilities. Sign installation and replacement is also taken care of by the Road personnel. The Road personnel also haul the recyclables and trash for Solid Waste along with baling the recyclables. The baling of the recyclables takes one day away from road maintenance every four to six weeks. The Road personnel also maintain the closed landfill and keep the concrete pad clean. The Road personnel are also on call 24 hours a day; seven days a week; 365 days a year for emergencies.

Accomplishments of the Road department are success in obtaining funds for Off-System Safety projects. Two projects have been completed for a cost of \$325,000. There is also a third project in process in the amount of \$250,000. Since 2012 over 36 miles of roads have been resurfaced with \$2,151,523 in GDOT LMIG funds. An additional \$22,000 was received by Franklin County for the Lankford Road intersection at the Kautex plant off of Hwy 17. Clear Creek Parkway was completed with \$500,000 in One Georgia funds and GDOT funding of \$230,000. Over \$130,000 has been received for reimbursement of the 2015 Winter Storm cleanup for labor and equipment reimbursement. Detailed records were turned in by Mr. Herren; Mr. White and Lyndon Burgess to be able to get the reimbursement.

Since 2011, 12 roads or 5.3 miles have been added to be maintained. At the

current time there are 19 posted bridges. Mr. Herren said that the posting is for the weight limit on the bridge. The Road personnel maintain the signs for the bridges. The box culvert installation on Sheriff Road eliminated the last bridge with a rating of only 10 tons. Every bridge in the County is over 10 tons now. In 2000, there were 27 posted bridges with 19 of those bridges rated less than 10 tons. The Road personnel have worked hard to upgrade the bridges with some of the upgrade owing to pipe installation.

The cost to improve and pave an existing dirt road is \$500,000 per mile. The cost to resurface with hot mix asphalt is \$72,000 per mile. The cost to resurface with triple surface treatment is \$60,000 per mile, which is the tar and gravel application. The price to pave all the dirt roads in Franklin County would be \$130,000,000 not including planning and design work. This is probably something that will not happen any time soon. The Road department operates on an annual budget of \$1.5 million dollars. This budget includes the 30% match of LMIG funds; 35% reduction in gravel and 50% reduction in the asphalt (patching) budget.

There are four types of work performed by the Road personnel. The types of work are asphalt; surface treatment; dirt road paving; and safety improvement. The funding sources for these projects are operating budget; state grants; and SPLOST. Proposed road lists are finalized by priority; available funds; and a large project versus a small project. Mr. Herren stated that most of the funds for roads come from SPLOST. He said that the road projects depend on SPLOST. Without the SPLOST funds a lot of the improvements would not get done. Mr. Herren stated that it is very important to have SPLOST funds for roads.

The potential SPLOST projects for SPLOST V are the larger projects which would exceed the LMIG yearly funding and would be high impact. The potential roads are Turkey Creek Road; Tugaloo State Park Road; and Dove Town Road. Mr. Herren said that there is a lot of bus traffic on Turkey Creek Road and it is whipping the road out. Tugaloo State Park Road has a lot of traffic with campers and boats. The campers and boats are usually wide and they run off the road causing shoulder damage. On Dove Town Road when shaving trucks are met, drivers wish for more sides of the road to go to. Mr. Herren said that he has received a lot of phone calls about Dove Town Road. He said that people ask can he slow the trucks down or widen the road. Mr. Herren said that the plan is to add two feet to the road and resurface it. Commissioner Strickland asked if the two feet is for each side of the road. Mr. Herren said yes that was the plan. Chairman Bridges asked about Turkey Creek Road. Mr. Herren said that the plan is the same for Turkey Creek Road; Tugaloo State Park Road; and Dove Town Road to add two feet to each side and resurface.

Mr. Herren said that the first two proposed LMIG projects for 2016 go back to the GDOT inspections. The roads are Grady School Road and Burnette Road. The needed repairs are due to separation of the wing wall. Over the passing of years the footing has become washed out causing the wall to move away from the culvert. These two bridges have been on the report two times. GDOT is currently doing inspections and these two bridges will most likely be on the report again. If a problem makes the list three times in

a row the County usually receives a letter from GDOT. Commissioner Strickland asked for clarification of where these two bridges were located. Mr. Herren said that one is on Grady School Road at Unawatti Creek Tributary and the other is on Burnette Road at Whiten Creek. He said that one particular contractor will replace the wing wall with the County personnel doing the backfilling. County forces will backfill; reinforce; and sow the grass which reduces the price charged by the contractor probably \$10,000 to \$15,000 or more.

The proposed roads for LMIG resurfacing were matched by available funds to the roads that needed to be resurfaced. Some patching as well as a level coat will take place before the actual resurfacing. Commissioner Strickland asked if striping is included in this. Mr. Herren said that yes, striping is also included as well as rebuilding of the shoulders if needed.

Mr. Herren said that the Road department has aging equipment. He said that with the help of Mrs. Thomas and the Commission Board a motor grader; a backhoe; and two mowing tractors have been replaced. And that is a great help. The slope mower is coming up for replacement. It is a crucial piece of equipment that is used almost every day. Mr. Herren said that a part had to be replaced recently. Due to the slope mower being over 14 years old, the factory had to make a replacement part. He said that of the eight work trucks six of them have over 150,000 miles. At some point the work trucks will also need to be replaced.

Commissioner Jacques asked about Shackelford Road on the proposed 2016 LMIG list. He said that he has looked at this road on several occasions and he wanted to know would the resurface treatment hold. Mr. Herren said that other roads similar to Shackelford Road have been resurfaced and the results have been excellent. He also said that there is not a lot of traffic on Shackelford Road but if this problem is not corrected the road will soon be lost. Commissioner Jacques thanked Mr. Herren for answering his concern. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Herren for the information. Commissioner Strickland said that he wanted Mr. Herren to know that he appreciates the job being done by the Road personnel with the small amount of employees. Mr. Herren said that he has a great crew of employees. He said that most of the time he does not have to tell his employees what to do, they just do it. He also said that they will volunteer for any job.

Commissioner Jacques said that a few meetings ago the Board had voted to take action on Atkinson Bridge Road from the bridge back to Hwy 51. He said that this was contingent upon adequate right of way acquisition. He said that the property owners have 60% to 70% of the right of way and want to know if this road will be started. Mr. Herren said that his understanding is that there are not enough rights of way to begin the work. He said that without the proper right of way, the County cannot put any State funds into it. Mrs. Thomas said that she had checked with County Attorney Bubba Samuels. Mr. Samuels's opinion is that all the right of way is needed for each property before working the road. Commissioner Jacques said that he did not think that was the case but he would defer to counsel. Mrs. Thomas asked Commissioner Jacques if he

knew of an example to please give it to her and she will send the information to Mr. Samuels. She said that the County needs to have guaranteed projects in order to obtain the proper funding. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to go over the proposed list for possible approval at the regular board meeting so that the proper paperwork can be completed.

Mr. Herren added that at one point the County received a letter and had to recertify that there was right of way on the roads before GDOT would release the funds. County Engineer John Phillips said that GDOT now requires the County to certify that there is adequate right of way before any road can be worked. He said that his understanding is that County Attorney Bubba Samuels has looked at this and has deemed that adequate right of way is right of way throughout the project. Commissioner Jacques said that the interpretation in the construction industry is for sufficient right of way to accommodate construction. He said that he would defer to legal counsel. Commissioner Strickland said that he appreciated that the road list is spread out across the county in the different districts. Mr. Herren said that is the goal to get one road in each of the districts.

Commissioner Franklin asked about Keller Road if this road would be resurfaced. Mr. Herren said yes that it is on the list to be resurfaced. Mr. Phillips said that the prices for the 2015 LMIG were so good that Keller Road was added. The resurfacing for Keller Road should start around September 1. Commissioner Wester commended the Road crew for their quick removal of downed trees on Harrison Bridge Road from the storm a few weeks back. He said that before he could come back to help that Jim Roberts had the tree out of the roadway. Mr. Herren said that he appreciated hearing this and he would pass the thanks along to his crew. Commissioner Wester said that Jim told him that with the storm they were sure more trees were down so they were heading out to find them. He said that the Road crew does a great job and he wanted to commend them for all of their hard work.

Mr. White came forward next to speak about **water**. He thanked the Commission Board and Mrs. Thomas for allowing the time to give an update. Mr. White said that there are 225 miles of water lines buried in the ground ranging in size from 6" to 16". The County buys water from three private wells along with purchasing from the City of Toccoa. There is one ground storage tank. There are 1,600 water meters which is an increase from 900 when Mr. White started his employment with the County in 2004.

In the water department there are four field employees, including Mr. White. There is one administrative assistant based out of the BOC office who handles payments, billing and complaints for work orders. The water department is responsible for installing services; collecting water samples (seven days a week) which are sent to EPD. Meters are read once a month for billing. Most of the meters are radio read. This process usually takes two complete days. On the third day after reading meters rereads are done and the water clerk, Rocky Farrow calls customers who have a high reading before billing them. Lines are located before work is begun to make sure that services are not interrupted. The water employees also install water mains. The water

department is also on call 24 hours a day; seven days a week; 365 days per year.

Some of the accomplishments that have occurred with the water department through the years with the help of County Engineer John Phillips are GEFA loans and grants. Franklin County received over three million dollars with \$900,000 being awarded as grants. The water sales are up from .50 million gallons per day to .64 million gallons per day. Approximately 24 miles of water mains have been installed by County employees. Mr. White said that he would put his employees against any contractor, that they are that good. Franklin County is interconnected with all five of the cities. Water cannot be bought from the cities but water can be moved into some of the cities systems because of the elevations. EPD has stated that Franklin County's "system is as drought proof as possible". Franklin County is also a regional supplier to the Town of Bowersville in Hart County; Town of Martin; Madison County and Banks County.

Mr. White said that the water system expansion plan has been to connect all five of the cities and this has been accomplished. Another goal was to have the water system in all of the fire districts in the County. This has been accomplished except for Gumlog which is serviced by the City of Lavonia. The secondary system improvement expansion is to identify contract work and what can be done as in house projects. At the present time because of cost constraints most of the projects are being completed as in house projects by County employees.

The cost of water expansion is \$6 per linear foot of pipe. Mr. White said that the other costs associated with water system expansion are surveyor; gravel; and contingency. The gravel costs are for driveway replacements; placing gravel around fire hydrants and repair of gravel roads if the road needs repair after the water line installation. Contingency costs include grassing, erosion control and miscellaneous pipe. To complete all current projects the cost of pipe only would be \$500,000. Mr. White also stated that a fire hydrant is installed every one thousand feet to help with the ISO ratings in the fire districts. He also said that the annual budget for the water department is 1.5 million dollars. Out of this budget amount \$630,000 goes toward current and future debt service payments.

Mr. White said that the project lists are determined by using good engineering practices. The system improvements are identified using this same method. Return on investment is to calculate rooftops per every 1,000 feet. Mr. White said that this was not a guarantee only a way to estimate. Franklin County also uses County identified system improvements as well as requests from citizens for services. The funding sources for water expansions are operating budget and SPLOST. Mr. White as well as Mr. Herren said that SPLOST is very necessary for improvements. At the current time Mr. White said that Roach Road is almost complete.

County Engineer John Phillips developed a way for the water department to rank potential projects with input from Mrs. Thomas for weighted rankings. Mr. White said that the three areas are return on investment; readiness and water system structure. On return of investment the weighted measure for potential services (county of services)

would be 50%. The weighted measure for guaranteed services (county of tap of fees paid) would be 100%.

The weighted measure for right of way would be 100% for right of way obtained by percentage. The weighted measure of potential (percentage of right of way willing to be donated to the County) would be 50%. The measurement for water system improvement would be one point. The construction issues associated with system improvement would be minus one point. Mr. White explained that the total of all the weighted scores divided by the length (feet) of the project would be the score. He then explained that the projects would be ranked by final scores. Commissioner Strickland asked the question about outside of the service area. Mr. White and Mr. Phillips said that because of Georgia legislation services from several providers are not offered in the same area. Commissioner Jacques said that this is service delivery strategy.

Mr. White said that the aging equipment in the water department continues to be a problem. Because of the older equipment repair expense continues to increase. He said that there are three work trucks in the water department. The trucks range from 2003 to 2005 with more than 180,000 miles on them. He said that due to the age of the equipment there is more maintenance. Mr. White said that the water crew along with help from Mr. Herren and his crew keep the equipment going.

Chairman Bridges said that he would like for the County to continue to find someone to take the vacant water tower down that is located on Hwy 59. Commissioner Strickland said that it would be nice for the County not to incur any cost. Mr. White said that the tower behind Petro was given to Madison County and removed at their cost. So far there has not been interest in the tower on Hwy 59. Mr. Phillips said that they have actively hunted someone to give the tower to. He said that most contractors are saying that the scrap prices are too low at this point to cover the cost of removing the tower which would run \$17,000 to \$22,000. Mr. Phillips said that he is continuing to look for someone who wants a water tank. Commissioner Jacques thanked both Mr. White and Mr. Herren for the jobs that they and their departments do. These departments do more work with less employees and he is very appreciative. Chairman Bridges and the rest of the Commission Board expressed thanks also.

Mr. White spoke next about the LAS (Land Application System) spray field, which is part of the **sewer system**. The spray field is 25 acres located behind Petro truck stop. The spray field was constructed in 1991 and is a big irrigation system. It treats 75,000 gallons per day. There are two lift stations. The customer base is small because this system was at or near capacity as soon as it was completed. The water personnel maintain the spray field and check it daily. Commissioner Jacques said that there are not a lot of customers but this operation is high volume because of the truck stops. He also said that if it was not for this system these truck stops would have been able to locate in Franklin County. Mr. White said that this is true. This system was put in for Petro. Then Flying J located. He said that within the next few years things should change as the collection system for the I-85 corridor is built.

Mr. White then asked Mr. Phillips to continue with the **sewer** discussion. He said that he and Mr. Herren really appreciated Mr. Phillips for all his help and knowledge. Mr. Phillips said that he; Mr. Herren and Mr. White make a good team. He said that the sewer project has been in progress for several years. Franklin County is working with the City of Carnesville to provide sewer service to the I-85 corridor. This project will allow Franklin County and the City of Carnesville to expand sewer service. The collection system is in place, a process is needed to treat the water. The engineering firm of Hulsey, McCormack and Wallace are assisting with obtaining funding as well design of the project.

Mr. Phillips said that the completion of the proposed sewer project will eliminate the spray field as well as the City of Carnesville's waste water treatment facility. The first phase to be built will be for 300,000 gallons per day waste water treatment facility which is double the existing capacity of Franklin County and the City of Carnesville. This facility is being built with the design for future expansion as the growth comes in to the County. The location for the waste water plant is near the elementary school in Carnesville, at the current City of Carnesville location. The City of Carnesville discharges into Stephens Creek. The new plant will continue to discharge into Stephens Creek. Another phase of the project is to construct a lift station near the location of the Franklin County lift station. This will then be pumped to the new treatment facility.

The estimated cost for the sewer project is \$6.4 million dollars. A large percentage of this will come from USDA grants and loans that have already been approved. Franklin County has been approved for a \$1,047,000 grant and \$2,245,000 loan. The City of Carnesville will contribute \$200,000 as well as the waste water treatment facility land. The IBA has committed to a \$500,000 contribution. Mr. Phillips has also applied for \$300,000 ARC grant and is waiting for approval. Prior SPLOST funds were also encumbered for this project.

The design stage is progressing with input from EPD; USDA; and GDOT. Three categories of treatment technologies were considered. The first type is lagoon which is the type that is currently used by Franklin County and the City of Carnesville. The other two types are package plant and alternative technologies. The project has been evaluated based on cost; treatment efficiency; operation and maintenance; life cycle costs and discussion with EPD.

After narrowing the choices for waste water treatment design, site visits were made. Owners and operators were questioned as to what works and doesn't work in the facility operations. Mr. Phillips said that after the fact gathering site visits the treatment selection was made for Continuous Flow SBR (Sequential Batch Reactor). EPD and the owners and operators of many treatment facilities speak highly of this method. The Continuous Flow SBR was the most cost effective treatment. This also has a very small footprint which is important because this facility will be located close to recreation activities and the elementary school. This design is also easily expandable for future growth. The design work is also continuing.

Mr. Phillips said that the WLA (waste load allocation) has been received from EPD. The design of the facility is based on the requirements from EPD. An Anti-Degradation Report has also been submitted to EPD. This report contains the discharge information going into Stephens Creek, to prove that there will not be any adverse effects. The target date for submittal of the final plans and specifications to the different agencies is December 2015. If the target submittal date can be met and a timely response from the different agencies is received, construction could begin in 2016.

The intergovernmental agreement between Franklin County and the City of Carnesville has been approved by USDA. The City of Carnesville has approved the intergovernmental agreement. Franklin County needs to approve the intergovernmental agreement before this project can move forward. The first key point of the agreement is that the City of Carnesville will deed the property to Franklin County. The City of Carnesville will contribute \$200,000 toward the project. Franklin County will have access to the City of Carnesville waste water collection system. Franklin County will operate the waste water treatment facility. Included in the agreement is a specific requirement for user rates with projected annual sewer revenue of \$294,400. Mr. Phillips asked the Commission Board to review the agreement and approve the agreement at the regular board meeting.

Commissioner Franklin asked if there were certain areas of the County where the sewer could be connected. Mr. Phillips said that this is not intended to be a service line as far as tapping on to provide service. There are ways that this could be done but there is not a need for this unless there is a significant customer in the area. Mr. Phillips said that there would not be individual taps for residents at this time. Chairman Bridges asked for clarification about the existing customers. Mr. Phillips said that all the existing customers will continue to be able to have service. Commissioner Strickland asked about coming up Hwy 59. Mr. Phillips said that there is a certain amount of collection space. He said that it is typical when new business locates to ask them to do part of the infrastructure to connect to the sewer.

Chairman Bridges said that the plan for this project is to have enough customers to make the payment. Mr. Phillips said that this is correct and is part of the USDA agreement. Commissioner Jacques said that two entities with antiquated facilities are combining into one. The beauty of this project is that the existing customers should be able to make this revenue neutral. He said that this project will allow for the further development of the Carnesville Industrial Park. Jail expansion cannot take place without this project as well as the upgrades at the interstate exchanges. Commissioner Strickland asked if the City of Carnesville's monthly portion is known at this time. Mr. Phillips said that he does not know. Commissioner Jacques said that he has the information and he will forward to Commissioner Strickland.

Mr. Phillips said that this project was the most cost effective to upgrade the system and bring services to the exchanges. Commissioner Strickland said it will bring growth to the County. Commissioner Jacques said it will get everyone out of the environmental constraints. He also said that he appreciated all the entities working

together on this project.

Chairman Bridges and the Commission Board along with Mrs. Thomas thanked Mr. Phillips; Mr. White and Mr. Herren for their presentation. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Herren and Mr. Phillips for getting the road redirected for Cromer's Mill Bridge. The sign looks good and the end of the bridge looks great.

Commissioner Jacques clarified for public information that the next regular board meeting will be on September 14 instead of September 7 because of the Labor Day Holiday. Mrs. Thomas said that the special called meeting will be on September 4 and the regular board meeting will be on September 14. Chairman Bridges said that he will be attending ACCG legislation this week. He asked for input from the Commission Board if any issue needed to be addressed. Commissioner Jacques said that he was concerned about the amount of sales tax that is received by the County.

Chairman Bridges asked if anyone had any other concerns before adjourning. There were no other issues or concerns. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 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