

FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING-PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
February 1, 2016
5:00 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

Staff: County Manager, Beth Thomas
County Clerk, Elaine Evans
County Attorney, Bubba Samuels

Item 1 & 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Bridges called the regular board meeting – planning session for February 1st to order. He welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. Chairman Bridges then asked Commissioner Jacques to lead the invocation and pledge to the American flag.

Item 3: Approval of Minutes:

January 4, 2016 Regular Board Meeting
January 26, 2016 Work Session-Planning Session

Chairman Bridges said that the minutes have been given to each Commissioner for review. He asked for a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to accept the minutes as written following review. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The minutes were approved by three (3) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Jacques, and Chairman Bridges. Commissioner Wester was absent due to a skiing accident. Commissioner Strickland was running late and did not come into the meeting until after the vote for the approval of the minutes.

Item 4: Items for discussion:

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked for public comment. There was no one present who wished to make a public comment.

B. Probation Lease – Chairman Bridges said that the probation lease was

talked about at the previous work session. He asked County Manager Beth Thomas to go over the probation lease. Mrs. Thomas gave the recommendation to the Commission Board that the revised lease be approved. This lease is between the Probation Office and the United States Post Office in Hartwell. The revised lease will provide the Probation Office additional square footage for approximately an additional \$28 per month. Mrs. Thomas said that along with the approval of the lease, the resolution to authorize her to sign the paperwork needs to be executed. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from Mrs. Thomas. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to accept the recommendation. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by four (4) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Strickland; Chairman Bridges; and Commissioner Jacques.

C. Board Appointment – Chairman Bridges said that board appointments were talked about at the work session. He said that Commissioner Jacques wanted to speak about this item. Commissioner Jacques said that he wanted to talk about the Joint Development Authority appointment. He said that in all of his years of being on the Commission Board the County has never received such a quality slate of applicants for any board position. Commissioner Jacques said that based on his review of the submitted resumes he makes the motion to appoint Tracey Dilworth. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion. He said that he spoke with all three of the candidates. He believes that Tracey Dilworth has a good scope to help and assist Franklin County within the tri-county industrial area.

Before the vote Chairman Bridges asked for discussion. He said that he echoes what Commissioner Jacques said and the County is very fortunate to have three outstanding individuals applying for this position. He said that any of the three would be ideal to represent Franklin County. Commissioner Strickland said that he concurs that all three are good candidates but Tracey Dilworth is his preference. Chairman Bridges said that it has been stated that the IBA recommended Brian James. He said that he did not think it was appropriate to go against the recommendation from the IBA. There was no further discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands to appoint Tracey Dilworth to the Joint Development Authority. The motion did not pass by two (2) YES votes to two (2) NO votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Strickland and Commissioner Jacques. The NO votes were Commissioner Franklin and Chairman Bridges.

Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give her recommendation. Mrs. Thomas echoed that three qualified applicants applied for this position and she was pleased with their willingness to serve. She said that the County has modified the questionnaire for further applicants to gain more information. Mrs. Thomas said that the County did ask the IBA for their recommendation. She said that this position does not have very much interaction with the Commission Board or the office of manager. This position does have a direct correlation with the IBA, therefore the consideration from them should be considered. Commissioner Strickland said that he thought this should

be tabled until Commissioner Wester is able to attend and vote. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from Mrs. Thomas. Commissioner Franklin made the recommendation to accept the recommendation from Mrs. Thomas for Brian James. He said that this is the recommendation from the IBA and he recommends going with their recommendation. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques said that he did not want to be caught up in dissension for an appointment. He said that if his colleagues are in favor of accepting the recommendation from the IBA, he is against postponing the vote. Commissioner Jacques then seconded the recommendation of Brian James. There was no further discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by four (4) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Strickland; Chairman Bridges; and Commissioner Jacques.

D. Planning Session – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go into the planning session. Mrs. Thomas said that this is the second part of the planning session. She went over tactical planning, long-term planning and strategic planning. **Tactical planning** focuses on interim objections with predetermined means. This is short-term planning and goals – going from the beginning of something to the ending of something.

Long-term planning is looking at the future needs by looking at an extrapolation method. Mrs. Thomas said that this type of planning is looking at long-term goals by starting with the resources on hand.

Strategic planning is a systematic process of a vision for a desired future and putting the vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and the sequence of steps to get there. This type of planning begins with a desired end and works backward.

Mrs. Thomas quoted Ross King with ACCG “*The effect of a successful leader is not always recognized while he/she is in office but instead may be reflected in the legacy of accomplishments that span far beyond an official’s tenure. Developing a clear vision for a community – together with strategies and benchmarks – can greatly aid county commissioners in reaching specific goals.*” She said that there are things taking place in Franklin County that somebody envisioned eight; ten; fifteen years ago. They set forth a plan although they are long gone out of office. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to see this Commission Board set forth visions or strategies. She said that a legacy can live long beyond being in office.

Examples of the types of planning using water line expansion were gone over by Mrs. Thomas. She said an example of tactical planning would be that the water line will be completed by February 1st. Long-term planning would include the number of requests for water line expansions. Strategic planning would state the mission – the water system strives to create a quality water delivery system serving customers in the most efficient and effective manner.

Three big questions in government according to Mrs. Thomas are where are now; where do we want to go; and how do we get there. She said that in the first half of

the planning session at last month's work session, finances were covered extensively. The County has looked at where we are now. It is time to look at where we want to go. In local government it is a systematic process, not something that is solved overnight. The mission has to be identified which derives values, goals and objectives. The management team carries out the mission that is set by the Commission Board.

The comprehensive plan for the County was approved last year which is required by the State. Mrs. Thomas said that the plan requires the community as a whole to come up with a vision. The data is gathered and it is a generalized statement. Stated in the comprehensive plan is continued general growth for Franklin County. Also, there is a strong sense of cooperation and Mrs. Thomas has experienced this since becoming part of the management team for Franklin County. The cities and County are striving for a bigger goal along with retaining the appeal of the community as a hometown. The vision statement that is listed in the comprehensive plan for Franklin County is to be progressive and proactive, serving as a prosperous and safe destination for both businesses and families providing quality services for all citizens and preserving our natural resources while leading the way in Northeast Georgia.

Mrs. Thomas said that the goals and objectives listed in the comprehensive plan are to utilize I-85 and SR17; increase water and sewer service; celebrate rural and Ag history; preserve private property rights and look at long-term potential. Also, support economic development and cultural resources. She said that the comprehensive plan is mandatory and it assists in grant funds. Whatever is listed in the comprehensive plan is what is looked at for grant funding. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to move from a general mission statement to a very specific mission. She charged the Board and the community to begin thinking about this. She also said that she would like for it to be related to just county government.

Are we ready for strategic planning was posed to the Commission Board by Mrs. Thomas? She said that the question is - is it the right time for strategic planning and also is there support from the governing body and the departments. Are we in a favorable position to undertake strategic planning or are we at a crisis level? Do we have the finances; personnel; technology and time for strategic planning? Mrs. Thomas said that her goals for the County when she became county manager last year was to learn as much as possible; get the financing reporting up to par with enhancements. She said that when she came in last year she had to reassess her goals as the County was in an urgent financial position because of the hospital and reduced reserves. Mrs. Thomas said that everyone has worked together to hit these problems head on. She would like to be able to go back to goals for herself and for the County.

Mrs. Thomas said that the baseline for any service is quality people. Quality service cannot be given without quality people. She said that proper training has to be in place. Mrs. Thomas stated that Franklin County has a great staff but there are things that need to be worked on. The County also needs community support. The four key pillars that Mrs. Thomas stated would work well for Franklin County are safety; service; synergy and stewardship. Safety is a core service of Franklin County which includes

EMS; Sheriff; and roads. Service is additional services. Safety would always come before additional services. Ancillary services would always be cut before safety. Synergy is how well do we work with each other across departments, elected officials and cities. Stewardship is how we financially handle all of these responsibilities. Mrs. Thomas said that all of these things have to be in place and work together to move the mission forward. She said that she thinks the County is still in crisis management. At this point the finances of the County are not able to handle all of the requests that are needed. The personnel and finances are not in place at this time. The personnel need is the volume and not the quality.

At this point, Mrs. Thomas stated that tactical planning with goals is what is needed from the Commission Board. She said that she will work from the goals given to her by the Board. This is necessary because the budget process will soon be starting. Also, cash management and treasury management will be priorities. First Citizens Bank will be helping with the treasury management. Cash flows were critical in the last budget and they remain so in this coming budget. The operating reserve needs to be built up so that if everything went bad there would still be enough in reserves to make payroll. Community support is a goal. Mrs. Thomas said that Shane Scoggins of the *Franklin Citizen Leader* has been great in helping get messages out to the community. Articles will still be written for publication. In the next year job descriptions will be worked on. Mrs. Thomas said that County Clerk Elaine Evans has done a great job in gathering job descriptions from across the State. She said that her goal is for each department to have a second in command already named and in place. Everybody should have a contingency plan and do performance evaluations.

Last year an employee committee was started to increase employee morale; foster communication; and to encourage teamwork according to Mrs. Thomas. The employee committee is open to all departments in the County. The only stipulation is that the employee representative cannot be a supervisor. Mrs. Thomas said that the employee committee organized the employee appreciation picnic; helped with the health fair; and organized the Christmas lunch. The goal for 2016 is to hold one event per quarter or season to increase employee morale. The employee committee members are much more than event planners. These employees were important keys in communication; policy making; and process improvement. A lot of policy discussions have taken place in the employee committee meetings because of the variety of departments involved. One of the discussions involved how to handle inclement weather – is it fair to send this person home when another one has to be on the road. It is interesting to hear comments of yes, I have to be here, and it is my job.

Two recommendations from the employee committee were presented by Mrs. Thomas to the Commission Board. The first recommendation was for a formal recognition for years of service. Mrs. Thomas said that this is a fairly easy thing to implement. It would only take five or 10 minutes at a board meeting to recognize employees. Franklin County has a lot of long tenured employees who are more than employees; a lot of them are also citizens of the County. Mrs. Thomas said that 76% to 80% of the employees live in Franklin County. She said that the second

recommendation from the employee committee is to add one PTO (personal/vacation day) on the employees anniversary date, in addition to the recognition for the years of service. For office personnel there would not be a cost associated with the additional day off – it would only be an opportunity cost. For other departments such as EMS or Sheriff, there is a cost associated with replacing the employee for the day, but the cost would be minimal. Mrs. Thomas said that she would calculate the true cost when the Commission Board decides that this is something that they are interested in implementing. She then publically thanked the employee committee for the wonderful job that they have done this past year.

Commissioner Strickland questioned Mrs. Thomas on the percentage of employees who live in Franklin County. He said that according to his calculation, 55% of the employees live within the County. Mrs. Thomas said that she did her calculation from the new employee listing. Commissioner Strickland said that he had asked for this information and had only recently received it. He asked Mrs. Thomas to send him her information so that he could compare with what he received.

Next Commissioner Strickland discussed constitutional officers' salaries. He said that the salaries for the constitutional officers per year are \$333,515. In Hart County the salaries are \$294,068; Ebert County is \$276,078; Stephens County is \$281,804; and Madison County is \$273,161. He said that Franklin County's salaries for constitutional officers are above all the surrounding counties. Commissioner Strickland said that he has asked approximately 365 people if they are aware what the constitutional officers make. He said that he wants the citizens of Franklin County to be informed of what the people in the County make. Mrs. Thomas said that Commissioner Strickland had asked for this but she wanted this to be known that the employee committee has a rule of not being allowed to talk about pay rates. This is public information and anyone can do open records. Commissioner Strickland said that he was not talking about the employee committee. He said that the Commission Board were elected to be good tax stewards of Franklin County and that is his reason for wanting to educate the public through the newspaper. Commissioner Strickland said that it has been discussed of giving employees pay raises but this cannot be done. The constitutional officers get a 5% COLA. He said that for someone who makes over \$100,000 per year that is a \$5,000 increase. Over a four year period that adds up to \$20,000 which is within \$800 of a \$10 an hour employee. Mrs. Thomas said to keep in mind that the 5% is only for election. Also the constitutional officers' salaries are set through State law. Commissioner Strickland said that he wanted the people in the County to know because they are the ones who pay the salaries.

Then Commissioner Strickland said that instead of a tax increase, his plan was to make the people who break the law pay more. He said that only one Commissioner agreed with him on this so it did not pass. Mrs. Thomas told Commissioner Strickland that his follow up plan did not work. She said that \$40,000 of additional fines was put into the budget and it is not being met. Commissioner Strickland said that the probate fines are up by \$106,000 from last year. He said that he was sure that the people would be more interested in criminals paying fines and forfeitures than the citizens paying.

Mrs. Thomas suggested to Commissioner Strickland that they look at the budget together because fines and forfeitures are running right on target. Commissioner Strickland said that he wanted this to be talked about in a public forum so that Shane Scoggins would publish it in the paper. Commissioner Jacques said that no one on the Board controlled fines and forfeitures. Commissioner Strickland said that the GSP had written 900 citations from March through June 6th. Commissioner Jacques said that based on review the budget was increased for fines because of the GSP. He then clarified that Commissioner Strickland's budget proposal was to borrow every dime of the budget deficit which would have been a catastrophe. Commissioner Strickland said that his proposal was to borrow at 1.75% and repay over five years. Commissioner Jacques said that he wanted to be clear on why Commissioner Strickland wouldn't have plugged this into the revenue stream of this year's budget and not had to borrow without kicking the can down the road. Commissioner Strickland said that with the Sheriff's budget going over 1.5 million dollars over three years, this did not just start and it is not going to finish until something is talked about and Sheriff Thomas is on board.

Sheriff Thomas came forward and told Commissioner Strickland if he wanted to talk about something to come and sit down and talk with him. He said that he cannot control the crime. The records from E911 will show that there are a thousand more calls per year. Sheriff Thomas also stated that he cannot put someone to sit and write tickets when crime is going on. Commissioner Strickland said that from 2000 to 2004 from the GSP records there were 20 homicides in Franklin County. Sheriff Thomas told Commissioner Strickland that the GSP does not work homicides. Commissioner Jacques called for a point of order. He said that he did not know how this related to community outreach.

Chairman Bridges noted the point of order. He said that this was rehashing something that has already been taken care of. Commissioner Jacques said that constitutional officers' salaries are mandated. He said that if there are problems they need to be dealt with as a Board from a legislative context.

After the comments, Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to finish her presentation. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to consider the recommendations from the employee committee. She said that the County is working on community outreach. Community outreach will be done using the ACCG initiative "You are Why we are Here". The County website is up and running. Mrs. Thomas said that she and the Elections Supervisor Gina Chappelle will be doing public relations this next year. They will be focusing on social media. News releases and town halls will be done again this budget season. The STELAR Act updates will continue as well.

Mrs. Thomas told the Commission Board that she appreciated the performance reviews that were given her. She also said that there is a phenomenal management team in place in Franklin County. John Phillips has also been a great help to her. She then asked the Commission Board to give her direction on the goals that they have for the County. Chairman Bridges thanked Mrs. Thomas for her leadership. He said that she stepped into the County at a difficult time but a lot has been accomplished. He said

that his vision is to keep the County going forward. Commissioner Jacques said that he appreciates the job that has been done by Mrs. Thomas; Mr. Phillips; the management team and every County employee. He said that the most valuable resource is the County employees who have persevered through the hard economic times. The County employees are the number one priority for Commissioner Jacques. He would like to be able to do something financially for the employees within the confines of the revenue without a tax increase. He also said that a lot of the legislation has caused a decrease of revenue to Franklin County, in particular truck tax; TAVT; sales tax; excise tax; and TSPLOST penalty. Chairman Bridges said that Franklin County is very appreciative of the legislators who represent us, along with ACCG that works on behalf of counties.

Commissioner Franklin said that he personally thinks that each of the constitutional officers do a good job. He does not like the County being backed in a corner with the mandates that are handed down. Commissioner Franklin said that his long-term goal is to expand water. Commissioner Strickland said that he does not have anything against the constitutional officers. His concern is for the finances of the County. Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook told Commissioner Strickland that he had to take into consideration the seniority or length of time that a person has held the office.

Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin referred back to the truck tax that Commissioner Jacques referenced. Mr. Martin said that the efforts to get the truck tax reversed for Franklin County first started in his office. He said that he and Chairman Bridges attended meetings with legislators and with ACCG along with senators from all over the State. Mr. Martin said that because of this over one million dollars will come to Franklin County over a five year period. He said that an inexperienced person would not have caught this.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 5:55 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