

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**WORK SESSION**  
**July 26, 2016**  
**6:00 P.M.**

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

Media: Shane Scoggins, *Franklin County Citizen Leader*

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

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

**Item 3: *Items for discussion:***

**A. Public Comment** – Chairman Bridges said that Commissioner Jacques will not be attending tonight's meeting due to being out of town on vacation. He said that at the beginning of each meeting the public is given a chance to speak in public comment. Chairman Bridges said that he is aware that there are people desiring to speak in public comment tonight. He said that if a question needs an answer to please give the information to the manager so that the issue can be dealt with. Those who wish to speak in public comment please come forward and state your name for the records before addressing the Commission Board.

**Glenn Davis** of Hwy 320 came forward to speak. He stated that he is a farmer. In the month of April a county employee observed some work that was being done on Hwy 59. Mr. Davis stated that the people who were doing the work had the necessary permits for the job. He said that the county employee took it upon himself to call EPD. Mr. Davis said that this was done without consulting anybody and EPD came out and shut the project down. A letter with some corrections was issued by EPD. After several months EPD did not give permission to complete the project. Therefore this farmer lost his crops.

Mr. Davis asked the Commission Board who the county marshal's supervisor is and who does he answer to. He stated that the county marshal's job description is available on the internet. Unless the county marshal's job description has changed, he is not authorized to file complaints against farmers.

The question was posed by Mr. Davis – does Franklin County have a local water ordinance that is stricter than the Federal or the State. Mr. Davis asked if the county

marshal has had any formal training for sedimentation and erosion laws. Also, is the county marshal certified under the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission? Mr. Davis said that certification can be obtained by taking an eight hour course. He asked the Commission Board if the county marshal is not certified, why he is not certified. Mr. Davis asked if the County wants employees out looking for things like this. He said that the farmer is spending his hard earned money to make improvements.

According to Mr. Davis approximately 35% of the County taxes are paid by farmers. He said that most of the farmers pay on time and are fairly dependable. Mr. Davis said that the Commission Board has a fiduciary responsibility when the farmers pay taxes to see that the money is wisely spent. He said that the farmers expect the Commission Board to solve this issue because it was their employee who caused it.

**Hal Fowler** of Brown Road said that his question is, if a citizen of the County sees a water quality or solid waste violation on private property or county property, what procedure should be used to report the violation. Mr. Fowler said that since he is not getting an answer, he would like to know should a private citizen be given consideration before EPD is called on them.

Chairman Bridges said that all questions will be answered. He asked Mr. Davis and Mr. Fowler to leave the questions with the manager. He said that each person will be answered directly by the manager.

**Glenn Davis** said that in the Red Hill Community there was a dump that is near a stream. Mr. Davis said that the county marshal came and evaluated the dump. He said that he would like to know the findings of the county marshal. The dump is now covered up. The water from the stream affects the farmers who live near it who are Joe Green; Jerry South; Harold Fowler; Jamie Buffington; Vern Bennett; Alan Mitchell; Joe Dan LeCroy; Gary Roberts; Eric Segars; Glenn Davis; and Jim Gibson. Mr. Davis said that he and the other farmers would like to know what the marshal found. Commissioner Strickland asked Mr. Davis what the name of the creek is. Mr. Davis said that it is Turkey Creek.

**Guerry Hall** of the Bold Springs Community said that he is here to represent the farmers. He said that the farmers are about 36% of the tax base in Franklin County. Mr. Hall said the volunteer fire departments are mainly run by farmers – at least 50% and probably closer to 75%. The strongest FFA in the State of Georgia is found in Franklin County. Mr. Hall said that the farmers take rough land and turn into something beautiful for the betterment of the County. Most of the farmers have a conservation plan that is overseen by the Hartwell office of USDA and these regulations are followed. Mr. Hall said that the farmers would like to work with the local level.

Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Hall for his comments. He said that the County is very prepared to handle any concern that any citizen may have without outside help. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Mitchell for beautifying his farm. He said that Mr. Mitchell followed the NRCS plan and did a great job with his farm on Hwy 59. Chairman Bridges thanked all the farmers for coming to the meeting and bringing their concerns. He said that this problem is currently being addressed by the County.

Commissioner Franklin thanked everyone for coming to the Commission Board

with their concerns. He said that the job on Hwy 59 was super. He also said that he hated that any County employee would do this and take the farmers time away from their work. Commissioner Franklin said that this would be taken care of so that it does not happen again.

**Steve Thompson** asked to be recognized. He said that he lives at 6 North Canal Bridge Road in the section of Stephens County that actually belongs to Franklin County. Mr. Thompson said that he is a farmer. He said that he is professionally associated with rejuvenation and restoration of farm land with State certification in nutrient management planning. Mr. Thompson said that he is also State of Georgia soil conservation certified. He said that has been doing this type of work for four years and deals extensively with EPD. Mr. Thompson said that the first line of action should be to call the local agencies. He said that the game wardens work closely with local governments. He said that everyone is in this thing together and without the farmers the rest of the world doesn't go around.

Commissioner Wester thanked everyone for coming out. He said that if the issue isn't brought to the Commission Board then it is hard for it to be taken care of. Commissioner Wester said that Mr. Mitchell called as soon as the issue happened and the Commission Board has been able to work on it. Mr. Mitchell has made Hwy 59 look a lot better. Commissioner Wester said his daughter grew up in FFA and his son is starting FFA this year – there is no doubt that this is the backbone of the County. He said that Franklin County is one of the top agricultural counties in the State. This is because of all the hard work that the farmers have put into it. Without the farmers, Franklin County would be moving backwards.

Commissioner Strickland said that he echoes the Board and thanks everyone for being here. He said that farming is the largest industry in Franklin County. He posed the question of where would we be without the farmers – beef and other stuff doesn't just come from the grocery store. Commissioner Strickland that it was nice to see everyone but also welcomed them back when there wasn't an issue of this type.

**B. Legislative Update** – Chairman Bridges said that each year there is a Commissioner who follows the legislation. He said that for the past several years he has been the Commissioner who follows the legislation and updates the Commission Board. This position works closely with the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). Chairman Bridges said that on July 1, 2016 there were 67 bills that impacted local governments. He said that it is a huge undertaking to make sure that the governments are on top of everything. Franklin County has a good tax commissioner (Bobby Martin) who pays attention to anything from the State that will affect the County.

Chairman Bridges said that Mr. Martin made him aware of the timber tax impact to the County. With working with ACCG and ACCG working with the State, Franklin County was able to resolve the issue of decreased revenue from timber. He asked each Commissioner to give him their concerns and he will work with ACCG to resolve issues affecting Franklin County. Chairman Bridges also asked the public to contact him if there is any legislation that they are concerned about.

**C. IBA Liaison Report** – Chairman Bridges said that the Commission Board has a Commissioner who serves as a liaison between the Industrial Building Authority

(IBA) and the Commission Board. For the past several years it has been Commissioner Jacques and now it is Commissioner Wester. Chairman Bridges asked Commissioner Wester to give an update to the Commission Board. Commissioner Wester said that the IBA had three agenda items at their last meeting. He said the budget was adopted for 2017 and it stayed the same as the 2016 budget. The IBA has been working with Ross Control on a bond issue for a building project. Ross Control is asking the IBA to do the bond on personal property. The IBA agreed to this. Ross Control is also asking for a 10 year tax incentive. Ross Control has guaranteed that they will hire 17 employees. The IBA said that this is something that will not go away as they will not lay these employees off. The IBA is in negotiations with Ross Control for this request.

Commissioner Wester said Central Franklin Industrial Park (CFIP) was the last item on the IBA agenda. He said that bids were taken for paving and curbing. Stratton and Sons was the only bid received with a bid amount of 2.56 million. The IBA awarded the bid to Stratton and Sons. The IBA has decided to do the curbing at the front entrance to the park and do away with the curbing into the industrial park. As businesses locate in the park they can add the curbing if they desire. The IBA made this decision to save money on this project.

Chairman Bridges thanked Commissioner Wester for the update. He asked if any Commissioner had questions. Commissioner Strickland asked if the Norfolk Southern and CXI railroads were discussed. Commissioner Wester said that this was not discussed. County Manager Beth Thomas said that this connection was already down below Elberton. Commissioner Strickland said that he was aware of this, he was asking about the 50 acres behind McDonalds in Lavonia where a hub could be built. He said that this would be a great thing for our County.

**D. Board Appointment Openings** – Chairman Bridges said that the County has a lot of boards. He said that the vast majority of the board appointments are volunteer positions. The County is always taking applications for these positions. Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over this item further. Mrs. Thomas said that there is currently one open position on the Department of Family and Children Services Board. She said that the appointee who rolled off in June, Mr. Kenneth Dove has expressed an interest in keeping the position. The DFACS Board has expressed an interest in keeping him on it also. Mr. Dove has completed the application with the information given to each Commissioner for review.

Mrs. Thomas said that to be fair to everyone the board positions should be advertised as they were before. She said that she would like to make good use of the advertisement. With the help of Mrs. Elaine (Evans) the positions that will be up for the next six months have been identified. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to advertise positions once a quarter and also post the advertisement on the County website. The appointments that will come due at the end of this year are: one tax assessor board member; two board of health; and three recreation board members, in addition to the DFACS position. She said that these positions will be advertised and the applications will be kept on file for one year.

These positions will be advertised as soon as possible. Mrs. Thomas asked the Board to make the appointment for the DFACS board at the September meeting after the advertisement has been done. Chairman Bridges asked the public to look into the

possibility of serving a board appointment. He said that all interest is appreciated.

**E. Juvenile Court Judge Circuit Agreement** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the juvenile court judge circuit agreement. Mrs. Thomas said that the proposed agreement is an intergovernmental agreement. The position is paid for by the State but the State pays it as an independent contractor instead of an employee. The Superior Court Judges are requesting that the Juvenile Court Judge be treated as an employee with all the taxes paid along with the health care benefits. Mrs. Thomas said that Madison County will act as the fiscal agent. She said that she is currently reviewing the financial impact to the County. Madison County is already being paid a portion of the judges' benefits. This appointment is effective January 2016 with the contract becoming effective October 1, 2016.

Commissioner Strickland questioned if Franklin County's portion now is \$1,500. Mrs. Thomas said currently Franklin County pays that amount. She is determining if this is for a new position or for what is currently being paid. Mrs. Thomas requested that each Commissioner go over the provided agreement and ask questions. Chairman Bridges asked the Commission Board to be ready to move on this item at the August regular board meeting.

**F. Record Retention/Maintenance (Contract with BOE)** – Chairman Bridges said that the next item for discussion is record retention and maintenance with the Board of Education. He said that Mrs. Thomas has been working long and hard on this issue. Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update. Mrs. Thomas said that in looking for a place for the Historical Society and a place to store vital records she requested that the Board of Education allow space to be used that the taxpayers are already paying for. She requested two rooms to house the Historical Society and the vital records. Mrs. Thomas said that the cost will be \$200 per month for two rooms. She said that this move will free up space in the Board of Commissioners (BOC) building. The plumbing issue has been corrected in the basement at the BOC with no risk of reoccurring problems. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to considering approving the contract with the BOE at the August regular board meeting.

Mrs. Thomas said that this move will secure the vital records but there are other needs to be addressed. She said that the Clerk of Court has stated that room is needed as well as a recommendation from the Grand Jury. Room is also needed by the Sheriff and the BOC. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to start a project to define the County's record retention policy to be in line with the State retention policy. She said that this will identify what is needed and how long it must be kept. She said that she would like for the elected officials as well as department heads to work on their needs for record retention. Mrs. Thomas stated to the Commission Board that if there is no objection, this will be listed as an operational project for this year. This will allow for the true needs to be assessed as well as to identify space in the County that can be used.

Chairman Bridges said that this would be good to see what the needs of the County actually are. He said that the move to the BOE is a good start. He said that he appreciated the patience of the Historical Society. Mrs. Thomas expressed her appreciation to the Board of Education for their assistance with this move.

**G. 2016 Millage Rate (VOTE)** – Chairman Bridges said that a vote is needed

tonight for the 2016 millage rate. He asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on this item before the vote. Mrs. Thomas stated that the 2016 Tax Digest has been advertised along with the five year history. The advertisement was in the newspaper as well as on the County website. The advertisement stated that the millage rate will be set tonight. Mrs. Thomas said that the unincorporated millage rate for Franklin County is 10.183, with the millage rate for incorporated Franklin County at 11.960. These millage rates are unchanged from the prior year. Included in the millage rate vote is the millage rate for the IBA which is 0.25 and is unchanged from the prior year. Also, the millage rate for the Board of Education is 18.118 which is a reduction of a half of a mil from the prior year.

Mrs. Thomas said that the millage rates and the required language have been included in the Tax Resolution. She requested that the millage rates be approved. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from Mrs. Thomas to approve the millage rate. Commissioner Strickland made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by three (3) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Strickland; Commissioner Franklin; and Commissioner Wester.

**H. Manager Finance Report (Budget, Audit)** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the information from the finance report. Mrs. Thomas expressed appreciation to the Commission Board for approving items at the last meeting during her absence. She said that the County is moving forward with the increased water rates. The notice in increase letters were enclosed in the upcoming water bills so that the customers will get the appropriate notification. Mrs. Thomas said that any water user who is identified as needing a classification change (residential; commercial; large user) will be issued a separate letter under separate cover.

The 2016 audit will begin soon since the engagement letter was approved. Mrs. Thomas said that the timeline from the auditors has not been received yet but she does anticipate that the audit will begin soon. She said that the County is in much better position than in prior years and the process should go smoothly. Mrs. Thomas said that the 2017 budget has been loaded into the financial system by Mrs. Elaine (Evans).

Mrs. Thomas said that last year budget modifications were presented at the end of the fiscal year. She said that as the financial processes are worked on, budget modifications will be presented as needed. Everything will be done at the legal level of control. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like for the budget modifications to be presented in a timelier manner to update financial records.

**I. September Board Meeting Schedule** – Chairman Bridges said that the September regular board meeting will be held on September 12 instead of September 5 due to the Labor Day Holiday. He asked the Commission Board if anyone had objections. There was no objection to the change.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Signed on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016

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Chairman J. Thomas Bridges

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Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner

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David R. Strickland, District 2 Commissioner

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Jeff Jacques, District 3 Commissioner

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Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner

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Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk