

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
October 25, 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
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Shane Scoggins, *Franklin County Citizen*

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

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

Item 3: *Items for discussion*

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to make a public comment. Carol Odom came forward to talk about Freedom Drive. She said that the road is very bad. Ms. Odom said that there are over 40 residents on Freedom Drive and there is a lot of traffic on this road, including four to six school buses.

Ms. Odom stated that everyone on the road is having breathing problems due to the dust caused by the cars driving up and down the road. She said that the road is powder that it is not even dirt any more. Ms. Odom said that Stephens County paved the backend of Freedom Drive but those residents have to come onto the dirt portion in Franklin County to get to their jobs. She said that the road cannot support this amount of traffic. Ms. Odom asked the Commission Board if there is some way that the road can be paved.

Freedom Drive has no utilities so Ms. Odom stated that she is talking with the City of Martin to see if water lines could be run down the road. She said that she has a petition for water and most of the people on the road have signed it. Fire hydrants are desperately needed because if something caught on fire the whole community would go. Ms. Odom said that she came before the Commission Board to beg for help. Chairman Bridges told Ms. Odom that tough issues are being faced with the ongoing drought but more information would be given in tonight's road report.

Chairman Bridges clarified that Ms. Odom is interested in getting water for Freedom Drive as well as the road worked. Ms. Odom said that she is talking with Martin Water and it is her understanding that is where the water will come from.

Commissioner Jacques stated that the area is included in their service delivery strategy. Ms. Odom asked if any of the Commissioners are familiar with the condition of the road. Chairman Bridges said that he has recently traveled Freedom Drive. Commissioner Jacques questioned if Freedom Drive has a dedicated right of way. County Manager Beth Thomas said that it is good. Commissioner Jacques asked if there is a full right of way. Mrs. Thomas said yes, according to the documents that the County has. Commissioner Strickland said that Freedom Drive is .52 miles in Franklin County before going into Stephens County. Ms. Odom said yes and Stephens County is paved. Chairman Bridges thanked Ms. Odom for coming before the Board.

B. Franklin County Speed Zone Ordinance – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the Speed Zone Ordinance for Franklin County. Mrs. Thomas said that the Georgia Department of Transportation has completed the update for the Franklin County Speed Zone Ordinance. This information was scanned and emailed to the Commission Board for review. This ordinance has also been reviewed by Major Chris Looney of the Sheriff's Office. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to consider granting approval of the ordinance and allow the Chairman to execute the document. As soon as the executed ordinance is received by the County a copy will be given to the Sheriff's Office. Chairman Bridges told the Board to be ready to take action on this at the November regular board meeting.

C. Public Works / Road Report – Chairman Bridges said that the next item is public works and road report. He asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update for this. Mrs. Thomas said that there are three items to be reported on. The first item is that the Georgia Department of Transportation will be doing two bridge repairs; on Casey Road over Unawatti Creek and on Akins Bridge Road over North Broad River. Franklin County issued a letter to the Department of Transportation stating that full support is given for both of these bridge replacement projects. The time frame is unknown for these projects. Detours will have to be done during the bridge replacements and will be announced. Mrs. Thomas expressed her thanks to GDOT for the help to Franklin County. Chairman Bridges said that this will be a big plus for the County.

There is a section of Old Hwy 17 that is in Franklin County which goes into Stephens County through the City of Martin. The name for this section of Old Hwy 17 has been posted as Main Street, at least in the Stephens County portion. This was caused due to the opening of the Hwy 17 bypass near the City of Martin. Mrs. Thomas said that this name poses a problem in the E911 system as there is already a Main Street. She said public hearings will need to be held to rename this road. One suggestion for the name is to leave it as Old Hwy 17 so that the numbers can remain the same in the E911 system. Mrs. Thomas said that the Board will need to authorize this so that the process can begin to rename the road.

Mrs. Thomas said the last item is the LMIG 2017 project listing. She said that the proposed list was emailed to the Commission Board several weeks ago for review. Mrs. Thomas stated that there are plenty of road needs in the County. She said that the proposed list is spread across the County so that every district will benefit. The County will receive approximately \$512,000 in GDOT funding. The local match will come from the SPLOST V funds. Included on the proposed list is a road that Commissioner Strickland has been working on for quite a while. There is adequate right of way on this road. The request for help has also been heard by the citizens. Chairman Bridges said

that he knew there are a lot of roads that need to be worked but he is glad that the work will be spread out among the districts.

Mrs. Thomas said that Road Superintendent Ralph Herren and County Engineer John Phillips rode the County and identified immediate needs of 2.5 million dollars. She said that Mr. Herren and Mr. Phillips picked the roads that are eligible within the confines of the LMIG funding. There are still many roads that need to be worked and they will be as soon as funding is available.

Commissioner Jacques asked for clarification if Freedom Drive is part and parcel of this list for the 2017 LMIG project, the road that was referenced by Ms. Odom. Mrs. Thomas said yes. She also clarified that this list has not been approved. Mrs. Thomas said that Freedom Drive has a very good base to it. Commissioner Jacques said Freedom Drive has a good structure. He also said that the dust issue is the same for every dirt road because of the drought. Commissioner Strickland said that one thing in Freedom Drive's favor is that it is a dead end which does cut down on the amount of traffic. Mrs. Thomas reemphasized that Freedom Drive is a good road structurally. She said that these roads will be prioritized on the list and the County will have to work within the constraints of the budget. Commissioner Jacques said that the listing for the 2017 LMIG is a good list of roads; these are some of the neediest of the needy.

Commissioner Jacques said that he wanted to bring up Atkinson Bridge Road. He said that the Board has previously formally voted to move forward with this project and he questioned if there are still outstanding right of way issues. Mrs. Thomas said that there are still issues. She said that the Board voted contingent on the money being available. The SPLOST IV funding for roads is completely out. Commissioner Jacques said that the funding was not contingent on SPLOST IV; it was contingent on the availability of funding. He said that he would like for the County to look closer at Atkinson Bridge Road predicated on resolution of the right of way issues. Commissioner Jacques said that there is a component of Atkinson Bridge Road that is already paved and has a high volume of traffic because it connects to a State Route. There are also continual maintenance and drainage problems in particular on the Hwy 145 and Hwy 51 side. Commissioner Jacques said that paving would resolve this problem. He also said that he did not want this road to fall into the cracks since it has already been identified as a road to work.

Mrs. Thomas said that the amount to work Atkinson Bridge Road would probably be close to \$350,000. She said that in with the road maintenance vote for Atkinson Bridge Road was also the water issue. Letters are being issued to potential water customers asking for current data and for those willing to give right of way as well as willing to be a water customer. This is being done for all the roads on the listing. There is right of way on one side of Atkinson Bridge Road but not on the other side. Commissioner Jacques said that he thought the total for Atkinson Bridge Road was around \$135,000. Mrs. Thomas said that all the grading; right of way; and other work would be closer to the \$350,000. There is also the issue of not having 100% right of way. Commissioner Jacques said that he did not think LMIG funding is predicated on 100% right of way. It is predicated on having the right of way available to be able to construct the typical that meets the geometric requirements.

Ms. Odom asked Mrs. Thomas what was meant by Freedom Drive being a very

good road. Mrs. Thomas said that structurally Freedom Drive is a good road because it is very wide, unlike a lot of the dirt roads in the County which are very narrow and one lane. There is also a good solid foundation base because a lot of gravel has been put on the road over the years and it has been maintained by grading. Mrs. Thomas said that right now the road is powdery but that is because of it not raining. Ms. Odom asked if this work can be done without a lot of other work on the road. Commissioner Jacques said that this is a good solid base and foundation which will support paving. Chairman Bridges said that hopefully the County will be able to move forward with Freedom Drive in 2017.

D. Manager's Report – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to present the manager's report. Mrs. Thomas gave each Commissioner internally generated financial reports through the end of September. She asked each Commissioner to go over the reports at their convenience and ask questions. Mrs. Thomas said that it is hard to project out a year based on three months. The revenue for the County does not typically come until later in the year because of property tax collections. Mrs. Thomas said that some of the revenue is trending above and some is trending below. Expenses were projected on known factors.

October is one of the worst cash months for the County. The insurance premium check helps float the finances until property taxes start to come in. Mrs. Thomas said that earlier in the year, the Commission Board voted to allow a Tax Anticipation Note for cash shortage. She made the announcement that the County has not had to borrow. The County is still not in great shape as there are not a lot of revenues built up. Mrs. Thomas said that staff has watched spending and cash flows closely. The various agencies in the County have also remitted monies quickly to help with cash flow.

The audit is currently in progress. There is not a completion date yet but the audit is moving along. This year's statements are looking better than last year's. Mrs. Thomas said a review of financial software packages is still being done. She has visited several to look at two major packages to help make the right choice.

E. Announcements – Chairman Bridges asked each Commissioner to make announcements. **Commissioner Franklin** expressed his appreciation for the work that the Road Department is doing with the slope mowing. He said that he has had citizens thank him for the limbs being gone on the school bus routes. Chairman Bridges said that there is the possibility of the County getting another slope mower. Mrs. Thomas said that currently the County owns an Off Road dump truck that is no longer used. This piece of equipment could possibly be sold at auction and then use the money for an additional slope mower.

Commissioner Strickland said that he attended the meeting at Sardis Church in Hartwell and presented the Domestic Violence Proclamation that was passed by the Board stating that October is domestic violence awareness month. He said that this year so far 59 people have lost their lives to domestic violence compared to the 84 last year. Commissioner Strickland said that the ceremony was very moving.

Commissioner Strickland suggested moving the public comment for work sessions to the end of the agenda instead of at the beginning of the agenda. He said that he thought this would give citizens a chance to give feedback on what was talked

about during the meeting. He said to do this only for the work session and not the regular board meeting.

Chairman Bridges said that this is a historical voting year and has been very interesting. He said that there are 13,094 registered voters in Franklin County. In the first week of early voting 947 people cast their votes. As of this afternoon 240 people have voted today. So far over 1,400 people have early voted in person. 230 absentee ballots have also been received. Chairman Bridges said that these numbers speak well of the citizens of Franklin County.

Commissioner Jacques said that for public information the Planning Commission has tabled all four of the rezoning requests from the October 20 meeting. There will not be a public hearing on November 7 prior to the regular board meeting due to the tabling of the Planning items.

Commissioner Wester gave an update on the grants received by the Royston Fire Department and the Sandy Cross Volunteer Fire Department. He said that Royston is purchasing a truck with their grant money. Sandy Cross is looking at replacing 22 airbags. The airbag cost is \$5,600 to \$6,000 each. Commissioner Wester said that the airbags have to be replaced because in 2017 to 2018 the airbags will become obsolete. He commended the fire departments for being fiscally responsible and not placing an additional burden on the County.

Chairman Bridges said in addition to the fire departments applying for grants they participate in fund raisers such as chicken-ques. He said that Bold Springs Fire Department held one recently that was very successful. Chairman Bridges said that there is a strong fire department in the County and they are to be commended.

Commissioner Wester said that the fire departments do a lot more than just putting out fires. It is impressive how each department takes care of themselves. He said that they are to be commended for what they do. Chairman Bridges said that it is a joint effort between the fire departments and the County. He said that he felt very good about the fire protection in the County. Commissioner Wester said that he felt very good about the fire departments, law enforcement, and EMS. He said that he would put Franklin County against any county in the State. Commissioner Jacques stated that was well said. Commissioner Strickland said that he would like to see an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Martin to get water down Hwy 17 close to the RV Park. Chairman Bridges said that John Phillips would need to speak with the residents to continue to make progress.

Mrs. Thomas said that with the catch up of the bush hogging by the Road Department it has revealed a lot of litter. She commended the employees of the Sheriff's Department who take the trustee crews out as well as the trustees who pick the litter up off the roadsides. Mrs. Thomas said that she and Sheriff Steve Thomas have talked about safety issues with the trash pickup.

Typically the planning session has been held in December. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to look at their calendars to schedule a date. She said that if the Board is in agreement cancel the December work session and have a planning session instead. This would be done because of the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Mrs.

Thomas said that the midyear numbers are not always available in December so January may be the better time for the meeting. She asked the Commission Board to let her know what dates they would be available to meet.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 6:43 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