

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 6, 2014
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 Clint Harper

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

Staff: County Manager, John Phillips
County Clerk, Elaine Evans
County Attorney, Bubba Samuels

Item 1 & 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance - Chairman Bridges called the regular board meeting to order. He then asked Commissioner Strickland to lead the invocation and pledge to the American flag.

Item 3: Approval of Minutes – Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and second to approve the minutes from the following meetings:

September 8, 2014 Public Hearing
September 8, 2014 Regular Board Meeting
September 30, 2014 Work Session

Commissioner Strickland made the motion to accept the minutes as written. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Harper; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

Item 4: Items to be Discussed:

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone had anything for public comment. There were no comments from the public. Chairman Bridges said that he did have something for public comment. He said that twelve applicants have applied for the county manager position. He asked that the Commission Board go to the Board of Commissioners office and review the applications. Chairman Bridges said that this would start the process of seeing who will be interviewed for the position. The position is open and applications are being accepted.

B. 4-H Proclamation – Chairman Bridges recognized Audrey Justice and asked her to come forward. Ms. Justice said that October 5th through October 11th is National 4-H Week. Activities are planned during this time period for students; ages 9 through 19. Public school students as well as home

school students are included in these activities. Ms. Justice then asked Chairman Bridges to sign the poster sized proclamation. She asked the Commission Board to have a picture taken with the 4-H representative students. Chairman Bridges thanked the 4-H students for coming. Commissioner Strickland thanked the 4-H students for all they do. Commissioner Jacques said that all the Commission Board agrees with the sentiments expressed by our Chairman.

C. Planning Commission Items – Chairman Bridges said that the planning commission items are Truth Fellowship conditional use permit and name change for a portion of Whitlow Road. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the conditional use permit for Truth Fellowship. Commissioner Franklin made the motion to approve the conditional use permit for Truth Fellowship and said that the Planning Commission did a great job. Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Harper; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and a second to change the name of a portion of Whitlow Road to North Whitlow Road. Commissioner Strickland made the motion to change the name of a portion of Whitlow Road to North Whitlow Road. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion per staff's request. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Harper; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

D. Short Term Work Program – Chairman Bridges asked County Manager John Phillips to go over the short term work program. Mr. Phillips said that it is time to update the Franklin County Joint Comprehensive Plan. This is the five year update which consists of updating the work plan. One of the main benefits for the short term work program is that the County is eligible for grant funds. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and second to move forward with the short term work program. Commissioner Strickland made the motion. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Strickland; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Harper.

E. Employee Handbook – Chairman Bridges said that the employee handbook has been worked on for a considerable length of time. He also said that he appreciated County Clerk Elaine Evans for her work on this update. All employees have had an opportunity to review this. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to adopt the employee handbook. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to adopt the employee handbook based upon review. Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion. Commissioner Jacques asked for confirmation that all constitutional officers and department heads had a chance to review the employee handbook. County Clerk confirmed that she had emailed the handbook to all constitutional officers and department heads. Commissioner Strickland asked that the handbook be distributed to each employee and that they sign a receipt for it. Commissioner Jacques said that he would like for this to be posted on the County website so that the information is available to the public as well as to employees. Sheriff Steve Thomas said that his department will not sign off on the handbook. The employees of the Sheriff's Office are not under the County handbook. Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook said that her employees are not under the County handbook either. Commissioner Harper said that he would have liked for the constitutional officers to have given more input into the update of the employee handbook. Commissioner Jacques said that was why he asked if all constitutional officers had received a copy of the handbook.

Chairman Bridges said that the employee handbook can always be amended as needed. The

handbook vote does not need to be delayed. Commissioner Jacques asked Sheriff Thomas if he had read the handbook or did he just not want his employees included. Sheriff Thomas said that the employees of the Sheriff's Office are under the policies of the Sheriff. Commissioner Jacques asked Sheriff Thomas if his department was opting out. Sheriff Thomas said yes that was true for the handbook. He said that he has his own policies for his department. The employees of his department are on the County insurance and do follow certain schedules of the County. Commissioner Jacques asked Sheriff Thomas if there is anything in the County handbook that would conflict with the policies of his department. Sheriff Thomas said that he did not say that, he is only saying that his department is opting out of the County handbook. Chairman Bridges said that this would be discussed further at the next work session.

Commissioner Harper asked County Clerk Elaine Evans if she had heard back from all the constitutional officers. She replied that she only had feedback from one. Commissioner Harper then questioned why Missy Holbrook had not received the handbook. Ms. Evans replied that the handbook was emailed three times to all the constitutional officers. Ms. Holbrook said that she could not open her emails. Ms. Evans said that a copy would have been provided to her if it had been asked for. Chairman Bridges said that the opportunity had been given for each employee to read and review the handbook if they had desired to do so. He then asked for a show of hands to adopt the employee handbook. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Harper; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

F. Commissioners Health Insurance – Chairman Bridges said that the commissioners health insurance has been advertised in the *Franklin County Citizen Leader* for several weeks. He also said that the commissioners have had a chance to receive input from the citizens in the County. He asked for a motion to move forward with giving the commissioners health insurance. Commissioner Strickland made the motion to move forward with the insurance being optional for commissioners and going into effect in January 2015. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges then asked for discussion.

Commissioner Jacques said that this has been advertised. He also said that this is a gratuity for commissioners. He said that the feedback that he has gotten from the County citizens has been overwhelming to not give health insurance to commissioners. The taxpayers of the County do not want to pay for health insurance for commissioners. Commissioners are part time employees. He then asked his colleagues to rescind the motion. Commissioner Jacques said that the job of the commissioners is to take action on the needs of the County and not to take action on themselves. This would benefit the commissioners exclusively.

Commissioner Harper said that as he stated in previous meetings this vote is against County policy; with the old handbook and with the new handbook that was just voted on tonight. Insurance is not provided to part time employees. He and Commissioner Jacques both said that commissioners are part time as stated in the Georgia legislation that created the Commission Board. Commissioner Harper said that this is the most self-serving vote that he has been a part of while being on this Board. He has received a lot of feedback from County citizens and no one has stated that giving commissioners is a good idea. He said that he is disappointed that a public hearing was not held on this issue, apparently it was not required.

Chairman Bridges said that in 2011 the Commission Board voted for the commissioners to come off the County insurance plans at the end of their respective terms. At that time the vote was unanimous to discontinue commissioners on the County insurance. Chairman Bridges said that he knew that the two commissioners to his right would be opposed to the commissioners being on the County insurance and that the two commissioners to his left would be in favor of the County insurance. He said that the proper thing is for him to break the tie vote. His decision was based on that previously the commissioners were

on the County insurance plans and the majority of the 159 counties in Georgia offer their commissioners insurance according to findings from Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). This is not a self-serving vote for Thomas Bridges as he will not take the County health insurance. Chairman Bridges also checked with the City of Royston and the City of Lavonia and was told that their council members are offered the option of taking insurance. He said that he has read the handbook and he has not found that it violates County policy for elected officials to be on the insurance plan. He also said that offering insurance would be a drawing card for qualified candidates to run for political offices. Chairman Bridges then asked for a vote by a show of hands for the commissioners to be able to opt in on the County health insurance beginning January 2015. The motion passed by three (3) YES votes to two (2) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; and Commissioner Strickland. The NO votes were Commissioner Harper and Commissioner Jacques.

G. Atkinson Bridge Road – Chairman Bridges asked County Manager John Phillips to comment on Atkinson Bridge Road before the motion. Mr. Phillips said that he and staff looked at the portion of Atkinson Bridge Road from State Route 145/State Route 51 to approximately 900 feet before the one lane bridge. This is a gravel section of the road. He and staff looked at ways to improve the road with surfacing and making the road into two nine foot travel lanes instead of the one existing lane. Portions of the road will need grading work. Projected costs for base work and resurfacing a portion of Atkinson Bridge Road is \$143,000. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to move forward with a project to put a surface treatment on Atkinson Bridge Road; beginning at State Route 145 extending to a point 900 feet east of the existing single lane bridge. This motion also includes that this project will be done exclusively with funding from SPLOST that are designated for road improvements. Also that this project will not interfere with state or federal funding for County projects and that the easements are obtained for right of way. Commissioner Harper seconded the motion.

Commissioner Jacques said that this will a safety improvement and will help with drainage on Atkinson Bridge Road. Commissioner Franklin asked what the time line is for this project. Commissioner Jacques said that he would like to see the project started by February or March of 2015 with completion by the end of the year. Commissioner Strickland asked what the length of the road is. County Manager John Phillips said that the road is 5,860 feet. Chairman Bridges asked for a vote by a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Harper; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

H. Benton Drive – Chairman Bridges said that Benton Drive had been discussed at the previous work session. He then asked for a motion to perform maintenance from ditch to ditch on Benton Drive. Commissioner Jacques made the motion for ditch to ditch maintenance contingent on the easements from the residents of Benton Drive as per the County's road policy. Commissioner Harper seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a vote by a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Harper; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

I. Jail Expansion – Chairman Bridges said the jail expansion was discussed at the September work session. He said that options have been looked at for expanding the jail. He also said that tonight would be discussion of ways to expand the jail. Commissioner Strickland said that he liked the idea presented at the work session of a portion being completed now with the other portion completed at a later time. He said that partial completion would help with the housing out of inmates but also help the County financially with not having to borrow as much money at this time. Commissioner Jacques said that he agrees with the assessment from Commissioner Strickland. He would like to see the four pod design cut into two pods at this time. Commissioner Jacques said that this should cut the costs down to around 1.4 million dollars. \$870,000 is currently available to begin construction on the jail expansion. He

also said that a cap needs to be placed on the spending by the Commission Board so that the project is not overspent. The bidding process needs to be started so that the actual costs for the jail expansion can be known. If the bids come in too high then the project can be looked at again.

Chairman Bridges said that the design will be looked at again in the next work session. If all the Commission Board is in agreement with the design for the jail expansion then the project can be put out for bidding. County Manager John Phillips said when the project is sent out for bids that if some of the site preparation can be done by County staff then that will be looked at for project savings costs. Commissioner Jacques asked Sheriff Thomas if he would be comfortable with the design of two pods being built now. Sheriff Thomas said that two pods would help. Captain Gary Smith said that the jail could be built in phases and that it would not compromise any of the safety and it is a feasible solution. Chairman Bridges asked County Manager John Phillips to get with Sheriff Thomas on the jail design so that planning can begin at the next work session. Commissioner Strickland wanted to make sure that the funds are there. Sheriff Thomas said that the amounts will be added to monthly by deposits to the accounts. Commissioner Jacques said that with the jail expansion that the housing out costs will decrease.

Commissioner Jacques asked for a full review of the County finances for this year. He said that he would like for the Commission Board to look at this either in the November or December work session or at the planning meeting in December. Chairman Bridges again asked the Commission Board to go by the Board of Commissioners office to review the applicants for county manager. He also said that the job is still open and applications are still being accepted.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Strickland; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Harper. The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2014

Chairman J. Thomas Bridges

Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner

David R. Strickland, District 2 Commissioner

Jeff Jacques, District 3 Commissioner

Clint Harper, District 4 Commissioner

Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk