

**FRANKLIN COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
July 28, 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  
MJ Kneiser, WLHR

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

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

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

**A. Public Comment** - Chairman Bridges asked if anyone wished to speak in public comment. There was no one who wished to speak in public comment.

**B. Tax Levy/Millage** – Chairman Bridges said that the required meetings have taken place for the millage increase. He thanked Shane Scoggins with the *Franklin County Citizen Leader* and MJ Kneiser with *WLHR* for getting the information out to the citizens of the County. The proposed millage increase is for 2.67 mills. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and a second to accept the millage increase. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to increase the millage rate. 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 (1) NO vote. The YES votes were Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester. The NO vote was Commissioner Strickland.

**C. Paul Withers – Voting districts** – Chairman Bridges recognized Paul Withers and asked him to come forward to speak on the voting districts. Mr. Withers said that at this time Franklin County votes at large. He would like for the voting to be changed to vote by districts. Commissioner Strickland asked Mr. Withers if he had spoken with Representative Alan Powell for help with this issue. Mr. Withers said that

Alan Powell told him that this could be changed by the grand jury or the Commission Board. Commissioner Strickland said that it is common sense to vote by district. Mr. Withers said that everything in Franklin County is unique. He said that he feels funny about voting for other districts and cities when he doesn't know much about the people.

Commissioner Jacques told Mr. Withers that is a point well taken. He suggested a non-binding referendum on the ballot in November when SPLOST is voted on. The item would be whether the citizens of the County want to vote by districts or keep the vote at large. Commissioner Jacques said that he would support the desire of the citizens. Chairman Bridges said that he is neutral, that he will go with the citizens. Mr. Withers said that he would like for the Commission Board to help him get this item on the ballot. Commissioner Strickland told Mr. Withers to get with county manager, Beth Thomas for help with this.

Mrs. Thomas said that she would seek the advice of the county attorney with the direction from the Commission Board. She also stated that there is a set time frame to work within and this will have to be followed. Commissioner Strickland concurred with Mrs. Thomas. Commissioner Jacques said to follow the rules and regulations and review everything. Commissioner Wester said that it would be great for the citizens of the County to decide how they would like to vote. Mrs. Thomas said that she will check with the State Elections Board for guidance. Commissioner Jacques said that because of the cost, he does not want to have a special election. Mr. Withers thanked Chairman Bridges and the Commission Board for allowing him to speak on this issue.

**D. Timber Ordinance** – Chairman Bridges said that county manager Beth Thomas had provided each Commissioner with a copy of the proposed timber ordinance. He said that it is an understandable ordinance. He then asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the ordinance. Mrs. Thomas said that the County cannot charge a fee for timber harvesting but that a penalty of up to \$500 can be assessed on the harvester if notice is not given to the County. Each timber harvester is required to have a bond or letter of credit before harvesting takes place. Commissioner Strickland asked Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin if timber harvesting would affect conservation use. Mr. Martin said that he has looked at the timber ordinance and he doesn't see anything wrong with it – everything seems to be in order.

**E. September meeting schedule** – Chairman Bridges announced that the September regular board meeting will be held on September 14<sup>th</sup> instead of September 7<sup>th</sup> due to the Labor Day Holiday. There was no discussion.

**F. Tractor Lease** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to discuss the tractor lease item. Mrs. Thomas said that the road department is down a tractor, there are only two in use at the present time. Over 400 miles are maintained by 11 Road department employees, one of which is the department head. The State Contract and local options were explored by Mrs. Thomas along with County Engineer John Phillips and Road Department Superintendent Ralph Herren. The best option was to lease to own with a local vendor for 60 months. The Road Department is down one employee at

this time but the decision was made to not replace the employee until after October 1<sup>st</sup> so that the lease payment of \$7,100 could be made for this year from those savings.

Commissioner Strickland said that he thought 36 months versus 60 months would be better. He also said that other counties are going with 36 months and the maintenance of the equipment is included. Mrs. Thomas said that this is a lease to own, at the end of the 60 months Franklin County will own the tractor. During the 60 months the tractor will be under warranty. Franklin County employees handle the maintenance of the equipment. Commissioner Jacques asked if this would be a qualifying SPLOST item. Mrs. Thomas said that capital lease payments are valid per our auditors but she will check again. Commissioner Strickland asked could the payment be deferred until the next SPLOST passes.

Commissioner Jacques asked would the County be trading anything in. Mrs. Thomas said yes that the County will be trading a very used piece of equipment. Chairman Bridges said that he is sure that Mrs. Thomas and Mr. Phillips have made the right decision for this lease. Commissioner Strickland said that the Road Department has decreased by 30%. Mrs. Thomas said that the decrease was through attrition and other circumstances. Commissioner Strickland then asked when future hiring would occur for the Road Department. Mrs. Thomas said that the Road crew is doing a phenomenal job with the staff that they have. She said that after October 1<sup>st</sup> there are plans to fill the vacant position.

Commissioner Jacques said that the DOT is contracting mowing. He asked if the County could explore this option for the seasonal work. He said that this would minimize the liability for the County and the Road crew could work on other projects. Mrs. Thomas stated that it is not in this year's budget but she will look into this for next year. There was no further discussion.

Mrs. Thomas asked that the Commission Board revisit the tax levy/millage item. She said that the IBA millage and Board of Education millage needs to be voted on. The millage rate for the IBA is .25 mills. The millage for the Board of Education is 18.618 mills. Advertising was done as required and everything has been completed. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the millage rates for the IBA and Board of Education. Commissioner Strickland made the motion to accept for the purpose of discussion. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. Commissioner Strickland asked if the IBA had any reductions or increases. Mrs. Thomas said that some went up and some went down. It would be best to look at the IBA's budget. Commissioner Jacques said that there was a reduction in the salary line because the current IBA director does not take insurance. 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 Wester; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Franklin; and Commissioner Strickland.

**G. Atkinson Bridge Road – Water and paving** – Chairman Bridges recognized Commissioner Jacques to speak about water and paving on Atkinson Bridge

Road. Commissioner Jacques said that several months ago several residents of Atkinson Bridge Road requested that water be installed. There are 17 residents within a one mile stretch who would like the water service. The citizens on the south side of Atkinson Bridge Road have obtained the right of way for road maintenance and water installation. He said that with the number of residents and the number of feet this road would make sense to continue the work in the Sandy Cross area.

The residents of Atkinson Bridge Road are having quality and quantity issues with wells. Commissioner Jacques said that both of these issues make Atkinson Bridge Road a double priority. He asked that a vote be taken at the next meeting to work the roads that have right of ways that were obtained by the residents of the roads. Commissioner Jacques said that this would tie Riverside Church; Hwy 51 and Hwy 145 together with Atkinson Bridge Road. He asked that the road priority list be adjusted following completion because materials are on hand.

Commissioner Strickland asked Commissioner Jacques was he asking just for water. Commissioner Jacques said at this time water is the priority. Mrs. Thomas said that a public works update will be given at the next work session. She also said that the residents of Atkinson Bridge Road started with paving the road and then went to water installation. Gravel costs will be incurred. Commissioner Strickland asked why gravel costs would be incurred if it was just for water. Mrs. Thomas said that rock and gravel will have to go back on the road after the water lines are installed.

Mrs. Thomas also said that six rights of ways are missing on Atkinson Bridge Road. Commissioner Jacques said that the bridge on Atkinson Bridge Road is a one lane bridge; this would need to be widened and paved. The gravel portion toward Hwy 51 could be surface treated and shoulder work performed to increase the safety of the road. Commissioner Jacques said that Atkinson Bridge Road is a high maintenance road. Converting from a one lane dirt road to a two way surface treated road the maintenance costs for the road would decrease. He also said that for LMIG, that like kind services can be done and part of the match will be eliminated. Labor and materials are already budgeted items.

Commissioner Strickland asked if poultry trucks traveling on the road would tear the road up. Commissioner Jacques said that there is a geometric standard for road work. Mrs. Thomas said that all or a substantial amount of the rights of ways are needed before work can begin. She will look for guidance from the county attorney because over twenty percent of the rights of ways are missing. Commissioner Jacques said that the residents of Atkinson Bridge Road said that one large land owner is willing to sign right of way. Mrs. Thomas said that the costs associated with this project would need clarification. Commissioner Strickland asked what the cost is per mile for gravel and paving. He also said that delivery costs needed to be looked at. Mrs. Thomas said that the delivery of gravel is included in the price. She also said that she would look at the prices again.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and a second to adjourn the work session.

Commissioner Strickland made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. 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 Jacques; Commissioner Wester; and Commissioner Strickland. The work session adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Signed on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015

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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