

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**WORK SESSION**  
**June 28, 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*  
Buddy Hardigree, *WLHR*

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

**Item 1 & 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance** – Chairman Bridges welcomed everyone and expressed his appreciation for their attendance at the June work session. He called the meeting to order and asked Commissioner Jacques to lead the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

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

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

**B. Budget** – Chairman Bridges asked County Manager Beth Thomas to give the details of the FY16 and FY17 budget items.

**1. FY16** – Mrs. Thomas gave budget modification information to the Commission Board. She said that all the changes are budget neutral; they add expense but also take corresponding revenue. These modifications are based on review by Mrs. Thomas. She said that in the Probate and Magistrate departments she is asking to move solicitor and public defender budgets into their own separate category. This will also be the same for the FY17 budget. Mrs. Thomas said that the EMS department received a donation; a grant; and insurance reimbursement. These items were not budgeted in last year's budget. The fire departments received part of the GEMA grant. A change was requested for AAVT to be put in a single line item. Mrs. Thomas said that the grant money for the Sheriff will also be modified. She asked that the Commission Board look over these modifications and approve at the July meeting. Chairman Bridges said that this would be looked over and considered for approval at the July meeting.

**2. FY17** – Mrs. Thomas said that included with the information given to the Commission Board is the budget resolution for FY17. She said that a few modifications were made to the FY17 budget from the proposal based on conversations at the meeting and afterwards. She said that these changes were tracked and given to each

Commissioner. Mrs. Thomas said that the commercial property reevaluation is included in this budget and was done by reducing gravel. Other small adjustments were made. Mrs. Thomas said that the budget needs to be approved by July 1. Chairman Bridges asked for discussion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to adopt the FY17 budget. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to adopt the proposed FY2017 budget again clearly specifying that there is no tax increase involved with this budget and/or the adoption thereof. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for discussion. 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 Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Strickland; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester.

**C. Public Defender Agreement** – Chairman Bridges said that the County has a public defender agreement and it is taken on each year. He asked Mrs. Thomas to explain this item further. Mrs. Thomas said that she sent the Commission Board an electronic copy of the full agreement. She said that this agreement comes through the County Attorney who then forwards it to management. Mrs. Thomas said that the public defender fees are based on the court cases in Franklin County. She said that there has been a minimal increase for this budget of approximately \$3,000. In last year's budget, Franklin County incurred a \$3,000 savings. In this year's budget the level is back up to what was experienced two years ago. Mrs. Thomas asked that this agreement be approved because it is part of the FY17 budget and is effective July 1.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the public defender agreement. Commissioner Strickland made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for discussion. Commissioner Strickland said that he understood that this is broken down by cases. He asked if it was taken into consideration that someone who is tried in one county might be from another county. Mrs. Thomas said that she did not have a definite answer. Commissioner Strickland said that he thought all five counties should just pay 20% each. Chairman Bridges said that the fees are broken down by cases and the fees are based on this. Mrs. Thomas said that her understanding is that the cases are running average. There was no further 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 Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Jacques; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin.

**D. Gateway Sewer** – Chairman Bridges said that the Gateway Sewer project was talked about at the last meeting. He asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on this. Mrs. Thomas said that at the last meeting she presented a preliminary plan. She said that the Gateway Church is in a predicament as they do not want to proceed with work without an easement and they do not know the final plans of how this is going to work. Mrs. Thomas said that she is bringing this again to the Commission Board to consider granting an easement under a conditional use. To grant the easement so long as it follows alongside A.T. Mauldin Road in the general vicinity. Mrs. Thomas said that the church could then proceed with their work knowing that they will be granted the easement. She said that if anything changed and it deviated too far from what was deemed appropriate by the County the project could be halted. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to look at this request and consider for approval at the July meeting.

**E. LMIG 2017 Award** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to comment on the LMIG 2017. Mrs. Thomas said that she wanted to pass the good news along. She said that Franklin County received a 30% increase in the LMIG allocation for 2017. The formula used yielded a \$512,914.31 award. Mrs. Thomas said that this is more money that is coming into the County for next year's project. She said that this is still in the early stage and no project lists have been formulated yet. Chairman Bridges said that this is great news for Franklin County.

**F. LMIG 2016** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on the LMIG 2016.

**1. Project Paving Bid Results** – Mrs. Thomas said that bid results have been provided to the Commission Board. She is recommending going with the lowest bidder. The lowest bidder for the paving project was Stratton and Sons in the amount of \$440,000. Franklin County received \$393,000 for the 2016 LMIG projects. Mrs. Thomas asked that this be considered and approved at the July meeting.

**2. Culvert Repair Bid Results** – Mrs. Thomas said that two bids were received for the culvert project. She is recommending going with the lowest bid of \$108,000 from Georgia Bridge and Concrete. This is included in the 2016 LMIG project.

Commissioner Strickland asked if anyone from Franklin County bid on the culvert repair. Mrs. Thomas said that only two bids were received – ER Snell and Georgia Bridge. She said that she thought this was a very specialized type of work. Mrs. Thomas said that some of the 30% match will be done with County resources. She said that the prep work for the culvert will be done by County staff with all hours tracked and equipment used. Mrs. Thomas asked that both of these projects be approved at the July meeting so that the County can move forward. She stated that the money has already been received. Chairman Bridges told the Commission Board to study the bids and be prepared to take action at the July meeting.

**G. Audit Engagement** – Chairman Bridges said that Mrs. Thomas has been communicating with the auditors. He asked Mrs. Thomas to explain the audit engagement process. Mrs. Thomas said that she had emailed each Commissioner the audit engagement letter which will cover years 2016; 2017; and 2018. She said years ago she spoke in public comment as a citizen in support of sending out RFP's. She said that she worked for a large company and auditors were switched every seven years. Mrs. Thomas said that the current auditors have been with the County for three years and these were some of the worst three years as far as a set of records. She said that the current auditors have gone above and beyond since receiving the contract. Mrs. Thomas said three years ago the auditors were the lowest bidders. The prices that they are proposing for the next three years are in line with what they bid three years ago.

Mrs. Thomas said that it is important now that the records are straightened out to continue on with the current auditors for the next three years. She said that everything has been cleaned up and it is time to give the auditors a fair shot at getting the audit in a consistent manner. Mrs. Thomas said that the auditors have been extremely helpful to her over the last 18 months. She said that they have gone with her to look at software and are taking an active part in ensuring that the County makes some good financial

decisions. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to approve the audit engagement letter at the July meeting. She said after the approval that preparations can start for the audit. Commissioner Strickland asked if the County paid more than what they bid. Mrs. Thomas said that the County paid for the out of scope services. These are services that are not covered in the engagement letter. Mrs. Thomas said that the auditors had to recreate the County's general ledger for two years. She also said that they wrote off about half of what they could have charged. Mrs. Thomas recommended that the County stay with Duncan and Kitchens LLC as the county auditors.

**H. Code of Ordinances** – Chairman Bridges said that he understood that the code of ordinances has been worked on. He asked Mrs. Thomas to comment further. Mrs. Thomas said that this is a project that has been worked on for quite a few months. She said that the County Clerk has been very helpful in pulling together multiple sources of books. All of the ordinances have been scanned that have been passed since 2002. These ordinances were sent to Municode to get a price quote. Mrs. Thomas is requesting help to fund this from the Law Library Board of Trustees. The total price is \$7,500 which will get Franklin County's Code of Ordinances up to date, from 2002 to current. Once the project is complete, it can be placed online for an annual cost of \$550. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to consider the contract from Municode. She said that this is a great step in getting a handle on the ordinances.

Commissioner Strickland asked was this offered by Georgia Mountains Region Commission so that the cost would be lower. Mrs. Thomas said that she reached out to the managers on the ACCG list serve. She said that everything she heard was that Municode was well respected and it is what is used by all the local counties if online is available. Municode is the premiere company for this type of work. Mrs. Thomas said that this quote came in around \$4,000 cheaper than she expected based on the quote given to a prior manager. She said that quote was around \$11,000 so she is pleased with the price of \$7,500. Commissioner Strickland asked Mrs. Thomas if she had checked with Georgia Mountains Region Commission. Mrs. Thomas said that she did not as she is not aware of them doing codification. She said that they do not have the legal staff to do the references. Commissioner Strickland asked to get them to look at this. Mrs. Thomas said that if that is what he wants, she will be happy to ask them. Chairman Bridges said that he appreciated the hard work that has been done on getting the ordinances together. He said that he knew Mrs. Elaine (Evans) has spent a lot of hours getting this ready. Chairman Bridges said that with 14 years of ordinances he is sure that there are some adjustments to do.

**I. Satellite Modification Request Update** – Chairman Bridges said that the satellite modification is an issue that has really been pushed strong for a couple of years. He said this is to try to get local television channels out of Atlanta into Franklin County. This has proven to be tougher than it appeared to be but progress is being made. Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to discuss this issue further. Mrs. Thomas said the STELAR Act of 2014 opened the doorway for local governments to be involved in satellite modification. This Act stated what had to happen but it took quite a while for the FCC to deliver rules and regulations. They mirror what the cable modification request will be. Representative Doug Collins' office made arrangements for Mrs. Thomas to meet with DIRECTV. At this meeting Mrs. Thomas asked for assistance in gathering data. To make a market modification there are five statutory requirements. The evidence must be provided for support of the statutory requirements. Mrs. Thomas

said that the evidence is something that counties do not have access to. The evidence consists of maps of where the satellites are located; market data of who watches; and what the channel listings are. The County will need assistance with this process.

Mrs. Thomas said that after meeting with DIRECTV they pushed her in the same direction that Dish Network had which was to submit a formal request; to file a voluntary pre-filing coordination process. A letter was sent to DIRECTV and Dish Network by Mrs. Thomas requesting that both providers give the County a feasibility certification. The feasibility certification will clarify to what extent this service can be provided. Mrs. Thomas said that if DIRECTV and Dish Network cannot provide the service then the modification request to the FCC is a moot point. Contacting the satellite providers is the first step in this process. Mrs. Thomas said that the satellite providers have 45 days to 90 days to respond to the request. She said that Dish Network has already acknowledged receipt of the letter. Mrs. Thomas said that Dish Network asked what Atlanta stations the County is interested in. She responded the top four; FOX; NBC; CBS; and ABC. The broadcasters will also play a part in this request process.

Mrs. Thomas said that after this first step is completed then the actual request will be given. The evidence requirements will have to be sent in. After this it will be up to the satellite providers and the broadcasters to negotiate the terms. Commissioner Strickland asked Mrs. Thomas if it would have been better to put that Franklin County is 75 miles from Atlanta rather than 100. Mrs. Thomas said that she wanted the information to match exactly what was put on the hospital refinance and every other formal document concerning Franklin County. Chairman Bridges said that the County does not want to give anyone a loophole to keep this from happening. He said that he appreciated Mrs. Thomas for working on this issue for the citizens of Franklin County.

**J. Water Rates** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to explain the water rates. Mrs. Thomas said that the FY17 budget includes increased water rates. She said that a full analysis was done by using April 2016 bills by individual customers by route number and meter. Mrs. Thomas said that the water rates were last adjusted in April 2011 which is over five years ago. She said that the water expenses have continued to increase. The City of Toccoa, a provider of water to Franklin County has an automatic annual increase. Over this five year period the City of Toccoa has increased the rate to Franklin County by over 10%. The production of water has also increased due to testing; supplies and manual labor. The debt service has also increased due to expansion of water lines. This has been a major factor in the cash flow.

With the water rate proposal from Mrs. Thomas, she would like to implement classifications of customers: residential; industrial; large industrial; commercial; large agricultural; and wholesale. The base fees are based on meter size; not on classification and provides for the first 2,000 gallons of water usage. Mrs. Thomas said that the proposed increase would yield an annual revenue increase of around 10.7% which is approximately \$122,000. She said that she would like for this increase to be effective September 1 so that the customers will have ample time to be notified. Mrs. Thomas said that based on the analysis formula the average residential customer will see an increase of \$4.31 to \$4.40 per month assuming they use the same amount of water. The increases by classification are maintained at fewer than 18% which will be a range of 5% to 18% by category. Mrs. Thomas asked for the Commission Board to review this information and if they deemed it appropriate to approve this at the July

meeting so that the letter can go out with the next bills to the customers. Commissioner Strickland asked if this meant for the last five years that the County has been losing money on water. Mrs. Thomas told Commissioner Strickland that he can look through the audits and see where the performance is and where the general fund has had to transfer money into it. She said that one of the biggest reasons for the transfer of money is the debt service. Commissioner Strickland asked would this get the water fund closer to breaking even. Mrs. Thomas said that it moves the water fund in the right direction.

Chairman Bridges said that the water connection fees will also increase but County forces will still be used. Mrs. Thomas said that the fee will go to \$750 from \$500. This amount will just cover the expenses. She said that the best thing that could happen is to continue to increase the water system and continue to increase the volume of customers. Commissioner Jacques said that the County tries to subsidize the tap fee in order to gain more customers. Mrs. Thomas said that is true and that is why that they are not asking for extra money, only enough to provide the tap. Chairman Bridges asked each Commissioner to study this information and be ready to take action in July.

**K. IBA Liaison Resignation and Appointment** – Chairman Bridges said that Commissioner Jacques has been working for several years as the IBA liaison and has done a great job but now would like to pass this along to someone else. Commissioner Jacques said that historically the Commission Board has had a liaison that is a non-voting member that attends the IBA meeting. He said that this person provides information and exchanges communications with other members to keep the Commission Board updated on perspective developments and/or economic outreach that is ongoing. Commissioner Jacques said that it has been his distinct pleasure for the last seven years to work with the IBA which consists of the five mayors; two members appointed by the Commission Board; and the IBA executive director, which previously was Mrs. Lyn Allen and currently is Mr. Ginn.

Commissioner Jacques said that this will be a two-fold discussion. He said that when he replaced Levy Moore on the IBA Board it was stated that there was not any pre-established duration for service. Commissioner Jacques said that he would like for this to be discussed as well as the transition following the July meeting. He said that he has talked with all of the Commission Board as well as Commissioner Wester individually. Commissioner Jacques stated that Commissioner Wester would be an ideal candidate to represent the Commission Board with the IBA. The IBA typically meets once a month on the second Tuesday night, unless otherwise needed.

It was suggested by Commissioner Jacques that the Commission Board formulate a plan to have the IBA liaison position rotate from board member to board member every fiscal year or run a two year cycle. Commissioner Jacques said that he was throwing this out as discussion but at the July meeting will tender his resignation as the IBA liaison from the Commission Board. He will also make the recommendation that Commissioner Wester will be appointed. Chairman Bridges thanked Commissioner Jacques for working with the IBA for the last seven years and keeping the Commission Board informed. He said that the IBA liaison transition will be made in July.

Commissioner Strickland asked if there was any way that two commissioners could be on the IBA Board in addition to the five mayors. He said the chairman and one other commissioner. He also said that the chairman should be allowed to vote.

Commissioner Jacques said that in the IBA charter it is specific about who is appointed and who votes. He said that any change of the IBA Board would require some type of legislative action.

**L. July Meeting Date** – Chairman Bridges said that the July meeting falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. He said that there was discussion to move the meeting to the second Monday in July which is July 11. Chairman Bridges asked the Commission Board if anyone had an objection to this change. There was no objection. The July meeting will be held on July 11 at 6 p.m. Commissioner Jacques said that there will also be a public hearing at 5:30 p.m. before the regular board meeting.

There was no further discussion. Commissioner Strickland made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. The motion passed by five (5) YES votes to zero (0) NO votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Jacques; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Strickland; and Commissioner Franklin. 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