

FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
November 29, 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: Kandice Eberhardt, *Franklin County Citizen*
MJ Kneiser, *WLHR*
Charles Anthony, *WLHR*

Staff:
County Manager, Beth Thomas
County Clerk, Elaine Evans
County Engineer, John Phillips

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

Item 3: *Items for discussion*

A. Alcohol Sales – Chairman Bridges asked Commissioner Strickland to present the alcohol sales agenda item. Commissioner Strickland said that Franklin County is about the only dry county around. He said that the Commissioners need to find ways to make money without going to the citizens. Commissioner Strickland went over the revenues received by the cities in Franklin County as well as the surrounding counties. He said the revenue from alcohol sales received by Franklin County is zero.

Commissioner Strickland said that Franklin County ranks 107 out of 159 counties for household median. He said that Franklin County is in the bottom third where Madison County and Banks County are in the top one third. Also, Stephens County, Elbert County and Hart County are in the middle. Commissioner Strickland said that with the sewer project on Exit 160 that will be starting soon, Franklin County is in great shape for growth. He said that Franklin County needs to plan for the growth. Commissioner Strickland said that Franklin County is an island with all the counties around receiving revenues from alcohol sales. He asked the Commission Board to consider voting to make it legal to sale beer and wine in the County.

B. Manager's Report – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give the manager's report and then to go into the moratorium item. Mrs. Thomas updated the Commission Board on the upcoming meetings. There were will be a public hearing

before the regular board meeting for December. There will not be a work session in December because of the holidays but a larger planning meeting will be held in January. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to look at their calendars and let her know what time is available. She also asked that the Commissioners give her the items that they would like to see on the agenda for the planning session. Mrs. Thomas reported that the offices at the BOC office will be closed for the Christmas and the New Year's holidays.

Mrs. Thomas said that the auditors have completed their field work. She said that an audit was also done by going to the departments to look at equipment. She thanked the department heads for their help. Mrs. Thomas said that the auditors are working on a date of completion. She said that she does not have a date yet but hopes for it to be very quickly.

Franklin County has received a draft waste water permit from EPD. Mrs. Thomas said that this requires a 30 day notice and comment period. This process was started by advertising in the newspaper. After the 30 days period, EPD will make a determination. After the determination the County will seek concurrence from USDA and EPD on the final plan. Then EPD will make concurrence on the final plan. After this the County will be able to take bids on the project. Mrs. Thomas expressed her thanks to John Phillips and the engineers for their work on this process.

It was reported in last week's newspaper that EPD has assigned Franklin County to a Level 1 Drought Response Status. Mrs. Thomas said that because of this the County Water System is required to do a public awareness campaign. This campaign was started by posting the information on the home page of the County's website along with the links from EPD. The drought response is based on a water system's ability to provide water to its customers. Mrs. Thomas said that the water system for Franklin County is in fair shape. Franklin County has a blended system with receiving water from the City of Toccoa along with the private wells. She encouraged the citizens of the County to be good stewards of the water and pray for each other.

Mrs. Thomas stated that there are several open board positions. Some of these openings are due to term expirations and one is due to a resignation. There has been limited citizen response to these openings. She said that she would like to do a more concentrated effort to let the public know that these are not paid positions, they are volunteer positions. Mrs. Thomas said that local government works best with citizen input. She said that she would like to present the applications to the Commissioners at the January planning session along with taking a look at the processes for all the board appointments.

At the last meeting the question was brought up on whether the Chairman should vote or not. Mrs. Thomas said that she is thorough in her research and she asks for patience in her information gathering. She said earlier this year the Commission Board voted to update the County ordinances with funds from the Law Library. Mrs. Thomas said that the last update of the ordinances was done in 2001. She said that at the last meeting Commissioner Strickland made reference to a state local legislation that occurred in 1997. Mrs. Thomas said that the ordinance book from 2001 has contradictions in it. The administrative side of the ordinance states one thing and the state local legislation states another. Because of the conflicting information the

Chairman had not been voting unless of a tie. This situation has brought more to light that the ordinances will have to be looked at line by line to keep from having conflicting information. Chairman Bridges thanked Mrs. Thomas for seeing the need to update the ordinances as well as the clarification of information from the question from Commissioner Strickland.

C. Planning and Zoning Moratorium – Mrs. Thomas said that the Planning and Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2004. Minimal updates have done which became effective in December 2014. Mrs. Thomas stated that the Planning and Zoning Board has requested a poultry house moratorium. She said that this does not require a public hearing but was brought up for discussion at the work session. Because of this issue there are people who will speak in public comment and provide valuable information on the issue.

Mrs. Thomas discussed the reasons behind the request from the Planning and Zoning Board for a poultry house moratorium. She said that the ordinance has had minimal changes since its adoption in 2004. Seventy-five percent of the Planning and Zoning requests in the last twelve months have been for poultry houses. Twenty-eight poultry houses have been recommended for approval in the last year. Thirty-two houses are currently under consideration. Two of the November applications were for 12 house farms, a first for Franklin County. Mrs. Thomas stated that several of the conditional use applications were heavily contested due to their locations, near the hospital; close to the city limits of the City of Royston; and close to the Recreation Department.

The concerns of the Planning and Zoning Board are the volume and scope of the applications and not the poultry industry; should larger farms be categorized differently than smaller family farms. Also, should there be additional requirements. Mrs. Thomas said that another concern is the location or buffers; should additional buffers be required. She said that the Planning and Zoning Board want input from experts. Mrs. Thomas said that the Planning and Zoning have asked for the moratorium to pause time for a needed review, receive expert advice and community input.

Commissioner Jacques asked Mrs. Thomas what the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Board is for the duration of the moratorium. Mrs. Thomas said that the Planning and Zoning Board recommended something in correspondence with the County's fiscal year. She said that the Planning and Zoning members want input from each of the segments. They would like to have a six month period beginning in January that will go along with the fiscal year of the County. This will give them a long enough time period to gather information from the experts.

D. Announcements – Chairman Bridges announced that at the December meeting there will be an executive session to evaluate the clerk and the manager. He said that each Commissioner has been given evaluation forms and this will be discussed Monday in the executive session.

Commissioner Wester serves as the Commissioner liaison for the IBA and he gave the Board an update. He said that a vote was taken to adopt a resolution for Ross Valves to issue a taxable revenue bond with the amount not to exceed four million dollars. This was done as an encouragement for Ross Valves expansion purchase of equipment. A tax saving incentive was issued that is only for the new equipment.

The IBA also approved the purchase of a new bobcat with a mulching attachment for use at the new industrial park. Commissioner Wester said that the reasoning behind the purchase is that it will be cheaper than paying someone to come and do the work. He said that the IBA has talked with the county manager about possibly having some of the County employees run the machine. The IBA is aware that the County is already short staffed.

Commissioner Strickland said that he will be giving up his seat on the Georgia Mountain Region Commission Board at the end of the year. He told Chairman Bridges that with him being the Chairman he might want to take over this position. Chairman Bridges said that the chairman is supposed to serve on this committee. Commissioner Strickland had volunteered the last few years. Chairman Bridges said that he will be taking over this with the approval of the Commission Board.

E. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges said the next item is public comment. He said that he appreciated everyone coming.

1. Ken Martin – Mr. Martin, the broiler manager for Fieldale came forward to speak. He said that he attended the Planning and Zoning meeting where it was mentioned proposing a moratorium. He is not in disagreement about the update of the ordinance. Mr. Martin said what caught his attention was the seven month time period. He stated that he did not think it would take this long to do the update.

Mr. Martin gave information on how big the chicken business is in Franklin County. He said that Fieldale has 288 broiler houses in Franklin County. The replacement cost for these houses would be approximately 55 million dollars. Fieldale has 65 farmers in Franklin County. The pay to the Franklin County growers is 13.2 million dollars a year. On the breeder side, Fieldale has 30 houses. Fieldale pays a little over 2.9 million to these growers per year. The replacement value on the breeder houses is 10 million. The payroll for the hatchery employees as well as the poultry farmers in Franklin County is over 16 million dollars per year. Mr. Martin presented extensive information and told the Commission Board that he is available for additional questions or clarification if needed.

2. Jim Hodges – Mr. Hodges of Ag Georgia Farm Credit came forward to speak. He said that he is a Franklin County resident. Mr. Hodges said that when he started at the Royston office in 1993 the loan volume was 45 million dollars. In 2008 he said that the loan volume was 195 million dollars. Mr. Hodges said that 97% of the loan growth was in the poultry industry. He said that for a six house farm the loan just for the infrastructure will be approximately 1.6 million dollars. The income from these houses will be roughly \$375,000 per year. The expenses for these houses will be approximately \$131,000 per year. Mr. Hodges said that most of the expenses will be collected by local suppliers. He said that this money is good for the local economy.

Mr. Hodges stated that poultry business expands during certain time periods. They are market driven and have to expand when the market is there. The same is true for the local farmer. He said that he did not agree with the seven month time period for the moratorium, seven months is just a little too long.

3. Raymond Fitzpatrick – Mr. Fitzpatrick the County Extension Agent came

forward to speak. He said that he is a resource for the citizens of the County. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that his role in county government is to provide non-biased researched information. He said that the Farm Gate Report is compiled by county agents from across the State of Georgia that determines the value of agricultural products produced in each county. The Farm Gate value for Franklin County is a large portion of the State Farm Gate value. Mr. Fitzpatrick said that Farm Gate value for poultry statewide is approximately 4.7 billion dollars. Franklin County ranks third in the Farm Gate value. Franklin County ranks number two for poultry only behind Madison County. Mr. Fitzpatrick told the Commission Board that he is available as well as the University of Georgia for additional questions or concerns.

4. Brian Fairchild – Mr. Fairchild an extensive specialist with the Poultry Department at UGA came forward to speak. He said that the poultry industry is market driven instead of factual driven. Mr. Fairchild said that the poultry industry will build it if asked to. He said that when an issue such as a moratorium comes up it is because of concerns. The poultry industry has a lot of programs in place voluntarily to ensure that the quality of life is good for citizens. The voluntarily nutrient management by the poultry industry has kept additional federal requirements from being imposed. Mr. Fairchild provided the Commission Board with informational handouts. He also told the Commission Board that he and the UGA staff are available for additional information or concerns. Mr. Fairchild cautioned the Commission Board to seek information that is factual based and make their decision from that.

Chairman Bridges said that the purpose of the moratorium is not to limit the poultry industry. The purpose is to make sure that the decisions are wise and fact based. He said that there are certainly a lot of places still in Franklin County for poultry houses to be built.

Mike Barrett came forward to speak. He said that he is on the City of Carnesville Council. Mr. Barrett stated the City of Carnesville sent a letter to the Planning and Zoning Board stating that they are not in favor of the poultry houses near the Recreation Department. He said that he has no problem with chicken houses or with money. Mr. Barrett said that there comes a time when the health and welfare of the County has to be looked at. He said that poultry houses do not need to be near schools or recreation departments. Mr. Barrett said that he thought that no one would go out of business during the seven month moratorium.

Dr. Robert Sullivan came forward to speak. He said that he is not against the chicken industry. He said that he is concerned about the quality of life. Dr. Sullivan said that Franklin County is the greatest place in the world to grow up, life and die. He does not want poultry houses near the Recreation Department because of the potential harm to the children. Dr. Sullivan said that he did not want the quality of life to go down for the citizens of Franklin County. He does not want the reputation of Franklin County to be damaged by putting chicken houses too close to the City of Carnesville.

Mrs. Thomas clarified that the public hearing for the chicken houses on Harrison Bridge Road will be held on December 5 at 5:30 p.m. She stated that she did not want anyone to feel like they did not have an opportunity to speak about this issue. A question came from the audience if the chicken houses on Baty Road would be on the agenda. Mrs. Thomas stated that all the recommendations from the Planning and

Zoning Board will be heard on December 5 at 5:30. Commissioner Jacques then clarified that action on each item will be taken and considered at the 6 o'clock regular board meeting.

Randall Gailey the Recreation Director for Franklin County came forward to speak. Mr. Gailey asked the Commission Board to consider the kids in Franklin County. He said that they do less with what they have to operate off of. Mr. Gailey said that he did not want the situation that happened in Stephens County to happen in Franklin County with the smell from the chicken litter.

Chairman Bridges thanked everyone for attending. He reminded everyone of the public hearing and regular board meeting on December 5, starting at 5:30 p.m. Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 7:05 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