



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING MEETING MINUTES
January 18, 2017
12:00 P.M.**

BOC: Commission Chairman Thomas Bridges
District 1 Commissioner Robert Franklin
District 2 Commissioner Dr. Jason Macomson
District 3 Commissioner Jeff Jacques
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Kandice Eberhardt, Franklin County Citizen
Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen

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

Item 1: Chairman Bridges called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He said there are a lot of items to be covered. This is also a brainstorming session to come up with solutions to help meet citizen needs. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Jacques who was delayed.

Item 2: Items for discussion:

A. Financial Review

1. FY2016 status & 2. Projected performance & 3. Fund reserve
– Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on the finances of the County. Mrs. Thomas said that this information is current as of December 2016. FY2016 status update and projected performance was given as the two are intersected. Mrs. Thomas said that the annualized total for the general fund should come in around \$481,000 which is \$200,000 better than was projected. She said that one of the reasons that the cash flow worked out as well as it did was because of the LMIG money which is given to counties in advance of the projects and it crossed fiscal years.

Mrs. Thomas said that the other entities are performing better than expected with the exception of Probation and Parole. She said that the Probation and Parole may shift around but right now they are running under budget.

There were rate increases in the water department this past September. The rate increases were just to get the water department closer to breaking even. For the



past several years the general fund has been supporting the water fund. This was due to incurring debt which had a requirement to transfer \$50,000 but in excess of \$300,000 was being transferred from the general fund to the water fund. It is not uncommon for younger water systems to need help but with the rate increases the projection is that water will be at the breakeven point at the end of year. \$85,000 was budgeted to be transferred to the water department from the general fund along with a drawdown of \$150,000 in CD's. The transfers have not been made but even so the water department is projected to be at a breakeven point.

The budget breakdown was gone over which included graphs detailing where the money is budgeted. Over 50% of the budget is public safety which includes the Sheriff's department. Public works is the next highest budgeted department with over 11%. Mrs. Thomas said that the projection for administration is skewed when compared against other counties because retirement costs, workers comp, and property and liability for every department are included. She said that if these items were allocated then the administration number would decrease while the numbers for the departments would increase.

Mrs. Thomas went over the revenue sources. She said that the bulk of property tax revenue is received in November and December. Additional money has been received by Probate Court with traffic fines and fees projected to come in over \$150,000. Mrs. Thomas said that a large part of this increase in Probate Court revenue is due to the new Georgia State Patrol Post which does a lot for Franklin County. At this point the combined revenue projections are coming in over budget for the year by \$50,000.

On the expense side the budget is over by \$247,000 in large part to the LMIG money and project that crossed fiscal years. Mrs. Thomas said that from a high level things look great overall. When broken down by departments it shows the areas that are maintaining their budget. She said that one of the hardest hits is the Sheriff's department which is currently projected to run over budget by a quarter of a million dollars. The highways and streets department is running under budget by \$100,000 with a lot of the savings in gravel and asphalt costs.

The County has just come out of a really tough time where taxes were increased and all the reserve was used. Mrs. Thomas said that the rate change for the water department was a very strategic and important change. This change pushed the cost of the debt over to the users of the water system. E911 is always a losing entity because the rates are controlled by the State. Mrs. Thomas said that the State is working on an E911 global system. The next generation 911 system will be required to be in place by the year 2020.

Mrs. Thomas stated that as of today everything is running along as projected as long as the departments do not increase their spending habits. She said that at some point it will probably become necessary to transfer funds out of some of the reserve accounts such as the jail account which is in the budget to cover department overages.



Chairman Bridges questioned if the 911 issue of staffing has been resolved. Mrs. Thomas said that the current issue is recruitment. The previous issue of staff certification has been resolved. Chairman Bridges asked if there was any problem with calls coming into 911 from cell phones. Mrs. Thomas said that there is no way to pinpoint a cell phone call. She said that 911 has interference from the radio system. The 911 system is an analog system and there is a 70 mile buffer. She said that the interference is extending out further than the 70 mile buffer and is coming from Alabama and North Carolina. Mrs. Thomas said that this will continue to be a problem as more things switch to digital and Franklin County stays analog. The switch to a digital system would cost approximately a million dollars. Leasing instead of purchasing is an option for consideration. Mrs. Thomas also said that the 911 revenue is dropping but this something that the State has plans to look into.

Mrs. Thomas said that a fund balance policy is needed. She said that it is hard to build a fund balance up when the money is tight but it is very important to do so. An example fund balance policy was presented which stated that the County will maintain 25% of their budget as a rainy day fund. She said that if the funds are not available that plans are put in place to reduce expenditures so that the fund balance can be built up with timeline stipulations. She said that the County does need to begin to look at a gradual phase to build the fund balance. Chairman Bridges asked what the requirement is for putting this policy into place. Mrs. Thomas said that she was not aware of a timeline for implementing this policy.

B. 2017 Goals & Objectives

Mrs. Thomas gave the Commission Board information from last year's strategic planning session. She said that at this point the County is still trying to climb out of the financial crunch. Mrs. Thomas said that she wanted the Commission Board to begin to think about the budget for next year. She said that the budget should be built around the top priorities from the Commission Board.

Chairman Bridges said that one of his priorities is to take care of the leak at the courthouse. He said that he would like this goal reached along with an upgrade at the courthouse. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to see employee pay raises. She said that the County needs a firm foundation of employee support along with a firm foundation of citizen support. She said that only two pay raises have been given to the employees in the last eight to nine years. Recruitment is a problem because of the pay but the County does have loyal employees and it is time to reward them.

Dr. Macomson asked how pay raises have been done in the past. Mrs. Thomas said that there have not been pay raises during her tenure but from testing it looked like across the board. Chairman Bridges said that it would be important to look at performance to make sure that employees are earning their money. Commissioner Franklin said that his problem with looking at performance is that each employee may have multiple jobs. He said that the last time he was involved in a pay increase a



percentage was given across the board. Chairman Bridges asked Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin how his employees were paid. He said that they were paid depending on the tasks that they have been assigned.

A question was asked about the employee evaluation system by Dr. Macomson. Mrs. Thomas said that there has been a breakdown in the area of employee evaluations because of no pay raises. She said that she does think evaluation of work is important but there has been no motivation to do the evaluations because of no pay increases. Mrs. Thomas said that she thinks that the employee evaluation form needs to be redone based on these four principles of safety, service, synergy, and stewardship. At this time the evaluation form the County uses is very generic.

Chairman Bridges said that capital improvements of buildings should be a priority. Mrs. Thomas said that the County has a lot of vehicle needs too. A lot of the vehicles were purchased at the same time and there is not have a vehicle replacement policy. Commissioner Wester said that another objective is public safety in general. He said that if growth is wanted in the County that potential businesses will look at public safety and what the County is capable of handling. Commissioner Wester said that the citizens now and in the future need to be protected. Mrs. Thomas said that the budget needs to be created with these objectives in mind. She said that for the next year she would like to make improvements in financial reporting and technology.

C. Ordinance Update / Review

Mrs. Thomas said that previously the Commission Board voted to update the ordinances. She said that the ordinance book has not been updated since 2001. The county clerk, county manager, and county marshal all have ordinance books and it was discovered during the update that all these books are different. There have also been ordinances and resolutions approved since 2001. Mrs. Thomas said that the vote was to get everything updated and pay for the annual service to have the ordinances online. Dr. Macomson said that online is a good idea so that everyone has access to it. Mrs. Thomas said that it would be up to the BOC staff to keep this updated each year. She said that all the ordinances have been scanned in to Municode. Mrs. Thomas said that there is conflicting information from the previous update. She said that the County staff will go through all the information before the vote by the Commission Board to accept the update.

In this review process Mrs. Thomas said that she will assign sections of the ordinances to different employees. She will also ask that the county attorney be involved. Mrs. Thomas said that there are also parts of the ordinances that the Commission Board need to review and update, in particular the nuisance ordinance. She also asked the Commission Board after updates are done how they would like the information to be presented before they vote on it.

Mrs. Thomas told the Commission Board that in 1993 a Recreation Board was set up. The Recreation Board was set up as a quasi-government entity to make all the



decisions for operation. She said that something was changed in the early 2000's as the money was turned over to the control of the Commission Board with none of the executive power. Mrs. Thomas said that she could not find information that the Commission Board had appointed anyone to the Recreation Board. She said that these positions were to rotate off every four years but there are not any records of appointments. Mrs. Thomas said that the county attorney is looking into this to see if it is possible to change this to an advisory board.

D. Comprehensive Plan Review

Mrs. Thomas said that in 2014 the Commission Board voted on a comprehensive plan review. She said that for any grant applications that the County applies for it has to be listed in the comprehensive plan. Mrs. Thomas said that an update is not due for Franklin County until 2019 but the process needs to begin now as this is the strategic plan for Franklin County. She asked the Commission Board to review the short term work program in the plan. Because of the work of the Planning Board several items on the short term work section have been completed.

1. DCA assistance – Mrs. Thomas stated that the Department of Community Affairs provides money to Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) which then provides help to the counties. Items have to be on the short term work program for assistance. The County does have to put some money up front but it is a small investment compared to the work hours that are provided. Mrs. Thomas said GMRC has been asked to come in and help with zoning maps. She said that she would also like a recreation plan to be updated with eventual involvement from the cities. The hours that GMRC will use first will involve planning and zoning and not recreation plans. Dr. Macomson questioned if progress is being made on the comprehensive plan. Mrs. Thomas said that when the update is done a determination of progress will be made.

Mrs. Thomas said that the sewer is an ongoing project. Hulsey, McCormack and Wallace are scheduled to look at the final plans. This project is moving along and has taken up a bulk of time and money. The water SPLOST status will remain unknown until the bids come in. The waste water treatment plant is a work in progress with hopes to be completed by the update time. Water expansion is continuing to be worked with County employees. The water department has a working supervisor and three employees who do everything. Water SPLOST funds are not being used at this time for expansion because of the sewer project. Commissioner Wester said that once the sewer project is up and going the County will hopefully begin to see growth.

E. Planning & Zoning Inspections Program

Mrs. Thomas asked John Phillips to come forward to speak about the planning and zoning inspections program. Mr. Phillips said that the Planning Board has been looking at the entire process including building inspections, permitting and zoning. He said that the Planning Board has determined that the time is right to implement a



building inspection program. Since 2014 almost 2,000 building permits have been issued by Franklin County. Mr. Phillips said that he is sure that all of the issued permits do not cover all the building in the County.

Mr. Phillips said that there are State mandated codes but local governments can choose to enforce them or not. He said that Franklin County has never enforced these laws. Some of the concerns expressed by the Planning Board are to follow State law and to protect the life and quality of the citizens and ensure growth in the County. Mr. Phillips said that the Planning Board also expressed the concern if building codes are not enforced what perspective industries or businesses will think of locating in the County. He said an updated ordinance would curb issues of non-compliance.

A building inspection program would be fair for all citizens and contractors. Mr. Phillips said that because there is not an inspection program there are contractors and citizens who will build and do what they want without the permits. He said that the proposal from the Planning Board is to contract with a private certified inspector for buildings to ensure code compliance. The Planning Board would also like to require permits and establish fees for them. Mr. Phillips said that contracting of services is a common practice with local governments and they have been able to set a fee schedule to cover the cost of the inspection and permits. This will only be paid for as needed thus eliminating the employee cost.

Mr. Phillips said that the Planning Board would like for this to be on the February meeting for the Commission Board. He said that they are only asking for approval to be able to send out a request for proposals (RFP) for inspection providers. The Planning Board would review all RFP's and bring a recommendation to the Commission Board. Commissioner Franklin asked if inspections were the same for industrial and residential. Mr. Phillips said no, that there were different codes and requirements. Commissioner Wester said that the State has broken the licensing into stages. He said that the residential basic is a basic home, no multi family. The requirements for commercial are stricter.

Mrs. Thomas asked if there would be different levels for agricultural and would the fees be included in the RFP? Mr. Phillips said that this can be handled in different ways. He said that this will need to be determined during the ordinance process. Commissioner Wester said that he did not think that there would be any opposition from builders as they follow the code. Mr. Phillips said that he would like to have meetings and receive feedback from the public before implementing the inspection program. Dr. Macomson asked what the fee structure would be. Mr. Phillips said that based on a typical residential home for Franklin County the fees would be approximately \$300 to \$400 for all the permits and inspections. Commissioner Wester said that this is not bad based on how other counties and cities do their pricing. Mr. Phillips said that the Planning Board has also talked with private companies who provide this service. Chairman Bridges said that this will be on the February agenda to approve the RFP.



Commissioner Jacques entered the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

The meeting recessed at 2:15 p.m. The meeting resumed at 2:30 p.m.

F. Occupational Tax

Mrs. Thomas said that an increase for occupational tax was included in last year's budget from \$35 to \$50 to cover administrative fees. She said that invoices are sent during the month of November for renewal the following January. Mrs. Thomas said that she reviewed the audit checklist in the compliance manual and determined that a public hearing must be held before an increase in fees could take place. In preparation of the budget for next year Mrs. Thomas would like an increase in the occupational tax from \$35 to \$50. She said that this would be a \$3,400 to \$5,000 annual increase. At this time Franklin County charges a flat fee. Some local governments charge by the number of employees and some by revenues. Mrs. Thomas said that Franklin County does not have the employees to monitor this so she would recommend staying with a flat fee.

Last year Mrs. Thomas was contacted by Police Chief Bruce Carlisle of the City of Lavonia concerning door to door sales. Mrs. Thomas said that Chief Carlisle told her that in order to receive an occupational tax certificate for door to door sales in the City of Lavonia that a background check is required. She said that this process would allow the door to door sales to be monitored closer. This process would also allow the County and the cities to work together. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like for this to be added to the ordinance update.

Commissioner Wester said that a citizen had asked him why chicken farmers did not have to get business licenses. He asked if this fell under a different category. Mrs. Thomas said that the type of business is listed in the Georgia State Code. She said that she would look into how home farms are classified. Commissioner Wester said that the argument from the citizen was that he ran a business and he has to pay for the license and chicken farmers run a business and they don't have to pay.

Mr. Martin said that something he has noticed and it is becoming more prevalent is the vacation rental by owner. He questioned if they had to purchase a license, would they still qualify for homestead exemption and are they running a business in a residential section? Mrs. Thomas said that this brings up hotel/motel tax. She said that this would need to be implemented and enforced. She said that the hotel/motel tax is basically an honor system where the owner gets to keep a portion before remitting to the County.

Commissioner Jacques asked if there was a database of who to send the bills to and who has paid. Mrs. Thomas said that yes but the financial system that is in current use has limitations. She said that the current system will only bill for the current year although the business may be in arrears for previous years. The past years of not being paid are caught when the payments are received. Commissioner



Jacques said that everyone needs to be treated fairly. Mrs. Thomas assured him that no one gets a business license until the previous years are caught up.

Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas when she wanted to have a public hearing to increase the fees for 2018. Mrs. Thomas said that the public hearing would be better to be separate from the budget or millage time. She suggested within the next few months if an increase is approved. Chairman Bridges said that he thought people would pay closer attention if this was closer to 2018. Mrs. Thomas said that the letters are issued in November so the latest to vote on it would be October. She said that her preference would be for this to be in place before a financial software change.

G. Employee Relations

1. Potential salary adjustment & 2. Future raises & 3. Retirement contributions – *Mrs. Thomas said that people are the foundation of everything successful. She said that the County employees have not had an overall raise in many years, only two within the last eight to nine years. In last year's budget the County was not financially able to give overall pay increases. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to do a retro salary adjustment to all full-time and permanent part-time employees. She said that she calculated salaries from the last pay checks in December with certain percentages. Mrs. Thomas said that her recommendation would be for a 2.5% one-time check based on the last pay in December. This would not be something that would continue.*

There is a reserve account from the self-funded insurance. Mrs. Thomas said that after her review of the self-funded insurance it was evident that the County had paid above the contractual maximum. At this point stop-loss insurance was filed for reimbursement. Approximately \$85,000 of the reserve account is being used to fund the health savings accounts for employees. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to propose a budget adjustment to move the reserve fund to the general fund. Also, make a budget adjustment to give employees a one-time paycheck for 2.5% of their earnings in 2016. This adjustment will wipe out the reserve account. Mrs. Thomas said that she thought that the one-time salary adjustment is the right thing to do at this time for employees. Commissioner Jacques said that his one number priority going into the budget was to take care of employees.

Mrs. Thomas discussed her goals for insurance for the last two years of moving from self-funded, improving claims trends and moving the plan year from July to June to January to December. She said that the move from July to January may be harder to do. If the insurance were to increase there would not be any health reserves.

Chairman Bridges said that the one-time increase would give a chance to evaluate the system instead of an ongoing increase. Mrs. Thomas said that pay raises would be perpetual but this would be a one-time adjustment. Commissioner Jacques said that the Commissioners know that the money is available for the one-time check and the variables for the next budget year are unknown. He said that he is 100% in



favor of giving this to the employees. Chairman Bridges asked what month was this planned for. Mrs. Thomas said that she would do this as soon as possible. She is ready to move as soon as it is approved. The budget will need to be amended before this can be done. Commissioner Franklin said the sooner the better. Commissioner Jacques said to put this on the next agenda at the January work session to be voted on at the February meeting if everyone is in agreement. Commissioner Wester asked if this could be voted on at the work session in order to get the ball running. Commissioner Jacques said historically that the votes have taken place in the regular meetings. Chairman Bridges said that he thought it was better to vote in the regular meetings.

Mrs. Thomas said that she could start work on this. The payroll clerk will have to be paid some overtime because this will be a big process. She will not put anything into the system until the vote by the Commission Board. Dr. Macomson clarified that 2.5% was what was being looked at. Mrs. Thomas said that she would love to be able to do 3% but this is not available in the health savings fund. Commissioner Franklin asked Mrs. Thomas to double check on whether 3% could be given. He said that he understands if it could not be done but he would love to be able to give the employees a 3%. Chairman Bridges asked what will happen if the departments don't stay in the budget. Mrs. Thomas said that if the departments overrun excessively or emergencies occur that it would put a strain on operations.

Recreation Director Randall Gailey stated that the lower paid employees needed more of a raise than the higher salaried department heads. Commissioner Jacques clarified that this is not a pay raise; this is only a one-time adjustment. He said that he would rather this to be fair with a 2.5% across the board for everyone. He thanked Mrs. Thomas for looking into ways to compensate the employees. Chairman Bridges asked about future raises. Mrs. Thomas said that the cost to give pay raises would be greater than the one-time salary adjustment. She said future raises would impact the budget more because additional employees would have to be looked at.

Mrs. Thomas gave information on the retirement contribution to GEBCorp. She said that \$613,000 was budgeted and the required amount was \$608,000. The retirement match from the other contributions will be made at the end of this month. Chairman Bridges said so the retirement contributions are costing the County approximately \$600,000. Mrs. Thomas clarified that this is for the old plan. She said that it is about 14 to 15 percent of payroll versus the newer employees at 2% of payroll. She said that the good news is that it was not as much as budgeted.

H. Employee Handbook & Policies

Chairman Bridges said that a lot of work has been done on the handbook. Mrs. Thomas said that an update was done in 2014. She said that LGRMS (Local Government Risk Management Services) inspect the safety program for the County. One of the recommendations is that an annual review of the handbook be done. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like for the handbook to be reviewed on a cycle. She said she would like to start with the reviews on these sections in the handbook; employee



status; travel policies; credit card policy; and personal leave. The sticking point for any of the policy changes would be whether or not the constitutional officers want to come under the County's handbook. Mrs. Thomas said the County is currently sitting on \$600,000 in outstanding personal leave hours. She said that there is no cap on the personal leave hours for the employees of the constitutional officers. Chairman Bridges asked Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook and Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin if they would consider coming under the County's policies. Mrs. Holbrook and Mr. Martin stated that their employees were not the problem. Commissioner Jacques said that it might be time to look at this issue again.

Mrs. Thomas said that other sections of the handbook that need to be looked at are the laws. She asked the Commission Board to let her know if there were additional places that they would like reviewed at this time. Mrs. Thomas said that the best process might be to create an internal process to review a certain amount of the handbook each quarter for State law changes. The reviews would then be given to the Commission Board for approval. Employee handbooks are required to be kept in retention for six years. There needs to be a secure place for the handbooks to be retained. Commissioner Jacques suggested electronic storage.

I. EMS

In 2016 Mrs. Thomas first presented the EMS issues to the Commission Board. She said that the first issue in the EMS department is availability. Mrs. Thomas said that the standard call volume per unit is 1,000. For the past four years the EMS department has been above 4,000 calls per year, running closer to 4,500. She said that this call volume leaves the County vulnerable although the County does have mutual aid agreements with other counties.

The second issue in EMS is the workload. Mrs. Thomas said that this affects employee morale, safety, and citizen services. She said that with the call volume the employees are getting burned out. It is hard to retain the employees. The third issue is employee pay which is a morale issue. Mrs. Thomas said that pay is different across the counties. She said that all the counties are fighting over the same pool of people. There are some employees that are very loyal to Franklin County and stay in spite of the issues. Mrs. Thomas said that the EMS Director is to be commended for having a full staff at this time.

The correction plan for availability is to add a unit. To correct the workload is to add a unit. Neither of these changes will help employee pay. Mrs. Thomas said that in her opinion availability comes first. She said that the public relies on the service. A temporary solution is to add a supervisor unit. This supervisor unit would ensure that when all four units are out of the County calls could still be answered with the help of first responders and off duty employees. The cost for this supervisor unit would be approximately \$185,000. Mrs. Thomas said that EMS is performing about \$90,000 over budget.



Mrs. Thomas said that under the authority of the manager she could have added the supervisor unit. She said that the reason she did not was that she feared that the next manager would lay the employees off. If the decision is made to implement the supervisor unit then this must be carried forward into the next budget. Commissioner Jacques asked if this would be based on call volume or time. Mrs. Thomas said that this would be an extra employee. There would some shift in operations as this person would go to the EMS stations for restocking and paperwork. This would reduce the wear and tear on the med units. Commissioner Wester said that this would leave the units in zone. Commissioner Jacques questioned if this would take away the spare med unit. EMS Director Terry Harris said that this would leave two spare units. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like to see action taken on this at the regular board meeting. Commissioner Wester said that employee morale goes down when things are talked about and not acted on. He said that action needs to be taken for the protection of the citizens. Mr. Harris reinforced that this would only be a temporary fix. A permanent solution is needed in the future.

If this is approved at the February regular board meeting, Mrs. Thomas said that the process will begin. The policies and procedures will be in place for the transports between the units before the addition of employees. She said that the changes will also depend on how quickly these employees can be hired. Dr. Macomson asked how many additional employees would be needed. Mrs. Thomas said that three employees would be needed.

J. Franklin County BOC Boards and Committees

Mrs. Thomas said that Larry Cornwell has resigned from the Planning Board. Advertisements will be done for this position. She said that some of the boards are appointed by the Commission Board. There is an opening on the Tax Assessor Board which needs action as soon as possible. Only one application has been received but there are previous applicants that have expressed willingness to serve on other boards. Mrs. Thomas said that all applications should be considered.

There are three positions open on the Recreation Board. According to the schedule in the original ordinance it should be time for these to rotate off. On the Chestatee Chattahoochee Board, Woody McFarlin has asked to be replaced. This board is a representative for the County instead of an appointment. Mrs. Thomas said that when the dues of \$500 are sent in that she will take Mr. McFarlin off as the representative for Franklin County.

The Board of Health is a joint board. The Commission Board initially appointed Dr. Bauerband to fill a short term vacancy. Dr. Bauerband has chosen to continue on the Board of Health. Mrs. Thomas said that Dr. Bauerband's reappointment needs to be documented in the minutes. She also said that it might be appropriate to send a letter of appreciation to Dr. Bauerband.

The Library Board has one open position on their trustee positions. Roy



Benefield has applied for this open position and the Library Board has asked that the Commission Board make the appointment.

Mrs. Thomas asked Mrs. Holbrook to give an update on the Board of Equalization appointments. Mrs. Holbrook said that the grand jury made three reappointments and one new appointment. She said that Gary Williams came off and Curtis Burger was appointed. These appointments are for three year terms.

The recommendation that Mrs. Thomas gave to the Commission Board was to accept applications for the appointments through January 31. Commissioner Jacques said that the bigger the pool the better. Chairman Bridges asked what timeline for the appointments. Mrs. Thomas suggested the regular board meeting in February.

Chairman Bridges asked if the people on the Recreation Board want to continue. Mrs. Thomas said that no applications were received from them. She said that she looked at the original information from 1993. Mr. Gailey said that the only one that he has not heard from about wanting to stay on the board is Mariette Farrow.

The meeting recessed from 3:50 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

K. Record Retention

Mrs. Thomas gave an update from the Georgia Archives on retention schedules. Public health, education, tax and public safety have not been updated yet. She said that tax and public safety impact the County. Mrs. Thomas said that her understanding is if the County does not have a separate retention policy then it should follow the one from the State. Her recommendation to the Commission Board is to follow the retention schedule from the State. Commissioner Jacques said being uniform made more sense.

The County records will be inventoried and compared against the retention schedule. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board if they would like an update before any records are purged. Chairman Bridges said to follow the recommendation from the State. Mrs. Holbrook said that her office is in the process of scanning documents before they are moved offsite. She said that they are now backing up to three servers to preserve the records. Permanent records need to have a permanent location. Mrs. Thomas said that the office staff needs to stamp these records as permanent and file them in a safe place.

L. Technology

1. Software selection update & 2. Hosted email & 3. Internet capabilities & 4. Support services

Mrs. Thomas said that she is being very cautious about picking new software for the financial system. The money has already been set aside to pay for this upgrade. She said that it has been narrowed down to three groups. The office staff has been



involved in the product reviews. Mrs. Thomas said that of these groups it is a high, low and medium; all within the \$50,000 to \$90,000 range. She said that her goal is to be able to present a recommendation at the work session. Then she would like the Commission Board to be able to see a proposal for the program and then move into an implementation process. Commissioner Jacques said that he trusted the decision and recommendation from the manager and office staff for the vendor selection. Dr. Macomson asked if this is the financial management software and was a server included. Mrs. Thomas said that along with the software update the hardware will have to be updated.

Mrs. Thomas said that she is asking for hardware prices along with software prices in the proposals. She said that the office currently uses the old AS400 IBM system which is very expensive to maintain as it is not easy to find parts to repair it. Dr. Macomson said security in systems have changed a lot since this system came out. Mrs. Thomas said that this update will make things more secure as well as being able to move from a small file server to something with more space. She said that she would love to have a system big enough to be able to link up with the GIS system but for now the primary focus will be file server, server to operate the system and software.

The financial system will not be able to go to a hosted system because of the reliability of the internet connection. The phone system is connected to the internet and there does not need to be an interruption in this service. She said that the only way to correct this would be to get a free line of sight by possibly placing a tower in the lot behind the Tax Commissioner's office. A future goal is to get the entire County into one network. At this time it is fragmented with networks at the BOC, Justice Center, and E911. Other offices work off of individual computers.

The County does not have an IT support services person on site. Mrs. Thomas said that the County does not have much IT support now. She said that the server is monitored by Mr. Huneycutt and he is good about letting us know when it goes down. Mrs. Thomas said that he has taken over a year to repair one computer and currently has had one for over six months. She said that he is great in a crisis but not good with routine areas. Mrs. Thomas said that she would like for the County to look into a hosted email system. She said that Mr. Huneycutt is very good with the AS400 system and monitoring the server. In the server is where the County emails are held. She said that she would like to be able to move away from Mr. Huneycutt's services.

Mrs. Thomas stated that the City of Lavonia previously had a hosted email system. Dr. Macomson clarified that the emails were linked to the website. He said that this worked well and was monitored by office personnel. Mrs. Thomas said that she is currently looking at the number of email users as well as what the fees would be. She also said that she would love to be able to move away from the .com to a .gov extension. The current provider would have to work with the County to be able to make this move.

Mr. Martin said that Mr. Huneycutt is very good at monitoring the server. He



said that Mr. Huneycutt does not put a high priority on other things such as ordering a new computer. Mrs. Thomas said that Mr. Huneycutt's system is not compatible with newer phones. She said that he is also installing Windows 7 on new computers because his system will not work with newer technology. All of the County computers are being downgraded to work with his system. Mrs. Thomas said that Mr. Huneycutt has done a phenomenal job with building the server and the email system but the County has outgrown his system. She said that this will cost money but it has to be done. Chairman Bridges said that this is another challenge for the County to face.

M. Capital Needs / Planning

1. Funding options & 2. Review of buildings

Mrs. Thomas went over the insurance list of County buildings. She said that the problems at the courthouse have to be dealt with. Although other repairs to the courthouse have been made the interior of the clock tower has never been repaired. Mrs. Thomas said that she looked into grant options for funding for the courthouse. She was told that no grants are available for routine maintenance, only renovations. Commissioner Jacques asked if the project could transition into a renovation from maintenance so that funding could be obtained. Mrs. Thomas said that all routes can be explored but she was cautioned that the funding could take years to receive. She said that there is an immediate need that has to be taken care of. An architect out of Augusta is coming to look at the problems at the courthouse and will give an estimate of repair costs.

The other big problem is the jail. There are two major issues in the jail; classification and census. The jail is one of the newest buildings in the County which is why it is frustrating that it has so many issues. Mrs. Thomas said that plans have to be made for more than just the immediate need.

The elections building is leaking so bad that it is coming down the stove and running onto the floor. Mrs. Thomas said that an estimate from last year for a new roof, gutting of the kitchen area, redoing the sheetrock, redoing the concrete, and redoing the work into the basement was \$90,000. She said that if \$90,000 was for repairs of one building, how much would a new building cost that would house four other departments. Mrs. Thomas said that the 911 center would not withstand a natural disaster and the operations would be lost. The Senior Center has had issues since it was built. One of the things that has been on the comprehensive plan for years is to build a multi-use administrative building to consolidate all the services together.

Funding options include money set aside in SPLOST for public facilities (jail and all other county buildings), operational budget, and debt. Currently there is no money in the operational budget for buildings. The debt options are capital leases, voters for bonds, and an authority. Mrs. Thomas said that the immediate need is the courthouse. She said that she would use SPLOST money to take care of this repair.



At this time Mrs. Thomas stated that housing out of inmates can continue until funding becomes available. She said that she does not agree with a jail expansion. Mrs. Thomas said that there is a real problem with classification and census issues. She said that she would advocate a new jail over a jail expansion. An ideal solution would be for a courthouse and jail to be side by side to cut down on personnel used for transports. Capital leasing is not an option for jails. Mrs. Thomas said that debt can be taken out through ACCG for a judicial system but not a jail. The jail debt would have to be looked at through a voter referendum.

Mrs. Thomas said that an administrative building is needed. This problem could be solved by a capital lease. She said that she did not think that everything needs to leave the square in Carnesville. Commissioner Franklin asked Mrs. Thomas if she had a place in mind where a new jail could be built. She said that she thought that there is space that will come available within the next few years. Commissioner Franklin said that he does not agree with spending the money for an expansion knowing that it will only be a temporary fix but he does not want to wait forever to correct the problem. Chairman Bridges said that the County has to be cautious.

Dr. Macomson asked how many beds the current jail has. Mrs. Thomas answered 72. Commissioner Jacques said that historically the inmate housing costs were steady. Mrs. Thomas said that was true. In 2014 the housing costs averaged \$10,000 per month. In 2015 the average was \$12,000 per month. The first six months of 2016 averaged \$10,000 per month. The average for the last five months was \$24,000 per month. Dr. Macomson asked how big of a jail was being proposed. Mrs. Thomas said that someone would have to come in to assess the need. She said that there is a needs assessment out of Nebraska that she would recommend that has demographics similar to Franklin County. The cost for this needs assessment is around \$30,000.

Mrs. Thomas said that Recreation is a multi-purpose building. She said that she would like to move 4-H and the Senior Center into the Recreation building to consolidate services so that they would be accessible to more people. Mrs. Thomas then said that elections could move to the Senior Center. Chairman Bridges said that this would be millions and millions of dollars. He said to start with the clock tower at the courthouse. Then look into these things and decide which direction to go. Mrs. Thomas said that she would begin looking into this and running numbers.

Commissioner Jacques said that legislation passed by the State has adversely impacted the revenue streams of Franklin County. He said that legislative remedy would help the County with the loss of revenue. Chairman Bridges said that it is important to stay in contact with the legislators. Commissioner Jacques said that there is lot of legislative pieces that have cost the County a lot of money. He said that he has been monitoring State collections and they are doing extremely well.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 5:13 p.m.



Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2017

Chairman J. Thomas Bridges

Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner

Dr. Jason Macomson, District 2 Commissioner

Jeff Jacques, District 3 Commissioner

Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner

Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk