



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
February 28, 2017
6:00 P.M.**

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

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen

Staff: County Manager Beth Thomas
County Clerk Elaine Evans
County Engineer John Phillips
EMS Director Terry Harris

Item 1: Call meeting to order – Chairman Bridges welcomed everyone and called the February work session to order.

Item 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Dr. Macomson led the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

Item 3: Items for discussion

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to speak in public comment. Betty Cryder of Banks Academy Road came forward to speak. Ms. Cryder said that the first problem she wanted to address is the increase in traffic since Hwy 164 has been closed for the new bridge. She said that all the traffic is being diverted to Banks Academy Road and Prospect Road. Banks Academy is a little two lane road and it is not able to sustain all the traffic, especially from the big trucks. Ms. Cryder told the Commission Board that she thinks that the Georgia DOT should be liable to repair the road. She also said that Marigold Road, which is a little dirt road, is being beat up due to the traffic and it is like riding on railroad tracks. Chairman Bridges said that it would not hurt to ask if the DOT would help.

Commissioner Franklin asked if there were detour signs sending the traffic to Banks Academy and Prospect. Ms. Cryder said that there is a detour sign on Hwy 63 near Swails Road in Stephens County that is diverting the traffic to Banks Academy Road. She said that her big concern is that the State is causing the problem that the County will have to fix.



Ms. Cryder questioned how the County goes about getting new business. She said that after you get away from Exit 160 until Lavonia there is absolutely nothing, no gas stations or anything. Ms. Cryder said that she would like to be able to spend her disposable income in Franklin County instead of in other counties. She asked if a grocery store could be located here. Chairman Bridges said that Franklin County has an Industrial Building Authority that works to get new business. He said that this is headed by Senator Frank Ginn. Ms. Cryder asked if there was anything that she as a private citizen could do to get companies to locate in Franklin County. Commissioner Jacques said that in his opinion it would mean more to hear from a consumer than from the Board. He said that there is plenty of good retail, commercial and industrial property for sale along the Interstate exits. The County is currently working on a sanitary sewer project that will tie the exits of 51 and 59 all the way up into the City of Carnesville. The sewer project will be tremendous as far as capacity and allowing for potential growth and development.

Dr. Macomson questioned if the Industrial Building Authority actively promotes the property for industrial. Commissioner Jacques said that they need someone full-time to do this but there is not someone here full-time. Mrs. Thomas said that the properties are posted on a lot of websites for economic development. She said that Franklin County is the ideal spot because of the rail connection and the interstate connection. The right business will come because Franklin County has the right ingredients.

B. EMS Fee Structure – *Chairman Bridges said that comments will be made by EMS Director Terry Harris, Commissioner Jacques and Mrs. Thomas on the EMS fee structure item. Commissioner Jacques expressed his thanks to Mr. Harris and other staff for putting together information for a fee structure to negate cost increases. He said that the EMS call volume has increased to over 5,000 annually and the supervisor unit was approved to help with this. Commissioner Jacques said that with the increased volume of calls the revenue has increased some. He said that the increase to the budget to have the supervisor unit is around \$200,000 annually. The anticipated revenue is approximately \$50,000. Commissioner Jacques said that this is a shortfall of around \$150,000 but it could change with the call volume. He said that this impact to the budget is about three tenths of a millage increase.*

Commissioner Jacques said that he had spoken with Mr. Harris and tremendous information was provided. He said that there are calls where the EMS units go to check vitals or help with medication administration. There are other calls where transportation is provided to the ER. Patient transfers out of the County are also made. Commissioner Jacques said that the proposal was to make the EMS supervisor change revenue neutral. He said that he is in favor of staff looking into potential fee increases to keep from going into next year's budget with a deficient.

Dr. Macomson asked Mr. Harris if there is comparison data of Franklin County against other counties. Mr. Harris said that Franklin County is behind on some and



even with others. Dr. Macomson asked if this could be averaged out to see where the increases could be made. Mrs. Thomas said that she has rough numbers for the past year's data. She said that the reason there has not been drastic changes in the past is because Mr. Harris does a great job in staying ahead of the Medicaid and Medicare curve. Mrs. Thomas said that 76% of the payments to EMS are from state and federal sources. These payments are paid by their fee structures. The other payment sources are 22% from commercial insurance, 1% from no insurance (private pay), and 1% from other that includes work comp and auto insurance.

Mrs. Thomas said that 96% of the charges for private pay people are written off although this is pursued through collections as much as is legally possible. She said that the fee increases will be on the shoulders of the commercial insurance payers. Mrs. Thomas said that in her opinion as a manager and as a taxpayer she views property taxes as an insurance policy. Of the property taxes, 50% to 60% goes to public safety which includes EMS, E911 shortfall and all of the Sheriff's operations. A fee structure increase to the commercial side would be like paying additional money along with paying property taxes. Mrs. Thomas said that Mr. Harris does a good job and she recommends allowing him to set the fees for the EMS. She cautioned the Board that fees will get them where they want to be but it will be on the backs of a very small population. Commissioner Jacques said that everyone is paying for the service but this would make the ones that use it pay for it. Mrs. Thomas said that this would only apply to 22% of the people.

Commissioner Jacques said that when the EMS units go out and check vitals or help with medications there is no further charge because it was not a transport. He said that he thought there should be a minimal charge for these calls. Mrs. Thomas said that this is a valid point and she thinks Mr. Harris has looked into this. Commissioner Jacques said that emergency service is an essential core function of government. He said that the proposed change is cost effective but he would like to balance the increase with fees. Dr. Macomson said that Franklin County should be compatible with other counties. Chairman Bridges said that this seemed to be a good idea. He asked Mrs. Thomas and Mr. Harris to continue to look into the fees.

C. Lakota Trail Abandonment Request – Chairman Bridges said a request to abandon part of Lakota Trail was received. He asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the request. Mrs. Thomas said that the request to abandon is within the confines of the property owner's property and they will give the County a turnaround spot. She said that she did not see a problem with this request. At the next regular board meeting Mrs. Thomas would like for the Commission Board to vote to begin the abandonment process. Chairman Bridges told the Commission Board to look this request over and ask questions of Mrs. Thomas or Mr. Phillips before the meeting.

D. Roads and Highways Projects and Expenditures – Chairman Bridges said that Mrs. Thomas will go over the road and highways projects and expenditures. Mrs. Thomas gave a projection of SPLOST V expenditures along with the two projects that have already been done which are Turkey Creek Road and Tugaloo



State Park Road. The County currently has a motor grader lease which will be paid off or renewed in 2019. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to consider purchasing a slope mower. The projected amount was \$150,000 but staff has located a demo under full warranty for less than \$135,000. The recommendation from Mrs. Thomas to the Commission Board is to approve this purchase at the March regular board meeting. This purchase will be made from SPLOST V funds. The collections for SPLOST V have not begun but the money is available because of the forward financing. Commissioner Jacques said that this sounded like a good deal on the slope mower but he did question if any of the local vendors were given an opportunity to provide comparable pricing for equipment. Mrs. Thomas said that this price is State contract. She said local vendors could be looked at but this is demo price and the price would likely be higher. Commissioner Jacques said that he just wanted to make sure that local vendors were given a chance.

Mrs. Thomas also gave a projection of the LMIG match for the next six years. She said assuming a minimum increase of 3% each year, the County match will be \$170,000 per year for various projects. Mrs. Thomas said that she wanted the Commission Board to be aware of what is available in the road budget.

At the March 6 regular board meeting GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) will give a presentation of bridge replacements over I-85. Mrs. Thomas said that over the next several years that a total of six bridge replacements will take place. She said that the financial investment that GDOT is making in Franklin County to replace these bridges is wonderful. Chairman Bridges said that this is good news for Franklin County.

E. Board Appointments – *Chairman Bridges said that the next item for discussion is board appointments. He asked Mrs. Thomas to go over this further. Mrs. Thomas said two positions came open on the Joint Development Authority this past December. She said that the IBA will give recommendations for these positions. The recommendations will be presented at the next work session.*

Mrs. Thomas said that the other board with openings is the Planning Board. She said several months ago that one position came open and applications were taken and received. Another position has come open due to another resignation. This is currently being advertised and applications will be received through March 24. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to appoint one position at the March regular board meeting and then appoint another member the following month. There is a third position that is coming open in March. The current member has expressed a willingness to continue serving on this board. Mrs. Thomas said that applications that are received will be given to the subcommittee for recommendations.

F. Manager's Report – *Mrs. Thomas gave an update on the courthouse. She said that a contractor, who does a lot of work for Athens-Clark County was brought in to take a second look at the immediate needs at the courthouse. The quote from the contractor to bring in a boom truck to do repairs on the roof was*



cheaper than expected. Minor repairs will be corrected immediately and an assessment will be given for the other repairs. The carpet will be placed in two of the rooms at the courthouse due to a backup plumbing issue. Chairman Bridges asked if SPLOST V funds will be spent for these repairs. Mrs. Thomas said that there are still available funds from SPLOST IV and these will be spent first.

A site visit to Colquitt County to look at software was made by Mrs. Thomas. She said that she has fully reviewed three software packages in the facilities that use them. The software package that was reviewed in Colquitt County will be reviewed by the staff on March 2. After this review Mrs. Thomas said that she should be ready to move on it. The goal is to implement the software by July 1 which is a very quick turnaround. Mrs. Thomas said an update will probably be given at the regular board meeting based on the staff review.

Mrs. Thomas said that Mr. Phillips and the Planning Board have completed their proposed changes. The proposed changes are posted on the County website. The first public hearing for the proposed changes will be March 16 at 6:30 p.m. The second public hearing will be March 28 at 5:30 p.m., right before the work session. Mrs. Thomas commended the Planning Board for their work on this.

The last item for discussion was an update on proposed changes to ordinances. Mrs. Thomas said that the two ordinances that she would like for the Commission Board to look at first are Parks and Recreation and Nuisance. The Recreation Board was created by local ordinance and it can be modified through a local ordinance. Information was presented to the Commission Board about changing the Recreation Board to an advisory board. Mrs. Thomas proposed by-laws based on a neighboring county to change to an advisory board. She said that the Commission Board has control of the money with no decision making authority.

Chairman Bridges questioned if the Commission Board would have time to study the ordinance changes. Mrs. Thomas said that the ordinance would state that the board is being dissolved, and then by-laws would be adopted to establish an advisory board. This change would give the Commission Board decision making as well as oversight of the money. If the Commission Board did not desire to make this an advisory board then they can give the Recreation Board back oversight of the money in addition to the decision making.

Dr. Macomson asked if feedback had been received by the Recreation Board or if they knew about the proposed change. Mrs. Thomas said that there has been some conversation but she has not personally met with them. She stated that she would be happy to meet with the Recreation Board if needed.

G. Announcements – *Mrs. Thomas said that she, Chairman Bridges and Commissioner Franklin will go to the ACCG day at the capitol on March 1. Chairman Bridges said that there are several bills that they will be talking to Representative Alan Powell and Senator John Wilkinson about. Commissioner Jacques*



thanked Chairman Bridges and Commissioner Franklin for taking the time to represent the Commission Board at the capitol. He asked that they request that Franklin County be made whole from the recent legislation that redirected about \$170,000 of truck taxes to other places. Chairman Bridges said that it is always important to talk with the legislators and let them know the needs of the County.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 6:49 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