



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 3, 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
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen

Staff: County Manager Beth Thomas
County Clerk Elaine Evans
County Attorney Bubba Samuels

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

Item 3: **Approval of Minutes:**

March 6, 2017 Public Hearing
March 6, 2017 Regular Board Meeting
March 28, 2017 Public Hearing
March 28, 2017 Work Session

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. He said that this have been sent to the Commissioners for review. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to approve the minutes as distributed. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The minutes were approved by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The YES votes were Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Wester; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Jacques; and Chairman Bridges.

Item 4: **Items for discussion:**

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



B. Drug Task Force Assignment of Grant – Chairman Bridges said that the Drug Task Force grant was talked about at the work session last week. He asked Mrs. Thomas to explain the item further. Mrs. Thomas said that the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement office is absorbing the North Georgia Drug Task Force. The Sheriff and the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement office have requested that the Commission Board relinquish the 2016 grant and assign it to the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement office. Franklin County is the fiscal agent for this grant but will remain whole through the remainder of this year even with relinquishing the grant. Mrs. Thomas gave her recommendation to the Commission Board to approve the request and authorize the Chairman to execute the appropriate required documents. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to transfer the funds to the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement. Dr. Macomson made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester seconded the motion. 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; Dr. Macomson; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester.

C. Franklin County Boards and Committee Appointments – Chairman Bridges said that the appointments will be taken one at time for discussion and vote. He asked Mrs. Thomas to go over each item.

1. Planning Commission – Mrs. Thomas said that the Planning Commission has one vacant position and two applications were received. The subcommittee reviewed the applications and recommended the appointment of Mr. Eric Segars. The term for Mr. Harold Gillespie expired a few days ago on March 31. Mrs. Thomas said that Mr. Gillespie would like to continue and has requested to be reappointed. The subcommittee recommended the reappointment of Mr. Harold Gillespie. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept Eric Segars and Harold Gillespie for the Planning Commission. Commissioner Wester made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Dr. Macomson seconded the motion. 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 Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Wester; and Chairman Bridges.

2. Joint Development Authority – Mrs. Thomas said that there are two open positions on the Joint Development Authority. She said that based on their work with the Industrial Development Authority the Commission Board asked for recommendations from them. Mrs. Thomas said that the recommendations for the Joint Development Authority are Mr. Brian James and Mayor Ralph Owens to be reappointed. She said that she concurs and asked the Commission Board to reappoint Brian James and Mayor Owens. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation. Commissioner Jacques made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. 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 Wester; Commissioner



Jacques; Chairman Bridges; Dr. Macomson; and Commissioner Franklin.

3. Board of Commissioners Capital Improvement Subcommittee – Chairman Bridges said that the Commissioners talked about this at the work session of forming a subcommittee to get started on capital improvement recommendations. He asked Mrs. Thomas to discuss this further. Mrs. Thomas said that she proposed the need for a subcommittee to discuss the potential options available to the County for capital improvements and debt financing. She said that it will be crucial to involve members of the community in this process but it needs to start with at least two members of the Commission Board to make recommendations or even to stop. Mrs. Thomas asked the Board to consider making two members part of the subcommittee to start this process. Chairman Bridges said that this will be a good starting place. He asked if anyone would like to volunteer for this. Chairman Bridges volunteered and then asked if another Commissioner would agree to volunteer. Commissioner Wester volunteered. Chairman Bridges said that this process will begin to put together ideas for capital improvements for the County. Commissioner Jacques thanked Chairman Bridges and Commissioner Wester for volunteering.

D. Parks and Recreation – Chairman Bridges said that the parks and recreation items need to be voted on. He said that the first part is the ordinance and by-laws. After the approval of the ordinance and by-laws the appointments of the advisory board members will need to be done. He asked Mrs. Thomas to explain the parks and recreation item.

1. Ordinance and By-laws approval – Mrs. Thomas presented for approval an update to the Parks and Recreation ordinance. She said that the ordinance will dissolve the Parks and Recreation Commission and will create a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The ordinance needs to be voted on as a stand-alone document. Mrs. Thomas said in this new ordinance that the terms of the advisory board will be set at four years and the language for the initial terms states that the first terms will provide for alternating years of expiration. She said that the ordinance will also have the effective date of dissolving the Parks and Recreation Commission and creation of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

Mrs. Thomas said that there are some funds that have been allocated to the Parks and Recreation Commission and these funds shall be appointed to the Franklin County Board of Commissioners. She said that she recommends that these funds be earmarked specifically for Parks and Recreation and would seek recommendation from the newly created Advisory Board concerning the appropriate expenditures. Mrs. Thomas said that there is only one account that was not given to the Commission Board in 2012. This account has about \$10,000 in it. It appeared before the last County audit. This account will need to be closed and given over to the Board of Commissioners.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the ordinance. Commissioner Wester made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. After a brief silence,



Chairman Bridges seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for discussion. Dr. Macomson said that he thought a debate was needed before the decision to change. He said that the Recreation Commission has done a really good job. Dr. Macomson said that as a former school system employee he knows that there is a great collaboration between the Rec Department and the school system with shared facilities. He said that he does not know of any negative comments about the programs. He said that from talking with different people he thinks that communication is the issue between the Recreation Commission and the Commission Board.

Dr. Macomson proposed that the Recreation Commission be restored full authority based on the prior amendment. He said that the Commission Board should talk with the Recreation Commission and tell them what is expected. The Recreation Commission should meet monthly, report minutes monthly and do a financial summary of activities monthly. The Commission Board should continue to approve the annual budget for the Recreation, personnel hires, and appointments. Dr. Macomson said that he would like to give the Recreation Commission six to 12 months to see if the communication can get better between them and the Commissioners. If not, then the issue can be revisited. He said that the Recreation Department has done a fantastic job and he is not in favor of making a change without giving them and the Commission Board a chance to communicate better with each other.

Commissioner Jacques said that he concurs exactly with the sentiments from Dr. Macomson. Commissioner Franklin said that he agrees with Dr. Macomson. He said that he is in favor of giving the Recreation a chance. Tell them what is wanted and needed. Commissioner Franklin said that if things didn't work out it could always come before the Board again. Dr. Macomson said that the Recreation Commission has some new members and there needs to be communication of expectations and roles and responsibilities. Commissioner Jacques questioned Mr. Samuels if there is currently anything in the current ordinance and the current composition of the Board that is not under legal protection of the County.

Mr. Samuels said that with the change that was made a few years with the finances it created a sort of disconnect organizationally but nothing illegal. He said that from a structural and organizational stand point that efficiency improvements could probably be made in the setup. Mr. Samuels said that from a legal point there is nothing that is upsetting. Commissioner Jacques thanked Mr. Samuels for his opinion.

Commissioner Wester said that as a long-time supporter of the Recreation Department and the Recreation Director Mr. Randall Gailey, they have always had his support. He stated that he made the motion because he was of the understanding that this was the direction that the Board wanted to go. He said that he feels that he has been left out in the cold.

Chairman Bridges said that the Commissioners are elected officials and they are accountable to the citizens of Franklin County. He said that the Recreation is an entity that they do not have control over. Mr. Samuels said that in certain points but the



amendment that was done several years ago did a lot to correct that. Chairman Bridges said that everyone needs to be accountable. He said that he is not bashing the Recreation Department because there is no one in the room who supports recreation more than he does. He said that it is a structural correctness that needs to be taken care of. Chairman Bridges said that the chairperson of the Recreation Commission admitted that it has been very lacking in structure; meetings and so forth. He said that it makes sense to him to have the Recreation accountable to the Commission Board.

Chairman Bridges said that his objective was not to bash the Rec Department; he only wants to make it better. He said that there have been a lot of good people who stepped up and volunteered through the years on the Rec Board. Chairman Bridges said that the letter that was received by the Commissioners stating that the Rec Board vigorously opposed was incorrect. He said that he knows that the letter was not a correct statement because people on the Rec Board said that they have no knowledge of the letter. Chairman Bridges said that he would like the letter to have been signed by each member of the Rec Board. He said that the Rec Board is not a constitutional office position. Chairman Bridges told the Commissioners that they should do their homework and check with all board members for their opinions. He told Dr. Macomson that he is willing to delay the decision but he does not see how he can abandon his accountability.

Dr. Macomson stated that he does want the Recreation Department to be accountable. He said that if they meet monthly, report the minutes, do a simple financial report and summary of activities for the Commission Board this will provide the communication piece. He said that he is willing to consider this at a later date but he is willing to allow the Recreation Department to fix the communication first. Dr. Macomson stated that if this is not working within a six to 12 months period it can be decided then by the Commission Board.

Mrs. Thomas said that these are very valid points. The restructure was proposed over a year ago. She said that the things that Dr. Macomson mentioned will definitely have to be improved upon. Mrs. Thomas said that there are other issues and out of respect for all the parties involved have not been broadcast publicly and he needs to be informed of them. She said that this is the communication piece, even on her part to the Commission Board. Mrs. Thomas said that this was presented over a year ago and was held. She said that her understanding was the Board was ready to move on this and she does believe this is the best method. The concept behind this change was to mirror the financial responsibility to the Board. Mrs. Thomas said that having that control would have benefited the bottom line of the County.

Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion failed by one (1) **YES** vote to four (4) **NO** votes. The YES vote was Chairman Bridges. The NO votes were Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Wester; and Commissioner Jacques.

E. FCC Market Modification Authorization – Chairman Bridges



asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on the FCC Market Modification. He said that this something that the Commission Board has been working on for a couple of years in trying to get the FCC to recognize that Franklin County is in the State of Georgia. Mrs. Thomas said that she has modeled the petition after the successful county in the State of Colorado. She said that the petition and letter must come from the Board of Commissioners and be executed by the Chairman. Mrs. Thomas said from the survey results there is a very strong opinion to continue with this process. She said she would like to be able to present this to the media attorney at the end of the month. Mrs. Thomas said that she has requested help from Representative Doug Collins office to work on two letters; one is a letter from Representative Collins and the other is an endorsement from the Atlanta broadcasters. Mrs. Thomas requested that the Commission Board formalize the intent to proceed with the FCC petition process and authorize the Chairman to sign the petition upon completion.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the request from Mrs. Thomas. Dr. Macomson made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The YES votes were Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Jacques; and Chairman Bridges.

F. FY2018 Financial Outlook – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on this item. Mrs. Thomas gave the Commission Board the proposed FY18 budget calendar. She said that the County is right on schedule. As soon as the March financials are ready this will provide a baseline for next year's budget. Mrs. Thomas said that for FY18 the budget will start off 1.8 million dollars in the hole. She said that the reevaluation process may help some with this but the tax digest has not been determined yet.

Mrs. Thomas said to answer a question from Commissioner Jacques on the LOST revenues; it looks like the County will remain in the positive for this, by about \$80,000. She said that she does not know how this will continue so she is estimating a \$48,000 to \$50,000 for next year. Mrs. Thomas said that for next year she will bump up the ambulance revenue while decreasing the truck tax as it decreases by 20% each year. She said that what the County is looking at before the tax digest revenue is a fairly stagnant source of revenue. She said that she does not make fines and fees from Probate Court a foundation for the budget.

An extra expense for the County in next year's budget is a State mandate providing all volunteer firefighters with supplemental cancer insurance. Mrs. Thomas said that she is estimating \$100,000 per year for this. She said that the County's insurance broker is currently working on getting a price for this. Commissioner Jacques said that one important thing to mention is this is only going to fund six months. She said that this is the policy. Commissioner Jacques said that this will only effect six months in next year's budget. Mrs. Thomas said that Commissioner Jacques is correct the policy will not go into effect until January 1 so the amount will be



\$50,000 for the six months in this budget. Commissioner Jacques said that he supports the firefighters whole heartedly but this is another example of an unfunded mandate handed down to the counties by the State. Mrs. Thomas said that it does hit the bottom line significantly.

Mrs. Thomas said that elected officials salaries will impact the budget also. She said that she had \$23,000 for last year but this year's budget may increase slightly. Mrs. Thomas said that the health insurance move last year to a consumer driven plan helped with the first four months. She said that some of the changes did not go as planned and due to high utilization the health insurance will probably increase by 20%. She said that about 5% of the population of the employees is driving a large segment of the health insurance cost. The increase before negotiations is around \$285,000. Mrs. Thomas said that she will work to get the cost down but the month of February was more than the prior four months totaled.

The Defined Benefit retirement contribution for FY18 is estimated to increase by \$70,000. The EMS supervisor unit will also be added. The offset of the expense for this unit is with the revenues. Mrs. Thomas said that the Sheriff's Department cost overruns will have to be determined how they are funded going forward. Inmate housing has increased and there is no expectation for that to decrease. The DA has requested and the Grand Jury has recommended additional staff which Mrs. Thomas is estimating at \$170,000. The request is for two investigators, one admin and an increase in pay for an ADA. Mrs. Thomas said that she is giving this information to the Commissioners for their input. She said that that the mandates will have to be done. The budget information will be given to the department heads for their recommendations.

*G. **Executive Session** – Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to go into executive session for the purpose of litigation, personnel, and land acquisition. Dr. Macomson made the motion to go into executive session. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. He asked Mr. Samuels for clarification if the issue with the Recreation ordinance could be discussed in executive session. Mr. Samuels said no sir. 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 Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Franklin; Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Franklin; and Chairman Bridges. The regular session closed at 6:35 to go into executive session.*

*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to close the executive session and go back into regular session. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to close executive session and go back into regular session and as part and parcel of the motion give the Chairman the authorization to sign the closed meeting affidavit in which litigation, personnel, and land acquisition were all discussed. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Dr. Macomson seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The YES votes were Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Franklin; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester. The regular session resumed at 7:10 p.m.*



*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Dr. Macomson made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jacques 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; Dr. Macomson; and Commissioner Franklin. The meeting adjourned at 7:13 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