



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
March 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
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen
Charles Robertson, WLHR

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

Item 1: Call meeting to order – Chairman Bridges closed the public hearing and called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. He welcomed everyone and thanked them for taking their time to come out to the meeting.

Item 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Bridges lead the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

Commissioner Jacques made a motion to amend the agenda to strike Item 3 C which is Gary Farmer – Tax Assessor Board from tonight’s agenda per the request of Mr. Farmer. 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 Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Jacques; Dr. Macomson; and Commissioner Franklin.

Item 3: Items for discussion

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges said that the Commissioners welcome comments from the citizens. He asked if anyone would like to speak in public comment. There was no one who wished to speak.

B. Public Hearing items

1. Rezoning request – Drew Lane – Chairman Bridges asked John Phillips to



give the recommendation for the rezoning request for Drew Lane made by Beverly Mason. Mr. Phillips said that Ms. Mason has filed an application to change from Ag Intensive to Residential Single-family. The tract is 8.71 acres located on Drew Lane and is also identified as Tax Parcel 070008. The Planning Commission reviewed the application and recommends approval. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from the Planning Commission. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to accept the recommendation of the Planning Commission and change the zoning per request of Ms. Mason from Agricultural Intensive to Single-family Residential. 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.

2. Proposed zoning regulations – Chairman Bridges asked Mr. Phillips to give the recommendation from the Planning Commission for the proposed zoning regulations. Mr. Phillips expressed his appreciation to the Planning Commission for their work on this update as the moratorium on poultry houses is scheduled to end on March 31. He said that the setback requirements will stay the same for the property owners with the following exceptions; poultry houses will be constructed where the exhaust end is at least 1,000 feet measured perpendicular from the exhaust end of the poultry house to any building that is regularly used for government; school; hospital; church or other place of worship; senior center; retirement home; nursing home; restaurant; or public community center. Also, 1,000 feet from the property line of any public park, public recreational area, or Corps of Engineers Lake Hartwell; provided that this requirement may be waived by the owner of the property or their authorized agents on which such establishment is located, if more than one owner of a property then all the consent of the owners shall be required. This is the first revision.

Mr. Phillips said that the second revision is that poultry houses will only be permitted as a conditional use in a zoned district in an area shown as rural on the current recommended character areas map in the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from the Planning Commission. Commissioner Wester made the motion to accept the recommendation from the Planning Commission. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques 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 Jacques; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Franklin; and Chairman Bridges.

Commissioner Jacques made the motion to end the poultry house moratorium effective tonight based on the adoption of the revisions from the Planning Commission. 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 Commissioner Franklin; Dr. Macomson; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester.



C. Gary Farmer – Tax Assessor Board – Agenda amended at beginning of meeting to eliminate this item.

D. Drug Task Force – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give the information about the drug task force item. Mrs. Thomas said that Sheriff Thomas and an agent with the GBI delivered a letter requesting that the Board of Commissioners agree to relinquish the current operating task force grant in the amount of \$86,709. The requested agreement would surrender the money specific to the North Georgia Task Force and would assign it to the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office. Mrs. Thomas said that from her understanding the North Georgia Task Force will be disbanded. Franklin County will then be under the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement. She said that this will need to be voted on at the regular board meeting on Monday. Mrs. Thomas said her recommendation is to move forward with the agreement. She said that as far as finances this agreement will allow Franklin County to continue under the current agreement. The grant pays for 50% of an officer's salary and the administrative personnel for the drug task force. The grant runs on a calendar year basis so Franklin County will be whole through the end of the calendar year.

Chairman Bridges said that this is a shift in who will be in charge of the drug task force. He asked Mrs. Thomas if either of these employees will transition into Franklin County's expense. Mrs. Thomas said that is a decision for the Sheriff. She said that currently that Franklin County is the administrator for the grant and the administrative personnel handles those duties. With the shift all of those administrative duties will go to another office in Cleveland and they have administrative personnel. Mrs. Thomas said that in essence the position goes away but what happens to the person has yet to be determined. She said that if this person is added to Franklin County's payroll then it will be an added expense.

Chairman Bridges asked Chief Deputy Jimmy LeCroy if he knew what would happen to the administrative personnel. He asked Mr. LeCroy if the Sheriff's Office is planning on taking on this person. Mr. LeCroy stated that the agreement will pay Franklin County through December. When budget time comes the decision will have to be made. He said that the assigned officer is already in the budget. The decision will have to be made at a later time for the other employee.

E. Franklin County Boards update

1. Planning Commission – Mrs. Thomas said that there is one position open on the Planning Commission. Applications were received through March 24 and two were received. The applications have been forwarded to the subcommittee for a recommendation which will be given at the regular board meeting. Chairman Bridges said that this will be voted on Monday to fill this open spot.

2. Joint Development Authority – On the Joint Development Authority Mrs. Thomas said that there are two terms that expired in December. She said that the Commission Board asked the Industrial Building Authority for recommendations. Mrs.



Thomas said that the recommendations from the IBA are to continue with Brian James and Mayor Ralph Owens for reappointment. The recommendation from Mrs. Thomas is to follow the recommendation from the IBA and reappoint Brian James and Mayor Ralph Owens to the Joint Development Authority. Chairman Bridges said that this will be voted on at Monday's regular board meeting.

3. Recreation Board – *Mrs. Thomas said that the Recreation Board and ordinance revisions discussions were begun at the January planning session. She gave information on amending Chapter 34 in the Code of Ordinances for Parks and Recreation which will abolish the current Recreation Commission and immediately assigns a Franklin County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Mrs. Thomas gave the Commission Board information on the necessary by-laws with modifications for Franklin County to match up with the ordinance. The county attorney has also reviewed these proposed changes.*

Mrs. Thomas said that in fairness for information the Recreation Board issued the Commission Board a letter on their stance. She stated to the Commission Board that her recommendation is to move forward with the change before the new ordinance book is codified. Chairman Bridges said that this would be looked at Monday night at the regular board meeting.

F. FCC Market Modification update – *Chairman Bridges said that the County put out a survey for the FCC Market Modification and has had good response. He asked Mrs. Thomas to go over this further. Mrs. Thomas said that the orphan counties of Franklin, Elbert, Hart, and Stephens have been gathering information. She said that 1,577 responses have been received so far. Out of these responses 94% are interested in receiving television broadcast out of Atlanta. At this time it is unknown what the cost will be to the citizens if this change is possible.*

Mrs. Thomas said that 81% of the responses stated that all the reasons were why they wanted to switch; sports, news and politics. Of the 1,577 responses, only 2% stated that they shop in South Carolina. At this point Mrs. Thomas stated that the County is ready to take the next step. The petition has to come from the Board of Commissioners. She said at Monday's meeting she will be requesting authorizing the Chairman and the Manager to pursue the petition. Also to allow a letter under the cover of the Chairman to request that the FCC change the satellites and allow Mrs. Thomas to contact the media bureau attorney in DC and to work with the county attorney to make the petition. Mrs. Thomas said that town hall meetings are not a bad idea but she would recommend that they be held in accordance with scheduled meetings and not have separate dates. Chairman Bridges said that this has been a long process. He told the Commissioners to be ready to vote Monday.

G. Manager Report

1. Debt management – *Mrs. Thomas stated that because the County has existing debt of SPLOST V forward funding of three million dollars and the hospital refinance general obligation debt that public notice is required. Franklin County uses a*



company by the name of DAK for this service. All of the information has been posted. Mrs. Thomas said that the County does have water debt but it is serviced by the revenue that is received. She said that with the current year rate increases the water fund should come in at break even.

2. Potential funding for capital improvements (Jail, Justice Center) –

Mrs. Thomas stated again as she had previously stated at the January planning session that she is not in favor of a jail expansion. She said that the County cannot ignore the need that exists. Mrs. Thomas said that she would fully support a new jail that could capitalize on a structure that would be more cost efficient than adding an expansion with a secondary staff. An expansion would not fix the current jail situation. In this year's budget for the Sheriff, \$145,000 was put in for capital requests for the jail. These are reasonable expenses and need to be made now with the jail fund.

Mrs. Thomas said that the funds that are available for a new jail or expansion are limited. In SPLOST V, 1.4 million was put in for capital improvements. This amount is for all the buildings not just for the jail. The jail is one of the newest buildings in the County. The balance in the jail fund is \$974,000 and should be used for immediate needs. Mrs. Thomas said that there are no grants available for jails so the only way to finance a jail is general obligation debt. General obligation debt has to be approved by the citizens. This can only be done at certain times. The upcoming voting times that would be allowed are November 7, 2017; May 22, 2018; and November 6, 2018. Everything will have to be place by the timeline before a vote can take place.

With very rough estimates, Mrs. Thomas said that a 10 million dollar vote would be about \$573,000 in debt service. She said with a six million dollar vote the debt service would be \$343,000. Both of these estimates were over a 30 year period. Mrs. Thomas said that the current amount for outsourcing inmates is approximately \$360,000 per year.

Along with a new jail, Mrs. Thomas said that a new judicial building is needed to house some of the operations. There are issues with the courthouse and there are a lot of jurors coming into a historical building. Mrs. Thomas said that on court days the Justice Center is packed with people parking on the grass all the way to E911. She said that with all the court that is being run through the County a consolidated building would be a great approach. A capital lease can be done for a judicial building and does not have to go up for a vote. Someone else builds the building and the County would pay rent until it was paid off. Mrs. Thomas said at this time these are just ideas but she would like for a subcommittee to look at these situations and see if this is something that the County would like to pursue.

Chairman Bridges said that this is something that needs to be looked at. Every grand jury has made recommendations to improve the jail. If the jail was visited it would be clear why the County needs to do something about it. This has to be funded some way. Chairman Bridges said that a subcommittee would be a good way to go for ideas and recommendations. If a new jail is the determined path, then the issue will have to go before the voters to incur the debt.



Dr. Macomson asked if a new jail was eventually built could the old jail be used for something else. Mrs. Thomas said that this would have to be looked at. There are issues at the jail that need to be fixed. Dr. Macomson clarified could some of the offices be combined and moved there. Mrs. Thomas said that a study would need to be done to see if this would be reasonable.

Commissioner Jacques asked Mrs. Thomas to clarify for the public what general obligation debt is and what would be voted on. Mrs. Thomas said that there are three options available for governments to incur debt, capital leases; revenue debt; and general obligation debt. She explained that capital lease is where someone else builds the structure and rent is paid on it until it is paid off. After the payoff the building would then belong to the county. Revenue debt is when a source of revenue is available to repay the debt, an example is the water. General obligation debt is funded by property taxes.

Mrs. Thomas said that if it was determined to fund the jail by general obligation debt that the wording for the ballot would be very similar to the refinancing of the hospital with SPLOST. The wording would be that the County is authorizing general obligation debt in the amount of something determined at a max interest rate of something determined. The general obligation debt would be repaid by the collection of property taxes which is the reason that it has to go before the voters for approval. Mrs. Thomas said that her hope is that if a new jail is approved that the cost overruns that are currently happening will be alleviated.

Commissioner Jacques asked if general obligation debt could cover the cost of a new jail as well as the personnel to run it. Mrs. Thomas said no, it could not cover both. She said that when a building is built, operational costs are associated with it. Mrs. Thomas said that a full financial analysis would need to be done but it is possible that what is being paid to other counties for housing would cover the operational costs. She said that she would like to have a safe jail that would take care of the personnel but would also minimize operational costs. Commissioner Franklin asked Mrs. Thomas if Franklin County has land to build a new jail or will land have to be bought. Chairman Bridges said that this would be determined by a subcommittee.

Chairman Bridges reminded everyone of the regular board meeting scheduled for Monday, April 3 at 6. He then adjourned the meeting at 6:35 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