



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
May 1, 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 Attorney Bubba Samuels
County Engineer John Phillips*

Item 1 & 2: ***Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance*** – *Chairman Bridges called the May regular board meeting to order. He asked Commissioner Jacques to lead the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the American flag.*

Item 3: ***Approval of Minutes:***

*April 3, 2017 Regular Board Meeting
April 24, 2017 Work Session*

*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the minutes from April. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to accept the minutes as written. 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.*

Item 4: ***Items for discussion:***

A. ***Public Comment*** – *Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to speak in public comment. Sheriff Steve Thomas came forward to speak. He stated to the Commission Board that he feels betrayed. Sheriff Thomas said that when he first*



came into office he told the Commission Board that a jail needed to be built. He said that he understands that there is a subcommittee and he is all for that. Sheriff Thomas expressed his concern over the statement made by one of the Commissioners that he would go along with it as long as the Commission Board does not have to abide by what the subcommittee says. He said that 22 people meet twice a year on the grand jury and make recommendations for the jail.

Sheriff Thomas said that 45 inmates are being housed out a day. He said that the jail is packed. The housing costs are in addition to the operating costs at the jail. Sheriff Thomas said that the calls answered by deputies for last year were 17,600. It is on pace to reach 19,000 calls for this year. He said that he cannot stop crime. Sheriff Thomas said that Franklin County deputies assisted Banks County near the county line this past weekend for 48 hours. This assistance from Franklin County helped with the suspect who shot the officer in Banks County.

The jail is housing people who cannot get out, along with some who do not need to be out. The charges range from aggravated assault on police officers to murder to child molestation to drug trafficking. Sheriff Thomas stated to the Commission Board that he had made the request in the past for a work release center. The work release center would allow the inmates who qualified for probation with a bond order to pay their way. He said that the Commission Board chose not to do that. Then it was requested to add a pod and a wing. Sheriff Thomas said that this was stopped. He said that he cannot stop locking people up for crimes as that is part of his constitutional job. Sheriff Thomas said that each budget cycle his department's budget is cut. As long as these cuts are made his office will continue to go over. He said that the citizens of the County are what he has to protect.

B. Budget Requests and Presentments – Chairman Bridges asked the **Library Board** representative to come forward with their request. Bonnie Bardy, Chairman of the Library Board came forward and introduced herself and thanked the Commission Board for their time. Ms. Bardy said that the libraries work under the Athens Regional Library. She said that fiscal year 2017 has been a very busy year with 58,381 visits and circulation of over 55,000 items. Ms. Bardy continued going over the various programs offered by the libraries and emphasized the computer usage of 42,883 logons. She said that the Athens Regional Library System requires two employees be in the buildings at all times for safety reasons. Royston Library has two employees for 40 hours per week. Lavonia Library is open 40 hours per week but is short by 16 hours per week of having two employees for coverage.

Ms. Bardy stated that the Franklin County Library Board has to use monies each year from their reserves for operations. This is not sustainable and the reserves are nearly depleted. Ms. Bardy stated that the branch manager's salary has not kept up with her tenure and there is an increased retirement contribution. The operations costs are also increasing. Ms. Bardy asked for an increase in the FY18 budget of \$17,972 which would bring the amount requested to \$50,178. Chairman Bridges said that this request would be added to the planning information for the FY18 budget.



Raymond Fitzpatrick of the **Extension** spoke next. Mr. Fitzpatrick thanked the Commission Board and staff for allowing him the time to come speak. He requested a cost of living increase for himself and his office staff. He said last year the Governor gave a 3% increase for all State employees. Mr. Fitzpatrick said that he and his staff got a 1.5% increase because their salaries are split between the State and the County. He said that the Extension has many successes including four of the 4-H participants winning the livestock judging and they will compete at the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest. Chairman Bridges said that the information will be included in the budget review.

Mrs. Thomas gave information from Avita Community Partners. She said that the funding level request from them is the same as the prior year. This information was given to make the Commission Board aware of their request.

Chairman Bridges said that the Animal Shelter was scheduled for tonight but they were unable to come. He said that they will be rescheduled for a later time. He also said that he wanted everyone associated with the budget to have an opportunity to speak to the Commission Board or to sit down with Mrs. Thomas. The majority of the departments have met with Mrs. Thomas and presented their budget requests.

C. Public Hearing items

1. **Variance** – Mark Phillips – **2245 Athens Road** – Chairman Bridges asked John Phillips to go over the variance request from Mark Phillips. John Phillips said that the variance application from Mark Phillips is to allow two residences on one lot and to reduce the setbacks. The Planning Commission reviewed the request and recommended denial for the variance. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from the Planning Commission. Commissioner Wester made the motion to deny the request for variance for 2245 Athens Road based on the recommendation from the Planning Commission. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion.

Dr. Macomson asked if the applicant met the considerations from the Planning Commission at a later time, could the request be reconsidered. Mr. Phillips said that it is correct. Commissioner Jacques asked if the time limit to be reconsidered is a year. Mr. Phillips said that it should be a year. Mr. Samuels said that he believes that is correct. Commissioner Jacques said that the information that was given by the applicant did not satisfy the issues. Mr. Phillips said that there were other issues than just the septic tank permit. There was no further discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands to deny the variance request. 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.

2. **Variance** – Douglas and Melissa Burns – **1122 Pulliam Road** – Chairman Bridges asked Mr. Phillips to give an update on the request from Douglas and Melissa



Burns. Mr. Phillips said that the request is for a variance to reduce the building setback on one corner of one poultry house. The corner of the poultry house is 195 feet from a property line instead of the required 200 feet. Douglas and Melissa Burns are requesting that the poultry house be allowed to remain there. The recommendation from the Planning Commission is approval because it is only one corner of one house and the adjoining property is vacant. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from the Planning Commission. Dr. Macomson made the motion to approve the variance request for Douglas and Melissa Burns. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion in accordance with the Planning Commission recommendation. 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 Franklin; Commissioner Wester; Dr. Macomson; and Commissioner Jacques.

3. **Rezone** – Jane Lunsford – **707 Hudson Terrace** – Chairman Bridges asked Mr. Phillips to give an update on the rezone request from Jane Lunsford. Mr. Phillips said that this property was subdivided several years ago into lots along the river. He said that when the County adopted zoning all the tracts were given agricultural zoning even though the tracts are about one acre in size. Mr. Phillips said that Ms. Lunsford has requested that the property be rezoned single family residential so she can place a home on the property and satisfy the building setbacks. The recommendation from the Planning Commission is for approval. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the rezone request from Ms. Lunsford. 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 Franklin; Commissioner Jacques; Commissioner Wester; and Chairman Bridges.

4. **Name Change** – Hwy 17 in Martin to **Old Hwy 17** - Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give information on the name change item. Mrs. Thomas said that when the new construction opened and Old Hwy 17 was granted over to Franklin County, the name given by GDOT was East Main Street. She said that according to the 911 system the East Main Street name did not work. When the problem was discovered Mrs. Thomas presented to the Commission Board and the process to rename was approved. Mrs. Thomas said that the public hearing prior to tonight's regular board meeting concluded the process. She gave her recommendation to move forward with the name change to Old Hwy 17. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to rename to Old Hwy 17. Dr. Macomson made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. Dr. Macomson asked if the rest of the road going into Stephens County will be Old Hwy 17. Mrs. Thomas said Stephens County will have to address this. 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 Franklin; Commissioner Jacques; Dr. Macomson; and Chairman Bridges.



5. **Abandonment – Portion of Lakota Trail** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give an update on the abandonment of Lakota Trail. Mrs. Thomas said that the Board previously voted to begin the abandonment process for a portion of Lakota Trail. She said that the portion to be abandoned belongs to a single land owner. The County will maintain the rest of the road. The required public hearings are complete. Mrs. Thomas gave her recommendation to move forward with abandoning the portion of Lakota Trail. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to move forward with the abandonment of this portion of Lakota Trail. Commissioner Jacques 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 Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester.

D. Road Inventory

1. **Abandonment of Strawberry Lane** – Chairman Bridges asked Mr. Phillips to go over the abandonment request of Strawberry Lane. Mr. Phillips said that Strawberry Lane is a dirt road that runs from Jackson Bridge Road to Carroll's Church Road. The request to abandon is for the entirety of the road and is from the property owners on Strawberry Lane. Mr. Phillips said that tonight's vote would be to begin the process of abandonment which includes advertisement and public hearings. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to start the process. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to start the process for abandonment of Strawberry Lane. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Dr. Macomson seconded the vote. 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.

2. **Acceptance of Governor's Walk** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the acceptance of Governor's Walk. Mrs. Thomas said that a request was received from Charles Rogers for a portion of Governor's Walk to be added to the Franklin County Road System. All of the easements have been received and the road does meet the criteria for acceptance. There are five residences on Governor's Walk and there is adequate turn around space. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to consider the request. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to move forward and accept Governor's Walk on the County books. Commissioner Franklin 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 Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Wester; and Commissioner Jacques.

E. **2017 LMIG Bid Award** – Chairman Bridges said that Mr. Phillips presented the bid information at the work session. He asked Mr. Phillips to give additional information on the LMIG bid award. Mr. Phillips said that bids were



received for deep base asphalt patching on five county roads. Four bids were received with the low bid submitted by Stratton and Sons in the amount of \$192,000. Mr. Phillips said that everything is in order with the bid from Stratton and Sons. He recommended that Stratton and Sons be awarded the bid if the Commission Board wished to proceed with the project. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the bid from Stratton and Sons. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to accept the bid for the LMIG deep base patching contract to Stratton and Sons. He stated that it is a very good bid. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Dr. Macomson seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges said that he was impressed with the bid. He 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 Franklin; Commissioner Jacques; and Dr. Macomson.

F. Health Insurance – Chairman Bridges said that Mrs. Thomas has been looking at the health insurance for some time. He said that this will be studied by the Commissioners before it is approved. Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the health insurance. Mrs. Thomas presented the Commissioners with handouts and went over the proposed changes. She said that the loss ratio for Franklin County is 105% and that whether self-insured or fully-funded any company would lose money on Franklin County.

Mrs. Thomas said that Franklin County offers two plans to its employees. One is the base plan which comes at no cost to the employees. The base plan is a health savings account that the County contributes \$35 per month to for each covered employee. The second plan offered by the County is a co-pay plan. On this plan the employee pays a portion of the premium for richer coverage. For last year the County provided a supplement of \$31 per month to help with the buy-up option for richer coverage. Mrs. Thomas said that high utilization, especially in prescription drugs is ongoing. She said that the County employees have a usage of around 33% in prescription medications where the national average is around 10%.

Information was presented to the Commission Board on the number of participants on the base plan and the buy-up option. There are 89 participants on the base plan and 75 participants on the buy-up. Mrs. Thomas said that over the last eight months the base plan runs at a loss ratio of 83% whereas the buy-up runs at 109%. She said if there are no changes to the plan the renewal will be a 23% increase. Plans were looked at from two national carriers and one regional carrier. Mrs. Thomas said that for the consistency of the employees she would like to stay with United Healthcare. She said that she would like to keep the plans as similar as possible. United Healthcare offers a lot of health advantages such as Rally and Simply Engaged. There are also plans to offer more options for health and weight loss in July.

Mrs. Thomas said that during negotiations with United Healthcare she was able to get some reduction. She said that her goal is to keep the financial impact to the County at 10%. In order to keep the increase around 10% then changes have to be made to the plan. The proposed change for the base plan is that co-insurance would go



from 90% to 80%. The maximum out of pocket would stay the same. The maximum exposure increase is \$400. The co-pays for medications went up by \$5 each but it is not applicable unless the deductible is met. Mrs. Thomas recommended that the health savings account contribution increase to \$60 per month from \$35 per month. She said that this is for the employees on the base plan who are running the better loss run ratio.

The buy-up plan deductible would increase by \$500, from \$1,500 to \$2,000. The out of pocket will increase by \$1,500. Mrs. Thomas said that the co-pays for the doctors' visits on the buy-up option will decrease \$5. She said that the biggest impact is on the prescription drug coverage. This plan will go from a three tier to four tier drug coverage. Mrs. Thomas said that tier 1 drugs will cost \$15 per month; tier 2 \$45 per month; tier 3 \$85 per month and tier 4 \$125 per month. As an example Mrs. Thomas said that someone now taking a tier 3 medication on the new plan it would be a tier 4 and the cost would go from \$60 per month to \$125. She said that this would force the employees to take a more active role in their healthcare and drug management. This plan will also remove the supplement of \$31 per month. The employee cost for this plan will go from \$7.25 per pay period to \$20.54 per pay period. Mrs. Thomas said that this is only an overall increase of \$345 per year.

Mrs. Thomas said that with these changes the cost to the County would be maintained at 9% or \$100,000. She said that this amount will impact the budget. Mrs. Thomas said that her goal was to keep the health insurance at 10% so that full focus could be given to find pay raises for the employees. She said pay raises will help everybody and will help with the medical choices made by the employees. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to please look this information over. She asked the Commission Board to please stay open to an additional meeting to give the employees more time for open enrollment. Chairman Bridges said that the sooner this is adopted the better it will be. The latest the health plan can be adopted is May 30 to give enough time for the employee meetings.

G. Executive Session

1. Land Acquisition – Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to go into executive session for land acquisition. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to go from regular session into executive session in order to discuss land acquisition. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin 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 Commissioner Franklin; Dr. Macomson; Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Jacques; and Commissioner Wester. The regular session ended at 6:48 p.m.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to come out of executive session and go back into regular session. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to come out of executive session and go back into regular session as part and parcel of the motion to give the Chairman the authorization to sign the closed meeting affidavit in which land



acquisition was 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 Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Franklin; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Jacques; and Chairman Bridges. The regular session resumed at 7:10 p.m.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion on the item that was discussed in executive session. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to authorize the Chairman to execute a contract with the City of Carnesville to acquire the vacant city building located at 7850 GA Hwy 145 in exchange for the Elections building and \$50,000 in cash with the contract to be drafted by County Attorney Bubba Samuels pursuant to OCGA 36-9-3 A 2 A. 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 Chairman Bridges; Commissioner Franklin; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Wester; and Commissioner Jacques.

H. Announcements – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas if she had any announcements. Mrs. Thomas said that her only announcement concerns the budget. She will keep the Commission Board informed of any additional requests or meeting times. Mrs. Thomas said that May will be a busy month. The first public hearing on the budget will be at the end of May. She said that she will be asking the Commission Board to vote on the budget passage at the June work session.

Commissioner Jacques told Mrs. Thomas if a meeting is needed to finalize the health insurance that he is willing so that this can be taken care of earlier. He thanked Mrs. Thomas for the budget preparation spreadsheet with the fields that can be populated with additional information.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to adjourn. 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 Commissioner Wester; Commissioner Jacques; Dr. Macomson; Commissioner Franklin; and Chairman Bridges. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 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