



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
June 27, 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

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

Item 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Commissioner Franklin led the invocation and pledge to the American flag.

Item 3: Items for discussion

A. Public Comment – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to speak in public comment. He said to come forward and state their name for the record and tell the Board what is on their mind.

Ellen Roper Partain spoke concerning the closing of Strawberry Lane. She said this will make the traffic from Carroll Church Road come into Jackson Bridge Road in a curve. Ms. Partain said that her concern is safety because the school bus will have to change its route. She asked the Commission Board to take this into consideration along with the number of wrecks that have taken place in the area. Ms. Partain also expressed concern that the residents in the area did not receive notification of the road closure.

Tracey Henry said that she is the elementary school bus driver that goes down Strawberry Lane twice a day. Part of her route is to go down Jackson Bridge Road onto Carroll Church Road and then Strawberry Lane. Ms. Henry said that it will be dangerous to have to take a left at around 6:15 in the morning and then again in the afternoon. She said that she is unable to see around the curves. The closure of



Strawberry Lane poses a safety concern for the school children as there will be issues with turning the school bus around.

Ruby Porterfield said that she lives on Carroll Church Road. She said that she read previous online Commission meeting minutes stating that Strawberry Lane was abandoned. Strawberry Lane is not abandoned as Ms. Porterfield stated that this is the road she travels every day going back and forth to work and it is also used on weekends. Ms. Porterfield said that she taught her children to use Strawberry Lane because coming onto Carroll Church Road is so dangerous. She is concerned about the safety issue. Ms. Porterfield said that she has lived on Carroll Church Road since the 1980's. She said that if Strawberry Lane is not opened back up then the curves on Carroll Church Road will have to be straightened out to provide safety. She also said that there were no signs announcing the closure of Strawberry Lane.

Johnny Cash said that he is a resident of Carroll Church Road for over 50 years. He said that he has always used Strawberry Lane in his business pulling trailers. Mr. Cash said that closing Strawberry Lane and forcing the residents to pull out on Carroll Church Road is a safety issue. He said that if Strawberry Lane is not opened back up then Carroll Church Road needs work for the problem of not being able to see when pulling out into the road.

Rita Cash said that she has lived on Carroll Church Road for 26 years. The best visual way to get on Jackson Bridge Road is from Strawberry Lane and this road has always been open. Ms. Cash expressed safety concerns because of not being able to see clearly when pulling into the road. She also said that Carroll Church Road needs to be investigated for safety.

Kristy Norris said that she was raised on Carroll Church Road right in front of Strawberry Lane. She said that it is a safety issue of trying to get on Jackson Bridge Road from Carroll Church Road. Ms. Norris said that the residents were not given notice. There were no signs for the closing of Strawberry Lane.

Sam Waller voiced concern for safety with the closing of Strawberry Lane. He said that he uses Strawberry Lane instead of going back to Jackson Bridge Road because of the sight issue. Mr. Waller said that it was written in previous minutes that it would benefit Mr. Laird's family if the road was closed. He said that Mr. Laird's family is the only one that it would benefit as it would not benefit anyone else. Mr. Waller said that no one was notified of the closing. He also said that there are many people in the County who own property on both sides of the road but they do not close the roads. Strawberry Lane is used by lots of people and it is not abandoned.

Pat Franks thanked the Commission Board for allowing everyone to come and voice their opinions on Strawberry Lane. He said that he read the minutes and the statements made by Mr. Laird are not true. Mr. Franks said that Mr. Laird had stated that he wanted the road closed due to trash which is an untrue statement. He said that he travels Strawberry Lane every day and he has never seen trash or tires on it. He said that his intent and the other residents is to ask the Board to reconsider the



decision of the abandonment of Strawberry Lane before someone gets hurt on Carroll Church Road coming onto Jackson Bridge Road. Mr. Franks said that he has used Strawberry Lane since 1978. He said that he understood that the abandonment request was in the paper but not everybody reads the paper. Mr. Franks also said that there were no signs for the abandonment on either Carroll Church Road or Jackson Bridge Road stating that Strawberry Lane was closing. He stated to the Board that if this cannot be reconsidered then major back sloping is needed on Carroll Church Road and Jackson Bridge Road.

Amanda Whitman stated that she lives off of Carroll Church Road. She said that if signs were put out then they did not see them. Ms. Whitman said that she is concerned about the safety. Everyone's life in general is more important than closing down a road for trash or whatever.

Roger Roper asked if this is a done deal. Chairman Bridges said that as of today the road is closed; however there are always legalities and the powers of commissions to look at. Mr. Roper said that he does not take a paper so he was unaware of the closing. He said that he goes up and down Strawberry Lane to check on cows every day and he has never seen trash on it. Carroll Church Road entering into Jackson Bridge Road is a big safety concern. Mr. Roper said that anything that the Commission Board could do to help would be greatly appreciated.

Eric McKinney said that he has family in the area and he travels Strawberry Lane quite often. He stated to the Commission Board that Mr. Laird wanted the road abandoned because he owned both sides of the road and it had trash on it. Mr. McKinney said that he is in the process of inheriting a piece of property on a dirt road in Carnesville that has a lot of trash and a lot of high speed travel that is not used as much as Strawberry Lane is. He said if these are the reasons to close a road he will petition to close his road and probably some other landowners will too. Mr. McKinney said that the road was closed under false pretenses. He said that there are still stop signs and road name signs on both ends of Strawberry Lane so legally this is still a County road.

Debbie Franks said that she has lived on Carroll Church Road for over 50 years. She asked that the Commission Board reevaluate the way that roads are closed. Mrs. Franks said that when a road is petitioned to be closed that safety and if it is beneficial to the County and the residents should be considered. She said that if Strawberry Lane is to remain closed that is fine but something needs to be done to the banks at the end of Carroll Church Road. She also said that the hedges need to be trimmed to be able to see to pull out into the road. Mrs. Franks said that she is also concerned about the school bus coming out onto Jackson Bridge Road.

Evelyn Whitworth stated that she would like for the Commission Board to take into consideration the safety of the school bus travel. She said that it will be very dangerous for the school bus to come out of Carroll Church Road into Jackson Bridge Road. Mrs. Whitworth said that she and her family are property owners on Carroll Church Road and they have always used Strawberry Lane. She expressed her thanks



to the Commission Board for allowing them to come and speak.

Kristy Norris asked to speak again. She said that she is concerned about the high school students using Jackson Bridge Road in the afternoons when school lets out. This road is heavily traveled and it poses a safety concern.

Seth Hollingsworth stated that he has lived on Carroll Church Road for a few months. He said that it is very dangerous to try to pull into Jackson Bridge Road and his very first time of using it he was almost hit by another car. Mr. Hollingsworth said that the closing of Strawberry Lane was not a very smart decision because of the safety concern on Jackson Bridge Road.

Chairman Bridges thanked everyone for coming out. He asked Mrs. Thomas to put this on the agenda for the July 10 meeting. Dr. Macomson questioned if the County issues quit claims to property owners when a road is abandoned. Mrs. Thomas said that she will have to check with the attorney but is also depends on what kind of right of way the County had. She said the process to abandon requires two public hearings, one meeting to vote, advertise in the newspaper and the signs are posted on the land. This issue was discussed in the April work session, May regular board meeting, May planning commission meeting, June public hearing and the June regular board meeting. Mrs. Thomas said that she wished that some of tonight's discussion had been heard at any one of these meetings.

There was a question from the audience on why the signs weren't posted. Mrs. Thomas said that the signs are used over and over to ensure that the correct legal statement is included. The signs are physically put out and taken up by County personnel. Another comment from the audience was that they sat and looked straight at Strawberry Lane and there was no sign. Mrs. Thomas asked the audience members if they saw the chicken house sign. Most affirmed that they did. Mrs. Thomas said that the abandonment notice was on the same sign as the chicken house notice.

Chairman Bridges told the audience that they heard Mrs. Thomas tell them how many times this was discussed. He said that tonight's discussion has taken him by surprise. He then stated again that this will be on the July 10 regular board meeting. Chairman Bridges said that the Planning Director and Mrs. Thomas will review this issue and will report to the Commission Board. He said that he is concerned about the safety issues and possibly the need to change the process.

Pat Franks asked if Strawberry Lane could be opened up and used until the July 10 meeting. Chairman Bridges said that action has already been taken and this cannot be changed on the spur of the moment without due process. He asked everyone to be aware that the usual dates for the Commission meetings are the first Monday of each month and the last Tuesday of each month. The July meeting is scheduled for the second Monday because of the holiday. Chairman Bridges also suggested that citizens look at the County website, read the newspaper and listen to the radio for additional information. He also said that anyone can make phone calls to the Commissioners.



Commissioner Franklin asked about the right of way on Jackson Bridge Road. Mrs. Thomas said that she would have to check. Commissioner Franklin said that right of way would be needed before the County could slope it. Mrs. Thomas said that Jackson Bridge Road was put on the list for the off system safety project. The engineers from the State came in and posted the road according to their guidelines. This road will be looked at to see if anything additional can be done. Commissioner Jacques suggested signs for the intersections to help during the interim period.

B. FY18 Budget – Mrs. Thomas gave the budget resolution along with the target budget to the Commission Board. She said that action needs to be taken tonight for the budget to begin for the new fiscal year on July 1. All changes along with approvals and denials of requests are included. Mrs. Thomas said that the budget is balanced with an excess of \$3,600 which is not a lot of wiggle room. She said that the budget assumes the same millage rate as prior years. Included in this budget is a 3% salary increase for employees. The salary increase will not be effective until August 24 after employee evaluations are completed and turned in to HR along with a pay increase form.

Mrs. Thomas said that the legal level of control is at the department level. There is no excess of revenue in this budget. She said any expenditures in excess of what is budgeted will be devastating to the financial position. Mrs. Thomas commended the departments that were able to stay in budget. She said any overages in the FY18 budget will be required to come to the Commission Board prior to the expenditure for approval. This budget was based on no tax increase and putting the employees first who have gone without for a very long time.

Chairman Bridges asked the wishes of the Board. Commissioner Jacques made a motion to grant the Chairman the authority to sign the budget resolution as presented by the County Manager. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The budget 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. Manager's Report – Mrs. Thomas said that she will begin working on the reports that are due to the Tax Commissioner for the Tax Digest. She said that the target date for the County is August 1 although the State does allow until September 1. Mrs. Thomas asked that the July work session be moved to July 31 instead of July 25 to move the work session closer to the August regular meeting. She made this request so that all information could be given to the Tax Commissioner on August 1. Also, if public hearings are needed for what the State considers a millage increase due to inflationary growth this would give the needed time. There was no opposition from the Commission Board to move the work session to July 31. Mrs. Thomas asked permission to move the September meeting to September 11 instead of September 4 because of the Labor Day holiday. There was no opposition to this request.

Mrs. Thomas said that the lease for State Probation has been received. She has



forwarded to the county attorney for review. Pending the approval by the attorney this will be presented at the next board meeting. A while back the County applied for a Georgia Infrastructure Bank Grant for the Ross Place application. Mrs. Thomas thanked John Phillips for his work on the grant although Franklin County was not awarded it. She said that Mr. Phillips asked for feedback on why the County was not competitive and this will help with future applications.

Mrs. Thomas gave an update on the FCC process by stating that she will have a conference call later this week to discuss alternatives to the broadcaster support. She has been unable to get any response from the broadcasters other than from 11Alive. This call will hopefully provide guidance on how to proceed with or without the support of the broadcasters.

GMRC will facilitate the Jail Subcommittee meetings. The first meeting is July 13. Each member has been given an opportunity to tour the jail if they haven't already done so. Mrs. Thomas thanked Captain Sisk, Jail Administrator for being willing to do the small group tours. Chairman Bridges clarified if the members were supposed to contact Captain Sisk. Mrs. Thomas said no, the tours have been arranged by the clerk.

D. Announcements –

Commissioner Jacques commended the staff for the tremendous job on the budget presentation.

Commissioner Wester gave an update on the June IBA meeting. He said that there is interest from a new industry to come into the County. At this time it is unclear whether it will locate in the new industrial park in Carnesville or if it will locate near Lavonia. To start off with it will employ eight to 10 with a possibility of growth.

An update for the energy facility was also given by Commissioner Wester. He said that the IBA Director Frank Ginn said that things are moving forward although an extension was granted to them by the State. Commissioner Wester said that along with the facility in Franklin County, the one in Madison County is moving forward as well. Possible water sales discussions have taken place between Mr. Ginn and Mrs. Thomas for the facility in Madison County.

Commissioner Wester thanked the constitutional officers and department heads for their diligent work for staying within their budgets. He said that this is his first year since becoming a Commissioner where putting money into reserves was considered. Commissioner Wester expressed his thanks to Mrs. Thomas and everyone who worked on this.

Commissioner Jacques asked the status of the sewer project. Mrs. Thomas said revised comments have been sent in to the USDA. She said that there was a meeting a little over two weeks ago with the engineer from USDA. The USDA engineer would not budge on an issue that Mrs. Thomas disagreed with him about so the County has sent in revisions. She said that the expectation is to advertise next week with the bid



submission due in August.

There was no further discussion or announcements. Chairman Bridges adjourned the work session at 7:05 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