



"You Are Why We Are Here"

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 6, 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
Mark Berryman, WLHR*

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

Item 1: **Call meeting to order** – *Chairman Bridges called the November regular board meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.*

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

Item 3: **Approval of Minutes:**

*October 2, 2017 regular board meeting
October 24, 2017 work session*

*Chairman Bridges said the October meeting minutes were sent to the Commissioners for review. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Franklin made the motion to approve the minutes. 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 Wester, Commissioner Jacques, Commissioner Franklin and Dr. Macomson.*

Item 4: **Items for discussion:**

A. **Public Comment** – *Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to speak in public comment, if so to come forward and state their name for the record. **Mike Kitchens** came forward to speak. He said his concern is the nulla bona of the*



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properties discussed previously by Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin. Mr. Kitchens said he has spent three years trying to buy a lot in Brittany Harbor East. He contacted the owners for a regular sale and found out they were deceased after receiving an email from their son. The son said he is not interested in the property and is not going to pay the taxes to get the land transferred so it can be sold and he is not going to pay the association fees to Brittany Harbor. Mr. Kitchens said Mr. Martin was given a copy of this correspondence. The property came up at a tax sale last month and he was unable to attend because of a family death. Mr. Kitchens stated that he still wants to buy this property. Chairman Bridges said if the delinquent tax resolution is passed the properties can still be sold and is sure that something can be worked out for Mr. Kitchens to achieve the purchase.

B. Board Appointments –

*1. **DFCS** – Mrs. Thomas said the open position for the Department of Family and Children's Services was advertised in the newspaper as well as on the County's website. The lone applicant is Ms. Peggy Berryman who meets all the requirements and qualifications. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to reappoint Peggy Berryman to the DFCS Board. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to reappoint Ms. Berryman. Dr. Macomson made the motion to reappoint Ms. Berryman. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Jacques seconded the motion. Dr. Macomson stated that Ms. Berryman is an excellent choice for this position. She was a long term employee of the school system. Chairman Bridges echoed the sentiment and thanked her for applying for the position. 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.*

*2. **Library** – Mrs. Thomas said Debbie Flowers is currently serving on the Library Board and is interested in continuing. The application from Ms. Flowers is the only one received for the position. Mrs. Thomas gave the recommendation to reappoint Ms. Flowers to the Library Board. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to reappoint Debbie Flowers to the Library Board. Commissioner Wester made the motion to reappoint Ms. Flowers. 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. Chairman Bridges conveyed his thanks for Ms. Flowers for serving on the Library Board.*

C. Qualifying Fees – Mrs. Thomas said information from the Elections Superintendent was given at the work session that qualifying fees need to be determined for advertisement in January 2018 for two Board of Commissioners positions and three Board of Education positions. A resolution was provided electronically to the Commissioners showing that the qualifying fees are on the base amount of the position. Mrs. Thomas said information was given showing what the



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qualifying fees would be for 3%, 4% and 5%.

Mrs. Thomas said the vote would be needed by the December meeting for advertisement in January. Dr. Macomson asked what the customary amount is, 3% or more. Mrs. Thomas said typically 3% is what has been used in Franklin County. Dr. Macomson asked what the pros and cons are of raising the qualifying fees. Mrs. Thomas said raising the amount would generate more money. The 2018 races are partisan races so 50% of the fees would go to the party and 50% to the County. No increase in the qualifying fee is to encourage more people to run for the positions. Commissioner Jacques stated the more people running for the positions, the more revenue comes in.

Mrs. Thomas said her recommendation would be to leave it at 3% to not cause harm for anyone desiring to run. Chairman Bridges said he has no problem leaving it at 3%. Commissioner Franklin said one or two percent was not going to generate a whole lot of money, just leave like it is. Dr. Macomson stated he did not see any reason to change it. Commissioner Jacques agreed. Commissioner Wester said he did not want to raise the fees either.

*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to leave the qualifying fee at 3% of the base salary. Commissioner Franklin made the motion. 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, Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Franklin and Dr. Macomson.*

*D. **Delinquent Taxes** – Chairman Bridges said the delinquent taxes item was presented by Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin at the work session. The County Attorney reviewed this and the resolution has been drawn up with the objective to get these properties off the tax base. Mrs. Thomas said the presentation from Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin and Mr. Gabe Martin gave a valid point that the taxes are owed on these properties but the County continues to incur expenses each time the properties are presented at a tax sale. The resolution was drafted by the County Attorney and Tax Commissioner Martin provided the oath of office that certifies he has done everything in his power to sale these properties.*

Mrs. Thomas said it makes sense to continue with this process and it is her understanding that if someone wants to buy any of these properties they can be put back on the tax base and be sold. These properties are not being ignored; the County is only ceasing the collection efforts and expenditures. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from Tax Commissioner Martin and Mrs. Thomas. Dr. Macomson made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. Commissioner Wester asked Tax Commissioner Martin if this would have any effect on what Mr. Kitchens wants to do as far as purchasing a property. Tax Commissioner Martin said if that particular piece of property is on the list and Mr. Kitchens expresses interest in purchasing it then it



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would be presented at another tax sale. Commissioner Jacques thanked Tax Commissioner Martin for his answer as he had the same question. 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.

E. Firefighters Insurance – Mrs. Thomas said that State legislation has mandated that counties and cities provide supplemental insurance to volunteer and full time firefighters who meet certain qualifications. The choice for insurance coverage is limited with very few companies providing coverage but ACCG (Association County Commissioners of Georgia) is one of the choices. The County also had the coverage bid out with another company and both quotes have been received. Mrs. Thomas said if the County chooses to go with ACCG the information was scheduled to be in by December 1 but an extension was asked for and granted to December 5 so this could be considered at the December 4 meeting. ACCG had the lower price with \$28,000 per year along with a three year price guarantee.

Mrs. Thomas said she would recommend for the County to go with ACCG and for the County to pay for the insurance but work it into the agreements with the fire departments. Chairman Bridges told the Commissioners to look over this information and be prepared to vote at the December 4 meeting. Dr. Macomson questioned the coverage type. Mrs. Thomas said this is only a supplemental cancer policy with coverage for missing salary and medical expenses if cancer is deemed to be a direct correspondence to their work as a firefighter. Commissioner Jacques stated the original legislation was to be funded by the State but ultimately was an unfunded mandate pushed to the County. He said he is supportive of the work the firefighters do but this is one in a long line of unfunded mandates handed down to the cities and counties by the State.

F. Jail Subcommittee discussion – Chairman Bridges said the jail report was presented at the work session. He asked Mrs. Thomas to go over this item further. Mrs. Thomas said after the jail report was presented it was the task of the Commissioners and staff to determine funding options. She said the funding information was presented to the Jail Subcommittee members but the question remains of how to finance the jail. Mrs. Thomas said there are no reserves of cash in the County and this is faced each year and is not an option for financing. There is a jail fund that is a restricted account and can be used for constructing, operating, staffing or contracting for the facility. The current balance in the jail account is approximately \$629,000. \$75,000 of the \$629,000 is included in the 2018 budget for operations. Another \$200,000 of the \$629,000 is budgeted for staffing, operations and cost overruns. The jail account is not a viable option for financing for the jail construction as this account needs to remain for operational needs.

Mrs. Thomas said the SPLOST III still has \$98,000 that is set aside for public safety. SPLOST IV has no funds left for public safety although there is still money left for the water project and recreation. SPLOST V is currently being collected and only



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part was forward funded. Mrs. Thomas said SPLOST V is coming in monthly and the first collections go to pay back the forward funding, the second part goes to pay for the hospital debt and the third part is split across all the categories. \$200,000 is typically included in SPLOST to go to public safety for patrol cars over the six year period of collections. In SPLOST V the amount set aside for public buildings is 1.4 million dollars with \$100,000 allocated for technology and infrastructure. \$80,000 was used recently for the purchase of the office building for elections.

Mrs. Thomas said in the next few months other capital projects need to be identified as there are repairs that have to be done at the courthouse over the six year period as well as other maintenance. She said this is something that has to be looked at by staff and the Commissioners. If the money is needed before collections the voters have approved borrowing but it has to be in the order laid out. In her research Mrs. Thomas stated she has not been able to find any grants for jails. It is a required expenditure but there are no grants for renovations or new construction for jails. Mrs. Thomas said it is unknown if there are available grants for alternatives to jails and this is something to be worked on.

The third option for financing is long term indebtedness. Mrs. Thomas said there are only four ways a county can go into debt. Revenue debt is not applicable because jails do not generate money. Authority debt is another way for indebtedness but the jail does not have an authority. Mrs. Thomas said there is a capital lease purchase financing but she was told previously it is not applicable to jails. During the jail subcommittee meetings it was mentioned that this could be a possibility and she will do more research on this.

Mrs. Thomas said the last option is general obligation debt which requires voter approval. This can only be on the ballot during a general election. The next general election is May 22, 2018 with the information required to be at KSU (Kennesaw State University) by March 1, 2018. If a referendum fails on general obligation debt there are not any alternative options for five years. Mrs. Thomas said if long term debt is the chosen path with an estimated 4 million dollar loan and a 4% closing cost and 5.25% interest the annual debt service payment for a 30 year note would be about \$275,000 per year or half a mill increase in taxes. The operational costs are not included in the \$275,000 only the debt service payment. Mrs. Thomas said she would reach out to GMRC for help with alternative financing for the jail project. Chairman Bridges said this is being studied carefully and solutions are being sought for the jail.

G. Employee Recognition Program – *Mrs. Thomas said initially she wanted to do the employee recognition program in November but this will be too rushed. After meeting with an employee recognition company Mrs. Thomas stated there needs to be a way to distinguish between compensation and recognition. She does want to do an employee recognition program but she does not want it to be extra compensation. She would recommend recognizing every employee who has been employed with the County for five years along the increments of ten, fifteen, twenty, etc. There will need to be a catch up year for all of these employees. She asked the*



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*Commissioners to table this discussion until next month so she can present better information on a true employee recognition program. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to table this until next month. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to table the employee recognition program discussion until December. 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, Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Jacques and Dr. Macomson.*

*H. **Executive Session** – litigation – Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to close the regular session and go into executive session. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to go out of regular session and into executive session for the purpose of discussion of litigation. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester 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, Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Wester and Commissioner Jacques. The regular session closed at 6:40 p.m.*

*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to close 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 and as part and parcel of the motion to give the Chairman the authority to sign the closed meeting affidavit in which litigation 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 Jacques, Chairman Bridges, Dr. Macomson and Commissioner Franklin. The regular resumed at 6:55 p.m.*

I. Announcements

Mrs. Thomas reminded everyone of the ACCG legislative meeting to be held on November 17 at Emmanuel College. She thanked Emmanuel College for hosting the event for Franklin County. Chairman Bridges said the meeting will be from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and is a very important meeting. He expressed his appreciation for Emmanuel College hosting the event.

*There were no further announcements. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to adjourn. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester 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, Chairman Bridges, Dr. Macomson and Commissioner Franklin. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.*



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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