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**FRANKLIN COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
March 27, 2018  
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:** **Call Meeting to Order** – *Chairman Bridges called the March work session to order. He expressed his appreciation for those in attendance.*

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

**Item 3:** **Items for discussion:**

A. **Public Comment** – *There was no public comment.*

B. **Board, Department & Elected Official Presentations** –

**Doug Kidd**, Chairman of the Elections Board came forward to speak. He said that he and the other members of the Elections Board are there to answer questions as well as to make a request. The other members of the Elections Board in attendance were Sherry McDonald, Roman Strickland and Alice Black. Mr. Kidd requested the Commission Board consider an increase in pay for the Elections Supervisor Gina Chappellear. He said the County is perhaps in jeopardy of losing Ms. Chappellear to another county for another job unless an increase is given. He asked that Ms. Chappellear be increased from roughly \$35,000 per year to \$40,000 per year. Mr. Kidd said Ms. Chappellear does have a college degree and he does not think a replacement would come in at the wage she is now making.

Mr. Kidd said Ms. Chappellear came to work in 2014. In 2015 the precincts were



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*consolidated with no major problems and the State did not have to become involved in this process due to the education given to the voters by Ms. Chappelear. Mr. Kidd said Ms. Chappelear performs her duties without a working board, she only has one part-time person to help. Some of Ms. Chappelear's duties are the training of the poll workers and updates of the County's website. Mr. Kidd said Ms. Chappelear does a good job of troubleshooting and keeping everything going on election days without having to contact the State for assistance.*

*The Elections Board surveyed the surrounding counties for comparison of wages paid to their elections supervisor. Mr. Kidd said Banks County pays \$40,000 annually; Hart County pays \$39,000 annually, Madison County pays \$40,000, Rabun County pays \$40,000 and Stephens County pays \$38,000. Butts County in middle Georgia with similar registered voters pays \$44,000 annually with four part-time positions. Mr. Kidd said similar counties in the area pay more than Franklin County pays. He said Ms. Chappelear has done a good job up to this point and the State is looking at changing the voting system for possible paper ballots or electronic voting with a paper receipt.*

***Chairman Bridges** asked if this request is for the new budget that will start in July. Mr. Kidd said July should probably work. **Sherry McDonald** said Ms. Chappelear also does the language on the voting machines which saves the County thousands of dollars. This has to be done every voting cycle. Ms. McDonald said a lot of the counties pay someone to come from Kennesaw and put the language on the machines but Ms. Chappelear does this for Franklin County.*

***Mrs. Thomas** clarified that Ms. Chappelear is the website administrator for all of the County. The domain name is paid for but the updates are handled mainly by Ms. Chappelear. Mrs. Thomas said on election nights it is amazing how well Ms. Chappelear and the Elections Board work together in getting the results so fast. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Kidd for coming before the Commission Board.*

***Judge Ken Eavenson** spoke next and gave the Commission Board a handout showing the status of revenues for the Probate Court. He said the revenue collections and the budget is on track for where it should be for this time of the year. There have been some mandated increases and this has been taken care of in the budget. Judge Eavenson explained adding a technology fee to the cases in Probate Court and suggested that this may need to be considered in the future. He presented examples from Echols County and Johnson County. The technology fee would go toward computer hardware and software purchases, or lease, maintenance and installation of computer hardware and/or purchase, lease maintenance and installation of imaging, scanning, facsimile, communications, projection and printing equipment and software. If a technology fee is adopted it would be added as a surcharge.*

***Commissioner Jacques** questioned Judge Eavenson if this would require additional local legislation to impose the fee. Judge Eavenson said this fee is usually done by legislation through the State. He said this has to be passed by legislation and it*



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*has to be specific of where the money will be spent and who will be accountable for it.*

*Judge Eavenson asked the Commission Board to consider zoning regulations for private burial cemeteries and burial spots. He said if the County does not have some type of zoning regulation there is nothing that can be done to keep anyone from burying anyone, anywhere on their property. Judge Eavenson suggested that setbacks and acreage size be considered. He said the Probate Court is seeing a lot more of private burials on properties. He is also receiving more inquires by phone into the private property burials. **Mrs. Thomas** said the County does have a five-acre minimum but there is no monitoring. She asked Judge Eavenson if his office is notified of private burials. Judge Eavenson said the only time his office is notified is if a burial transit permit is issued which is required for cremation or out of state transportation of a body.*

***Chairman Bridges** said although the County does have zoning that this may need to be looked at again. Mrs. Thomas said the monitoring and permitting may need to be looked at. **Mr. Samuels** said theoretically this could be made a conditional use in all the districts. Mrs. Thomas said there would have to be a special process for this. **Dr. Macomson** said there are a lot of private property burials all over the County. Judge Eavenson said there was a period of time where you did not see a lot of private property burials but this is beginning to change. He directed the Commission Board to the last page of the handout given them concerning a person's rights and what does not have to be done when someone passes. Judge Eavenson said private property burials have an everlasting effect on the property and potentially the adjoining property. Mrs. Thomas asked if there is a requirement to disclose there is a burial ground on the property if selling. Mr. Samuels answered this would be part of the due diligence and there are State laws dealing with graveyards on private property.*

*Judge Eavenson said in 2013 a collections agency was used for past due citations. He quit using this company because they were not collecting and they had a lot of cases that should not have been in collections. Judge Eavenson said there are multiple cases that are more of a petty offense that stay within the court jurisdiction that are not getting paid, especially the out of state ones. At this time Judge Eavenson is talking with three collection agencies for the best price. He will also let Mrs. Thomas look over this before a decision is made for which agency to use. There are also plans for reform most likely for fines paid and cash bonds. Certain people who would normally go to jail may be able to post a cash bond and be issued a citation. Judge Eavenson said this may take care of some of the housing jail problems. He also informed the Commissioners that the Assistant Magistrate Court Judge helps with the court days. More court days may have to be added if the numbers continue to increase although Judge Eavenson said he is trying to avoid this to keep the costs from going up. He also stated that cases are seldom transferred to Superior Court so they are not backlogging the court system.*

***C. Plumbing Standards Ordinance – 2<sup>nd</sup> reading** – Mrs. Thomas introduced the Plumbing Standards Ordinance for the second reading. She said there*



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have not been comments made or any changes requested. The request and recommendation from Mrs. Thomas is for the Plumbing Standards Ordinance to be approved at the regular board meeting in April. Chairman Bridges told the Commissioners to look over the ordinance and be prepared to make a decision at Monday night's meeting.

**D. 2018 LMIG Bid Results** – Mrs. Thomas said the 2018 LMIG bid opening was held on March 22. Bids were received from four companies with the low bid of \$694,686.92 from Stratton & Sons. The bid from Stratton & Sons was approximately \$50,000 lower than the next closest bid. Mrs. Thomas recommended to move forward with the bid from Stratton & Sons. Franklin County will receive \$551,000 from GDOT as part of the LMIG grant. The match from the County will be \$143,000. Mrs. Thomas said this year's LMIG projects include a lot of road patching. Chairman Bridges said for the Commissioners to look over the list and be prepared to vote Monday night.

**E. Recreation Board opening** – Chairman Bridges said there are two openings on the Recreation Board. He asked Mrs. Thomas to explain this item further. Mrs. Thomas said the Recreation Director Randall Gailey approached one of our Commissioners and stated there are two current openings on their Board. This information was verified by a phone conversation between Mrs. Evans and the Recreation Chairman Kenneth Roach. The resignations were from Mariette Farrow and Bernard Roebuck. Mrs. Thomas said these resignations took place last year and the Commission Board was not made aware of this. She said this will be advertised and the applications on file for less than one year will be considered also. The applications will be taken through April 20 with the applicants' names being presented to the Commissioners. The Recreation Board has not met so far this year so the meeting minutes from last year will have to be relied upon for the information. Chairman Bridges questioned if the Recreation Board is scheduled to meet monthly. Mrs. Thomas said there is not a requirement for the Recreation Board like there is for the Commissioners.

**F. Meadow Brook Lane** – Chairman Bridges asked Commissioner Wester to go over the Meadow Brook Lane item. Commissioner Wester said he received phone calls from two residents of Meadow Brook Lane. The road is not in bad shape as the County does a good job maintaining it. These residents questioned the possibility of getting Meadow Brook Lane paved because of a large hill that is hard to get up and down. Commissioner Wester said he drove Meadow Brook Lane and the hill has been graded down to rock. Chairman Bridges said this would be noted at the County office. Mrs. Thomas said additional right of way would be needed for a part of the road.

**G. Impact of State of Georgia Legislation 2018** – Chairman Bridges said this has been watched closely by the Commissioners. He asked Commissioner Jacques to comment further on this item. Commissioner Jacques said he wanted to bring this to everyone's attention and to commend his colleagues for their efforts in contacting the senators and representatives. He said Chairman Bridges and Commissioner Franklin went to a meeting in Atlanta and personally expressed what he will be talking about.



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*Commissioner Jacques said the Elections Board referenced a change to the voting process. He said if there is a change it will be an unfunded mandate to the County. Commissioner Jacques stated if there is a change it should be funded by the State who would be mandating the change and should not be pushed back onto the counties and cities.*

*Senate Bill 458 also referencing House Bill 373 was discussed by Commissioner Jacques. This is a broadening of the qualifications for conservation (CUVA) designation. Commissioner Jacques said this will lessen the tax burden from some and shift the tax burden onto others. The Commission Board needs to be aware that fewer and fewer people will be sharing the tax burden.*

*House Bill 327 relating to reforming TAVT was transitioned in 2012. Commissioner Jacques said since that time, Franklin County has lost over \$250,000 per year. Over half the counties in the State of Georgia have lost revenue. Commissioner Jacques said the counties used this tax for funding. \$250,000 per year is a significant amount of money especially since the State has gained 500 million dollars since the start of TAVT. He said the Senate version of this bill will pretty much bring the counties back to where they were by eliminating what the House has proposed.*

*Commissioner Jacques went over adverse legislation and the impact on Franklin County. There has been a reduction in the 911 collections and a mandate for the County to provide insurance for firefighters. Commissioner Jacques said he was not discussing the merit of the particular item, only the adverse impact to the County. The State is putting unfunded mandates on counties with the only available remedy to the counties is to raise taxes. There was a redirection of truck taxes from Franklin County via legislation that causes \$170,000 to be lost annually. The County has lost a three-cent sales tax on large industries that was removed by the State. Gas and diesel tax has been removed from County owned vehicles and the County now has to pay. The County also receives a TSPLOST penalty based on the LMIG funding. The GATES card also eliminates sales taxes in SPLOST, ESPLOST and LOST.*

*Chairman Bridges said he would like to see more citizen involvement. He said he is watching House Bill 887. The County wants wireless but the County does need to have controls in place. Chairman Bridges said he stays in contact with Senator John Wilkinson who represents Franklin County well. He said the unfunded mandates do cause a hardship to the County funds. Commissioner Jacques said the County is now looking at a jail. He said the shortfall could be negated by the restoration of some of the unfunded mandates on Franklin County.*

*Commissioner Wester said this was an impact in 2014 when taxes were raised. He said this was directly related to unfunded mandates and the County was backed into a corner with no other options. Commissioner Jacques said this was just to maintain the same level of revenue. He said a report that was commissioned by the State of Georgia and put together by Georgia State University on the impacts of TAVT*



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showing 100 of the 159 counties in Georgia have experienced revenue loss. Chairman Bridges said ACCG has a good group that keeps the Commissioners informed and they fight for the counties in Georgia. Commissioner Jacques said if this continues there should be a line on the tax bill stating unfunded mandates or redirection of funds.

**H. Manager's Report** – Mrs. Thomas gave a handout for the FY19 budget with a draft calendar for the budget cycle. One extra meeting may need to be held for a public hearing for the budget on June 14 which should align with the Planning Commission meeting so it could be held at 5:30 p.m. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commissioners to think about their goals and objectives for the County. Property tax will have to be assessed whether to keep the millage rate the same.

On the expense side Mrs. Thomas said she would like for the employees to be given COLAs equal to the amount the State gives. Mrs. Thomas said another priority that she would ask for is an increase in the gravel budget for roads. \$161,000 was cut in FY16 from the gravel budget and to date only \$25,000 has been added back. At this time there are only nine men working the roads instead of 11. The savings from the two positions has been used for gravel. At some point these positions will need to be filled. Other priorities are technology and maintenance upgrades along with review of staffing. Look at possibility adding a half or full staff position to maintenance to help with the jail. Possible ways to pay for this position would be to use money from the Jail Fund. Mrs. Thomas said at the high-level assumption the budget process will start 2.4 million in the whole. Jail debt service has been included in the 2.4 million along with operations and this assumes the jail referendum passes.

Mrs. Thomas said Franklin County has applied for several water infrastructure grants. The Economic Development grant has made it through the pre-application process and Franklin County has been asked to submit a complete application. The ARC grant has moved from pre-application into application and is waiting now on OneGeorgia. A public hearing was held Tuesday morning as part of the GEFA process with one person in attendance. Utility billing was transferred from the old system to the new system this week. Bills will be processed on the new system. Mrs. Thomas said eventually staff and customers will appreciate the move. The sewer project was started the first week of March.

The "Pie in the Face" contest will end this Thursday with someone being the receipt. Mrs. Thomas expressed her appreciation for the participation in the contest. She said there has been a lot of back and forth talk. As of today, the \$150 mark has been passed for donations. This is something big to the seniors for their projects. Mrs. Thomas said everyone has until 11 on Thursday morning to turn all money in. She said the tickets to throw the pie are \$1 each. The tickets will all go into a hat and the one drawn is the winner to throw the pie. The one with the most money in their jar is the one who will get the pie in the face.

**I. Executive Session** – Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to go into executive session. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to go into executive session



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*for the purpose to discuss litigation. 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 Franklin, Dr. Macomson, Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Jacques and Commissioner Wester. The work session closed at 6:55 p.m.*

*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to close the executive session and reopen the work session. Commissioner Jacques made the motion to close the executive session and reopen the work session and as part of the motion grant the Chairman the authorization to sign the closed meeting affidavit of which litigation was discussed. 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. The work session resumed at 7:50 p.m.*

***J. Announcements:***

*Mrs. Thomas reminded everyone to contribute to the funds for the “Pie in the Face” contest and to purchase the raffle tickets to throw the pie.*

*Chairman Bridges reminded everyone of the upcoming public hearing and regular board meeting on Monday. He thanked Shane Scoggins of the Franklin County Citizen for attending the meetings and keeping the public informed.*

*There was no further discussion. Chairman Bridges adjourned the work session at 7:55 p.m.*



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Signed on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2018

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*Chairman J. Thomas Bridges*

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*Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner*

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*Dr. Jason Macomson, District 2 Commissioner*

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*Jeff Jacques, District 3 Commissioner*

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*Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner*

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*Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk*