



You Are Why We Are Here

FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
April 24, 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

Item 1: **Call Meeting to Order** – Chairman Bridges called the April work session to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Item 2: **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance** – Commissioner Wester 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. **Riverbend Estates** – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone was present to speak on the Riverbend Estates item. Mrs. Thomas told Chairman Bridges this was requested to be placed on the agenda and the person who requested it is not present. Chairman Bridges stated this could be discussed at a later time if the citizen so desired.

C. **Library Board** – Chairman Bridges welcomed Bonnie Bardy of the Library Board and asked her to come forward. Mrs. Bardy thanked the Commissioners for the help that was received this past year for the library. The Library Board is thankful of the support from Franklin County and they are good stewards of the money given to them. She said due to the retirement of her husband she has personally seen the benefit of the Library to the senior citizens and a lot of the “Friends of the Library” are senior citizens. The Athens Regional Library system of which the Royston and the Lavonia libraries are a part of is the number one library system in the State of Georgia. The Royston Library was cited because of the Ty Cobb statue and renovations.



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Mrs. Bardy said there are more needs of the Library and the support is greatly appreciated as it allows for a well-rounded array of programs and services for the residents. In the past year the Library provided over 141 programs for children and teens. A Vibrant Communities grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts brought quality arts programming to the County through the Library. Mrs. Bardy said this grant provided a print making shop, pottery and a one-act play that was directed by Vivian Young.

Wi-fi usage increased by over 50% at the Royston location and 100% at the Lavonia location. Mrs. Bardy said the residents of Franklin County are discovering the local library is the place for fast and free Internet. Both libraries have access to a printer, scanner and technology instruction. Programs, meeting room space and materials are also provided as a resource for Franklin County residents.

Mrs. Bardy gave a handout to the Commissioners providing the FY2017 numbers for public computers, door count, circulation and youth programs broken down by location. She stated that the attendance for youth attendance is fantastic, it is continuing to go up in Royston and in Lavonia. Mrs. Bardy stated there is an untapped potential in Lavonia and a community effort is needed to get kids reading in the summer.

For FY2019 the Library Board requests an increase of \$2,711. Mrs. Bardy said this amount combined with the requested increase to the Franklin County Board of Education is needed for a mandatory increase to the Teacher's Retirement System of Georgia for the full-time staff, a 2% cost of living increase for the staff and for three additional staff hours at the Royston Library. The three additional staff hours is to ensure two staff members are in the building instead of one person working alone. She thanked the Commissioners for their time and consideration.

D. Tax Levy Resolution for the Board of Education – Chairman Bridges said a vote is not usually taken at a work session but it was needed to accommodate the time table for the Board of Education. He then asked Wayne Randall, Superintendent of Franklin County Schools if he would like to present discussion before action is taken. Mr. Randall asked the attorney for the Board of Education, Cory Kirby of the law firm Harben, Hartley and Hawkins to explain the request. Mr. Kirby said this is a very similar document that was signed by the Board of Commissioners in 2012 and basically says that the Commissioners will do what they are already required by law to do. If the Board of Education's SPLOST share is not sufficient to pay for the principal or principal and interest payments over the five-year period then the Board of Education will recommend to the Board of Commissioners a bond millage. Then the Board of Commissioners as they always do will levy it. Mr. Kirby said the Board of Education is a recommending authority but the Board of Commissioners is a levying authority for collections.

Mr. Kirby said this is a new bond issue that is based on a vote that took place in March of 2016. The voters approved a one percent sales tax for various capital outlay



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projects and as part of this vote the voters authorized the Board of Education to issue some general obligation debt. Mr. Kirby said the Board of Education has been very conservative in its estimations of the amount of principal based on the amount of anticipated SPLOST monies. Chairman Bridges questioned the need for the vote tonight instead of at the regular board meeting. Mr. Kirby said the reason for the request is the closing is taking place in two days. He stated the Board of Education is very fortunate that a private bank was willing to purchase the bonds but this is the reason for the closing date. He thanked the Commission Board for agreeing to vote on this item at a work session.

*Chairman Bridges asked for a motion for this item. Dr. Macomson made the motion to adopt the tax levy resolution for the Board of Education. 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 Franklin, Dr. Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Jacques and Chairman Bridges.*

***E. Project Updates** – Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give the project updates.*

*1. **Sewer update** – Mrs. Thomas said the sewer project is in progress and the impending bond resolution needs to be executed. She presented an Interim Bond Resolution for the construction loan and the Bond Resolution and recommended and asked for the Commissioners to approve these two items tonight. After the approval the bond validation will be done and the project can then proceed. The project was started in March although the weather has hindered progress. Mrs. Thomas said the amount to be borrowed is 2.2 million from USDA with a 1.2 million in grant funds. A 2.2 million interim construction loan will be obtained from Northeast Georgia Bank. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from Mrs. Thomas. Commissioner Wester made the motion to move forward with the bond resolution. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. Commissioner Wester said this is expected to bring more business into Franklin County. Chairman Bridges said it is a big step for Franklin County. 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.*

*2. **Water update** – Mrs. Thomas announced that as of April the water customers now have the opportunity to make online payments. There is a link on the County's website at www.franklincountyga.gov with an icon to make water payments. Mrs. Thomas said there is a fee associated with the payment that does not come back to Franklin County but pays the processing company. She said it is cheaper to make the payment online than to call the office and make the payment*

***F. Manager's Report** – Mrs. Thomas said there are two open positions on the*



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Recreation Board. Two members resigned last year creating two openings that the Commission Board was not aware of until recently. These openings were advertised on the County website as well as in the Franklin County Citizen. Mrs. Thomas told the Commissioners that the County Clerk compiled a list of applications received within the timeframe of one year for review. She asked the Commissioners to review the applications and vote at the May regular board meeting. Chairman Bridges asked Dr. Macomson and Commissioner Wester to be a subcommittee and make recommendations for the two open Recreation Board positions.

Mrs. Thomas said the County has weathered its fair share of health insurance costs and expenses and renewals are currently being worked on with the broker. She said she plans to present more information on the health renewal and plan at the May regular board meeting. All of the ancillary coverage and supplemental insurance were due for renewals this year and there may be slight increases. With the uneasiness of health insurance Mrs. Thomas said it is important to stay with the same carrier to give the employees some sense of security.

The current health insurance plans will no longer be offered. Mrs. Thomas said the replacement plan is identical to what is going away. She said looking at a comparable product to what the County now offers the starting point is a 12% increase. Mrs. Thomas said her goal is to keep the increase at \$100,000 which would be about an 8% increase. Negotiations will take place between the insurance carrier, the broker and the County. Mrs. Thomas said plan modifications will also have to be looked at. The County offers two plans, a base plan and a buy-up plan. The base plan is a high deductible with a health savings account. The buy-up is a traditional co-pay plan.

Mrs. Thomas said Franklin County's loss ratio run of around 80% is far better than what it was for the past five years. The loss ratio for the buy-up co-pay plan is 109%. The base plan with the high deductible health savings account has a loss ratio of 45%. Mrs. Thomas said this shows a separation and the sicker employees are driving the costs up primarily with prescription drug costs. The County has some employees with ongoing health issues with costs ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000 per year. Mrs. Thomas said decisions will have to be made regarding this.

One component for consideration is to pre-fund the health savings accounts of some employees. Mrs. Thomas said she would not recommend doing this for every employee but maybe to pre-fund the year for the employees with tenure of over five years. This might help the employees to be able to make better health decisions for themselves as well as for the County. This is currently being looked at with the broker before a presentation is made to the Commissioners. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commissioners to please give her comments and concerns so they can be addressed.

As of this afternoon the FCC Market Modification petitions have been filed. Mrs. Thomas said the online filing system has a technical glitch and she has been unable to file electronically but the petitions are in the mail. This is the start of the process and



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Franklin County is now waiting on the FCC. At some point during this process there will be a comment period which will be opened up for citizen comments.

Mrs. Thomas said if the Atlanta stations do not buy into this then the County may not be able to move forward. Franklin County has done their part and the petition is filed. Chairman Bridges thanked Mrs. Thomas for her time and efforts for this petition for the citizens. Mrs. Thomas said she will share her information with the other counties for their filings.

G. Announcements

Chairman Bridges said he would like for the citizens to have more information on the jail situation. He said Shane Scoggins of the Franklin County Citizen has done a great job on his articles with the recommendations from the Jail Subcommittee. The County is looking at 4 million dollars to build the pods. The maintenance and staffing information needs to come from Sheriff Stevie Thomas.

Commissioner Wester said his concern is to not wait too long for the information to go to the citizens. Early voting starts on April 30 and the voters need to be educated before casting their votes. The numbers need to be given to the public so they can ask questions and be prepared to vote. Commissioner Jacques said the total cost and how it relates to millage and how it will affect them personally needs to be given to the voters. He stated that this needs to be given out before the first vote is cast.

Dr. Macomson stated he is in favor of a public meeting to give citizens a chance to ask questions or clear up any issues before voting on it. Commissioner Wester said he would be in favor of a public meeting next week. He said he did not want people going to vote and then saying they did not know what they were voting on. Mrs. Thomas cautioned that any meeting would just need to be informational. Commissioner Wester said he totally agrees with that but he thinks the information needs to be out there for the voters for them to make an educated decision. Mrs. Thomas said she has shared her numbers with Sheriff Thomas and she will gladly share them with the Commissioners and anyone else. She will use these numbers until Sheriff Thomas gives her an update.

Chairman Bridges stated all the Commissioners are in agreement that information needs to be passed along to the public to make a wise decision. He said he does not want the Commissioners to give figures out and then have to change them. Chairman Bridges suggested having a meeting on April 30 and invite the Sheriff to attend. Commissioner Jacques said it is important to get the information out. After discussion it was decided to have a called meeting for information on the jail. Mrs. Thomas said a called meeting would require an agenda but a town hall meeting would not require a quorum. Commissioner Jacques said it didn't matter but he would prefer a formal meeting with documented minutes but he would yield to his colleagues. Chairman Bridges said it would be a wise step to document the meeting. Dr. Macomson asked for the Jail Subcommittee to be invited also.



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Commissioner Franklin expressed thanks to the Water Department. He said they helped find someone who was getting water and not paying for it.

Commissioner Wester commended the Road Department for their work especially on the dirt roads. He said they have done a good job with the roads in between the rains.

Commissioner Jacques expressed his appreciation to the Road Department for rectifying a safety issue on one of the roads in the Bold Springs area. The resident also commented on what a great job it was. Commissioner Jacques said this is a tribute to staff. Mrs. Thomas said it is nice to hear thanks instead of complaints.

There was no further discussion or comments. Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2018

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