



*You Are Why We Are Here*

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**WORK SESSION MINUTES**  
**May 29, 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 opened the meeting 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:** ***Items for discussion:***

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

**B. Health Insurance Renewal**

*Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give information on the health insurance renewal. Mrs. Thomas said multiple plans have been reviewed. In all the plans offered by United Healthcare an additional \$500 co-pay was put in for certain procedures to be done in an outpatient or hospital type setting. The purpose of this co-pay is to force people to manage their own healthcare and to have the procedures performed at stand-alone facilities versus hospitals. Mrs. Thomas said the deductible will go up \$250 on the base-plan as well as the buy-up plan. This will make the deductible be \$2,250 for both plans.*

*Mrs. Thomas stated the cost containment can be kept to \$100,000 with these plans. The base-plan will be offered to the employees at no cost with the health savings amount increased by \$10 per month. For the buy-up plan the premiums will be paid equal to the amount for the base-plan plus the \$10. All of the other costs will be pushed*



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to the employees. Mrs. Thomas said the employee cost for the buy-up will increase by \$37 per month for a total of \$100 per month. Spouse, children and family coverages will have increases also. Mrs. Thomas said the percentage of increases range from 13% to 19% depending on the plan chosen.

The dates for open enrollment discussed with the broker are June 6, June 7 or June 8. Mrs. Thomas said the documents are being prepared in anticipation of approval at the June 4 meeting. She said this will give the Commissioners enough time to review the documents and will give the broker enough time to prepare the documents. Mrs. Thomas said this will allow the County to stay with United Healthcare. Her recommendation is to also stay with Lincoln, Unum and Avesis for the ancillary products. There was a slight increase in the Avesis product but additional benefits were included for people wearing glasses. Chairman Bridges asked if any of the Commissioners had questions on the insurance proposals. There was no discussion from the Commissioners. Chairman Bridges asked if anyone present had questions. Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook stated this was the first they had heard of it.

### **C. FY2019 Proposed Budget**

Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to go over the proposed FY2019 budget. Mrs. Thomas gave the Commissioners a draft budget as well as sending the information electronically. She told the Commissioners a public hearing date for the budget would need to be agreed on to get the information published in this week's newspaper. The public hearing needs to be advertised for seven days and held at least one week in advance of the adoption of the budget. Mrs. Thomas said June 26 is the date the budget will need to be voted on. She asked the Commissioners to either hold a public hearing on June 12 or June 19.

Mrs. Thomas said this budget is based on no property tax changes. If there is any real growth then it will be adjusted and used where needed. The tracking for the global increases and adjustments was provided to the Commissioners electronically. Mrs. Thomas said there is a 3%-line item increase for salaries and applicable taxes. All of the elected officials increase was taken out of this as the State of Georgia did not approve an increase for them. This is not an automatic 3% COLA, this is only a line item increase. Anyone managing their budget will have the 3% to allocate as needed across their employees. Mrs. Thomas said there is a \$1,394 buffer in this budget which does not leave a lot of wiggle room. There is nothing going into the reserves and this is only meeting the necessities.

After discussion it was agreed by the Commissioners to hold the first public hearing on June 12 at 6:00 p.m. It was agreed to have a second public hearing for the budget on June 26 at 5:30 p.m. before the June work session. Sheriff Stevie Thomas questioned Chairman Bridges when Mrs. Thomas plans to talk to the constitutional officers about the budget. He said in the past the budget was discussed line by line with the Commissioners and Manager. Chairman Bridges said on February 27 a memo was sent out by the Clerk. Sheriff Thomas said nothing was received about the budget.



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*Chairman Bridges said there was probably some miscommunication but the memo was sent out inviting everyone to come speak to the Commissioners. Sheriff Thomas said his question is when will the constitutional officers be talked to about the budget. Chairman Bridges asked Sheriff Thomas if he had gone to Mrs. Thomas and asked about the budget. Sheriff Thomas said it had been several years since anyone had discussed the budgets with the constitutional officers, line item by line item.*

*Mrs. Thomas said last year's complaint was they did not get to present in front of the Commissioners. This year the invitation was issued and this was not taken up on. She told the Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin his office runs under budget by \$40,000 to \$50,000 and the Commissioners do not want to reduce this. Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook was told her budget looks okay and will probably come in under budget. Mrs. Thomas told Sheriff Thomas they have talked about his budget on numerous occasions. An opportunity was given for him to come directly to the Board of Commissioners. Sheriff Thomas said no, he did not. Mrs. Thomas said that was what the invite was. Mr. Martin asked to see the email. Chairman Bridges showed the email to Mr. Martin, Mrs. Holbrook and Sheriff Thomas.*

*Chairman Bridges said next year every department will be asked to come before the Commissioners and give an update. He told Sheriff Thomas that he knew budget time was in the spring and he would have encouraged him to have contacted someone when he received the memo. Mrs. Holbrook said it didn't say anything about the budget. Sheriff Thomas said it didn't say anything about the budget. Mr. Martin agreed but stated he did get the memo. Mrs. Holbrook questioned what email this sent to. Mrs. Evans told her it was sent to the Superior Court Clerk's email that she provided. Mrs. Holbrook said for the past 26 years she had set down and went over insurance and other expenses and this is how a budget should be done.*

*Chairman Bridges said he would encourage Mrs. Holbrook and the Sheriff and anyone else to sit down and discuss the line items with Mrs. Thomas before the budget public hearing. He told Sheriff Thomas, Mr. Martin and Mrs. Holbrook they are professionals and he would have liked for them to have taken the initiative and asked questions when they received the memo. Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Evans if she called them after the email. Mrs. Evans said she called some and asked others as they came into the BOC office. Mrs. Holbrook stated again the memo doesn't say anything about budgets, it says concerns. She said there is a difference in budgets and concerns. Mrs. Thomas asked her would it have changed. Mrs. Holbrook said yeah. Mrs. Thomas said for the past three years she has sent detailed budget packets. She stated she had gone above and did not get any response, this year she swung in the other direction.*

*Mrs. Thomas said Chairman Bridges is correct, we are all professionals and need to work together. She said at the January planning session the constitutional officers made a valid point about not being invited although the date was clear. When the planning session is set for this January personal invites will be sent out and a mid-year review will be done. Mrs. Thomas said she was kind of confused as to what the constitutional officers want and if they would tell her she would be glad to oblige. Mr.*



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*Martin stated budget comparisons are not being sent and he would like to know where his department stands. Mrs. Thomas said budget comparisons have not been sent out due to the software conversion. She said the March reports are complete and she will print them out and put in the department boxes tonight after the meeting. As soon as April is completed they will be given to the departments as well.*

*Mrs. Holbrook stated her concern is the constitutional officers are not having a chance to present any changes to the Commissioners. Mrs. Thomas asked her how she would like for this to be handled. Mrs. Holbrook said they need to sit down and discuss with the Commissioners and the Manager. Mrs. Thomas told Mrs. Holbrook she would be happy to facilitate that for her and questioned how she would like it done. Mrs. Holbrook said the constitutional officers would like to be included before May 29. Mrs. Thomas questioned next year when the memo is sent does Mrs. Holbrook want it listed for concerns and budgets or for a specific meeting dedicated to budgets. Mrs. Holbrook said a meeting dedicated to budgets like was previously done in January would be good, then meet again in March or quarterly. Chairman Bridges said the Commissioners will be inviting everyone to speak at future meetings and the budget will be specifically mentioned.*

*Mrs. Thomas told Sheriff Thomas, Mr. Martin and Mrs. Holbrook that the calendar is being worked on for next year's meetings. She asked them to provide her with the dates that will work best for them. Chairman Bridges said there is still time to express concerns about the budget and this will be corrected for next year.*

**Landfill Monitoring Agreement** – *Mrs. Thomas said Jacobs Engineering has performed the monitoring at the landfill for a few years and they are doing an excellent job. She said in their new agreement they are going up on the price by \$1,200 for the upcoming year. Mrs. Thomas recommended continuing with Jacobs and asked the Commissioners to consider approval.*

**Public Defender Resolution and Agreement** – *Mrs. Thomas said each year as part of the budget process the public defender sends a contract with their budget request. In this agreement there is a \$30,000 increase from last year's budget. This amount will be split between all the participating counties. The increase for Franklin County will be \$9,033.48. Mrs. Thomas said the increases are for rent and pay raises for the attorneys. She asked the Commissioners to consider this for approval. Mrs. Thomas directed the Commissioners to contact the County Attorney Bubba Samuels if they have questions as he helped draft the agreement.*

**Operational Proposals – fees, taxes and hours** – *Mrs. Thomas said for the past couple of years there has been discussion to increase the fee for occupational tax from \$35 to \$50. Public hearings will be needed as well as ordinances updated for this to happen. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commissioners to keep this on their radar for consideration. The proposed increase will generate about \$5,000.*

*Mrs. Thomas said at this time there is not a projection for increased property*



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*tax collections. She said she is looking at a constant with no increase. After the millage rate is set the Commissioners can determine how the excess needs to be handled.*

*The County is facing staffing difficulties at the landfill. Mrs. Thomas said there have been people sent for drug testing and interviewing that did not come back well. She said one alternative is to change the hours at the landfill. Possible times for the landfill to be open would be mornings from 7 to 11 or 7 to 9 and all-day Saturday. This would be convenient to the customers but would help with the staffing issue. Mrs. Thomas said the landfill is being staffed by taking one of the Road department employees away from their regular duties.*

*Commissioner Jacques questioned what the current fund balance is. He said based on what he has seen it is around \$1,000. Mrs. Thomas said cash wise the County is pretty good but the County floats on LMIG money from year to year because of the advance. She estimated the County will close the year with about \$50,000 of unreserved money. There is more money than that in the bank but it has already been designated to funds. Mrs. Thomas said the County spent more than was budgeted and although the revenue was good it was all blown.*

*Dr. Macomson asked for a monthly budget review to be done starting with the new budget as this would be more beneficial. Mrs. Thomas said this type of report should be able to be printed from the new software. Chairman Bridges said this would be good. Dr. Macomson asked if the constitutional officers have access to the new system or is it just the County office. Mrs. Thomas said the County office does the record keeping for the constitutional officers for their expenses. She said they have their own set of books for their specialty accounts.*

*Commissioner Jacques said he cannot move forward in good conscience with what he is seeing. He said next year's budget is being based on what was adopted and not on actual run rate. There is virtually no fund balance with about \$800,000 overrun. Commissioner Jacques said he does not know of any reason why this should happen and he asked Sheriff Thomas if he could explain this. He said it looks like the County will be in a major hole by next year and money will have to be borrowed. Chairman Bridges said most of the departments have been good stewards of the County's money. He said he has talked with Chief Deputy Jimmy LeCroy about the budget being over and, in his discussion, he thinks there should be places that this could be better. Sheriff Thomas told Chairman Bridges the only way things could be get better would be if employees do not get sick. Detention officers have to be replaced even if they are on leave as the jail cannot be understaffed. Sheriff Thomas also said there is money that comes into his department that does not show up in his budget. He said he would like a column to show what comes back. Mrs. Thomas told him that these things are factored into his budget. Commissioner Jacques said at some point someone will have to deal with the level of spending from the Sheriff if it remains constant. Chairman Bridges suggested to Sheriff Thomas that he and Mr. LeCroy get with Mrs. Thomas and go over each line item in the budget to determine where the \$800,000 overrun was spent and why it was needed.*



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*Dr. Macomson questioned when the constitutional officers would like to start their budget process. Mrs. Holbrook said ideally January would be the time to start. Mrs. Thomas said she would be glad to take the information at any time. Mr. Martin said he has been in the Tax Commissioner job for 18 years and he said a better line of communication is needed. He said meetings should not be adversarial. Everyone is working together on the same team for the good of the citizens of the County. Mr. Martin stated that everyone needs to work together and not make sly comments. He said it may be appropriate to get together to talk things out. Chairman Bridges said the communications is the key, going both ways. He said a meeting will take place in January and he would encourage everyone to sit down and talk with Mrs. Thomas by March about their department budget.*

#### ***D. Manager's Report***

*Mrs. Thomas said the sewer project is coming along well although the rain has hindered progress. The wet well has been set. Mrs. Thomas said the first two payments are in the que. Funds will be transferred out of the Water CD's to the construction fund along with SPLOST funds as needed. The County has to meet obligations before the loan kicks in. The bond validation hearing for the loan was held this morning and the closing should come shortly.*

*Mrs. Thomas told the Commissioners she placed information in their boxes concerning a road request. This road is being analyzed and the property owner will be contacted before a recommendation is given.*

#### ***E. Announcements***

*Mrs. Thomas said the docket number for public comment has been received from the FCC. She will provide instructions on how to give the public comment as soon as it is received from the media attorney at the FCC.*

*Chairman Bridges said he, Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Evans attended a broadband informational meeting conducted by Representative Doug Collins in Dahlonega. At this meeting Chairman Bridges and Mrs. Thomas met with the FCC Chairman and explained the situation of Franklin County. Chairman Bridges said the FCC Chairman seemed very interested in helping.*

*Chairman Bridges announced his grandson Chaz Bridges plays basketball and baseball. He said his grandson was offered several scholarships from colleges in the State of Georgia and accepted one to play for the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega.*

*Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 6:50 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*