



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
September 25, 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 welcomed everyone to the September work session and called the meeting to order.

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. Presentation

Chairman Bridges welcomed the **Franklin County Fire Association** President, **Garren Hall**. Mr. Hall said he is the Chief of the Bold Springs Volunteer Fire Department along with being the President for the Fire Association. There are 12 fire departments in Franklin County, seven of them in the rural areas and one in each of the five cities. The Fire Association holds monthly meetings and the agreement for fire protection is between the County and the Association. Mr. Hall said the response area for each fire department is decided by the Association.

Almost all of the fire departments have at least two Class A pumpers and Mr. Hall said this helps with the ISO ratings. There are three rescue stations in the County; located at Line Volunteer Fire Department, Bold Springs Volunteer Fire Department and Royston. There are four ladder trucks in the County; Carnesville, Franklin Springs, Lavonia and Sandy Cross. Mr. Hall stated there are 274 volunteer firemen which averages out to around 22 firefighters per station. Each fireman is required to have a minimum of 24 hours of training each year. Mr. Hall said most of Franklin



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County's firefighters have 50 or more training hours each year, well over the required 24 hours.

The firemen of the seven rural stations are completely volunteer, they do not receive compensation for their service. Mr. Hall said the firemen want to give back to their community and help out even when it is not convenient. The Fire Association provides information each year in October to the schools for Fire Safety Week. Mr. Hall said the firefighters assist with cutting trees and getting them out of the roads during storms. The firefighters' also direct traffic when needed and assist the Sheriff's Office with trucks for scene lighting.

Mr. Hall said the cost of the gear for one firefighter is approximately \$3,095. The cost for an air pack is \$6,830. The total cost for each fireman outfitted to go into a fire is approximately \$10,420. Mr. Hall said the firefighters' share the air packs because of the cost. He said the firefighters save the County a lot of money possibly over a half million dollars each year that would be in salaries by having volunteers instead of paid firemen. All of the fire departments are thankful for the SPLOST. Mr. Hall said prior to the 2000 SPLOST the fire departments were using trucks from the 1960's and 1970's with a 1980 model being the newest one. The SPLOST allowed the fire service to obtain top of the line equipment. Franklin County has the best equipment and most volunteer firefighters of any of the surrounding counties. Mr. Hall expressed thanks to the Commissioners for allowing the fire departments to have a part of the SPLOST and to the citizens for voting the SPLOST in.

Chairman Bridges stated he is grateful for the firefighters throughout the County and the departments are run efficiently. He has heard that other counties are envious of the number of volunteers that Franklin County has. Mr. Hall said there are neighboring counties that have less than 30 volunteer firefighters in the whole county. He said 10 to 15 firefighters are added each year with some firemen deciding to step down. Franklin County is fortunate that when the firefighters retire some of them continue to help pump trucks and help on the fire scenes. Commissioner Jacques said the service provided by the volunteers leads to a significant savings on the property owner's insurance bills due to the lower ISO ratings. Mr. Hall said each department is actively working to lower the ISO ratings to help with the home owner's insurance. The fire hydrants throughout the County has also helped lower the ISO ratings.

Commissioner Wester said all the fire departments have had to upgrade their air packs and the SPLOST has helped pay for this. The fire departments have also applied for grants that has helped pay for the necessary equipment. Mr. Hall said grants have been received by Bold Springs, Sandy Cross, Lavonia and Line is in the process of applying for one. Chairman Bridges told Mr. Hall to give the Fire Association the thanks of the Commission Board. Mr. Hall said at some point the Fire Association will be asking for a slight increase in the budget but nothing unreasonable.

C. Forest Drive

Liz Brown of 176 Forest Drive in Lavonia came forward to speak about safety



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issues on her street. She said she has lived there for a little over a year and is happy to be in Franklin County. Forest Drive is a very narrow, small street located off of Hwy 17. Ms. Brown said her concern is the large vehicles that speed on her street making it unsafe for children, disabled neighbors, elderly and animals. This street is so narrow that two vehicles cannot pass each other regardless of their size. Ms. Brown stated there are no speed limit signs posted and she is very concerned about the children who live and play in this area.

Ms. Brown said she has talked with Commissioner Jacques, John Phillips, Sheriff Stevie Thomas and Major Chris Looney came to her house and looked at the street. She said she is looking for answers on how to make the street safer. Chairman Bridges asked Ms. Brown what her thoughts were on what could be done. Ms. Brown said she thought a speed limit sign could possibly help. She asked if heavy trucks and vehicles could be banned. Dr. Macomson asked if this is a through street. Ms. Brown said it is not, it turns into a dirt road and there is a trailer park back there. Commissioner Wester asked Ms. Brown what she meant by big trucks. Ms. Brown said she is talking about dump truck vehicles, larger than garbage trucks; the proper name is motor freight transportation vehicles.

Commissioner Franklin asked if a business is located on the street. Ms. Brown said no, it is completely residential. Commissioner Jacques said based on his review, Sauls Nursey has access to the road. Ms. Brown said she has never seen a truck going that way. Dr. Macomson asked who is responsible for posting traffic signs. Mrs. Thomas said the County follows the State law. She said "Children at Play" signs are already posted and she will look into the posting of the speed limit sign per the State regulations. Dr. Macomson questioned if there were certain times of the day that the vehicles seemed to be present, if so he suggested Ms. Brown contact the Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Jacques said his thought is this is an enforcement problem, if citations were issued this would have the potential to change behavior.

Commissioner Jacques and Chairman Bridges suggested for County Engineer John Phillips to look into this. Mrs. Thomas said Mr. Phillips is already looking into this and the County will do what is legally allowed. Ms. Brown brought up roads not having signs. Mrs. Thomas informed her to contact the Board of Commissioners Office to report any missing signs. Commissioner Jacques said the 911 road signs are for the safety of the citizens. Chairman Bridges said the Commissioners want signs up on roads for safety. He told Ms. Brown the Commissioners will continue working with the Sheriff's Office for the safety of this road.

D. Canal Bridge Road

Joyce Kirby came forward and stated she lives on the south end of Canal Bridge Road and she would like for the County to work the north end of Canal Bridge Road. The County works part of Canal Bridge Road and she is requesting the 900 feet from the end of where the County works to the gate be added to maintenance. Mrs. Kirby said her husband has worked this portion over the years but is now unable to maintain it. Chairman Bridges questioned if this was a through road previously. Mrs. Kirby said



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yes it was, prior to the bridge closing. Chairman Bridges told Mrs. Kirby the County Engineer will look into this for the feasibility of maintenance.

E. Public Works

Mrs. Thomas gave updates on projects, grants and the GRP/lender agreement. The monthly sewer update meeting was held and everything is running ahead of schedule with the plant. The line construction meeting for potential start dates will take place this Friday. The work should start this week on Hwy 59 for the pump station.

The water projects are being readied for bidding. Mrs. Thomas said these bids are for the blending system, tanks and line work. The County has received word that the ARC grant for Franklin County and Madison County was awarded. The grant amount was 2.2 million dollars for both counties with Franklin County to receive \$775,000 based on the need. The compliance meeting for the grant has taken place and the bids should be sent out soon. Mrs. Thomas said a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Madison County will be entered into because of the joint grant and grant administration will also be looked at for compliance.

*Mrs. Thomas said she, Commissioner Franklin and Chairman Bridges toured the GRP facility this morning. She said it is a massive plant with a huge investment. There is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Franklin County and GRP. Mrs. Thomas said the County Attorney Bubba Samuels delivered another agreement to her. The lenders for the power plant want to enter an agreement that states **if GRP does not pay their bill to Franklin County, they want to pay it.** Mrs. Thomas said this is a good agreement and should have been done at the beginning. She asked the Commission Board to place this on the October regular meeting for approval.*

Chairman Bridges said this is a fantastic investment for Franklin County of 235 million. Mrs. Thomas stated GRP has said 30 full-time jobs will be at the facility with over 800 ancillary jobs between the two plants in Franklin County and Madison County. This should make a huge economic impact for Franklin County. The target date for full up and running is June 1, 2019 with some testing starting January 2019.

F. Board positions

Mrs. Thomas said Ryan Swails is uncontested in the November elections for a Board of Commissioner seat and it is anticipated he will serve on the Commission Board starting January 2019. This will create a vacancy on the Planning Commission. Advertisement needs to be done and applications accepted for the remainder of Mr. Swails term which runs through January 1, 201.

Other board openings are two positions on the Elections Board which is handled by the first and second largest political parties. The openings for the Board of Equalization will be handled through the court system. Mrs. Thomas said the advertisement for the Tax Assessors Board will be handled by that office.

Mrs. Thomas said the deadline to accept applications for the Recreation Board was



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today. There were no new applications received. A list of applicants from the past year was provided to the Commissioners by the Clerk. Mrs. Thomas suggested advertising the Recreation positions again when the Planning Commission position is advertised. All of the Commission Board agreed to advertise again for Recreation and begin advertisements for Planning.

G. Manager's Report

Mrs. Thomas said there are two new items for consideration along with the tabled item of Best Propane for the October public hearing Monday night. Additional information has been provided from Best Propane. Mrs. Thomas said she was requested by the Planning Commission to do whatever possible to ensure public awareness of the Best Propane item. This was placed on the homepage of the County's website as well as on the Planning page. Dr. Macomson questioned if Best Propane changed their access point. Mrs. Thomas said this was not feasible with GDOT's rules. Additional information was provided for the ingress and egress of Argo Road. The recommendation was made by the Planning Commission to approve with the condition of a buffer and improved road entrance for the first 100 feet.

Mrs. Thomas reminded the Commissioners to look at their schedules for possible dates for the Planning Session in January. She also asked them to decide how the work session should be handled in December.

The FCC granted all four petitions and found in favor of Franklin County for the market modification. Mrs. Thomas said she has not heard from the television stations in Greenville, SC regarding appeals although they do have time. Dr. Macomson asked if the other counties were granted this too. Mrs. Thomas said no, the only other county that has filed is Hart County. GMRC will work on the petition for Stephens County. Mrs. Thomas does not have the information for Elbert County.

The comments from the citizens played a large part in the approval. Mrs. Thomas expressed her thanks to them and she has called some of the citizens who were mentioned in the ruling and thanked them for their diligence. Commissioner Jacques thanked Mrs. Thomas for taking the lead on this. Mrs. Thomas said this is a triumphant for all informed. Chairman Bridges stated Mrs. Thomas went against attorneys from a large law firm that tried to block it.

H. Announcements

Commissioner Wester informed the Board he probably will not be at the October regular meeting because he will be in Myrtle Beach watching his daughter's golf tournament. He said if needed, he can be reached by phone.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the September Work Session at 7:02 p.m.



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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