



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
March 30, 2021
6:00 P.M.**

BOC: *Commission Chairman Dr. Jason K. Macomson
District 1 Commissioner Robert Franklin
District 2 Commissioner Kyle Foster
District 3 Commissioner Ryan Swails
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester*

Media: *Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen Leader
MJ Kneiser, WLHR via Zoom*

Staff: *Manager Derrick Turner
County Clerk Kayla Finger*

- Item 1:** **Call meeting to order** - Chairman Macomson called the March work session to order and thanked everyone for attending.
- Item 2:** **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance** - Commissioner Foster led the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the American flag.
- Item 3:** **Approval of the Agenda** - Commissioner Swails motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion. All were in favor, 4-0.
- Item 4:** **Personnel:** Manager Turner introduced the new Emergency Management Director (EMA), Mr. Ryan Parks, and the new Maintenance Director, Mr. Andy Sorrow. While Mr. Sorrow is not a new employee, he was recently promoted to this position. The board congratulated both men and thanked them.
- Item 5:** **Public Comment:** Chairman Macomson explained that public comment is not a question/answer time, and commenters are limited to 5 minutes of speaking time and time will be kept by the clerk on a stop watch. Chairman Macomson also asked everyone to please understand that the board will not be discussing any pending planning and zoning items, and there are specific meetings scheduled when these items can be discussed. All speakers may only speak once and are asked to give their name and address to the clerk and address all comments to the board.



You Are Why We Are Here

Mr. Eric Segars, 1234 Beatty Road addressed the board speaking against the proposed rendering plant. He asked the board to do their homework and research the history of this company's' numerous violations. He noted he was a former grower for this company and was wrongfully terminated. He pointed out that their history shows they have no problem breaking contracts and paying off fines. He also stated if this passes Franklin County will die. He praised the community for coming together to fight this. He left documents for the board to look over.

Mr. Wayne Young, 33 Deer Meadow Estates Road addressed the board stating his closeness to the proposed plant. He referred to the Jefferson Plant from the 60's and how badly it smelled. He told the board to stop it now before it goes any further.

Mr. Chris Phillips, 867 Hunters Creek Road addressed the board with concerns about growth of the county and the negative impact this plant could have on this potential growth and industry.

Mr. Michael Malia, 270 Bold Springs Church Road addressed the board about the proposed rendering plant. He recounted the how bad the smell is from the plant on Hwy 145 on his way to Stephens County, and how he could smell it for miles. He noted the impact the smell could have on the high school and sports teams.

Item 6: Guest Speaker: Adam Hazell, GMRC

Mr. Hazell reviewed the service delivery strategy process. This is a plan for local governments that is set in place to help avoid double taxation and make sure citizens are being supplied with government services in their local area (eg: sewer, water services, etc.). This document is updated frequently to stay current with any changes. It was due last year, but was postponed to a due date of October of this year (2021). Mr. Hazell stated the board would need to review all proposed amendments and changes. He asked the board to get in touch with him by the end of April with any input.

Item 7: Items for discussion

A. Airport Authority Update: Chairman Macomson gave an update that Hart County & Franklin County awarded the bid for the Airport Authority Audit to the company Carr, Riggs, & Ingram of Miramar Beach, Florida for \$40,000.00 which will be split equally between Hart and Franklin County. The audit will be for seven (7) years starting in fiscal year 2012 through 2018.



You Are Why We Are Here

Chairman Macomson explained that the county and airports fiscal years run from July to June, so 2012 for instance would run from July of 2011 to June of 2012. The airport authority has already done an audit for 2019 and during the joint meeting last week both boards expressed the desire to have the airport conduct their annual audits. Chairman Macomson spoke with Mr. Kevin McCraney last night and Mr. McCraney the secretary treasurer for the airport authority and he said an audit for fiscal year 2020 will be discussed at the upcoming airport authority meeting in April. Chairman Macomson noted he had reviewed the recording from the prior joint meeting in December and noted the way they came up with the intervals involved the years for the audit were discussed we used 2019 as a baseline because the airport authority had an audit, they did that year, so we backed up from there. They do not have a firm timeline for the audit yet, but they will keep everyone updated. Manager Turner and Hart County Manager Partain will be the main points of contact for the airport authority. There is currently a vacancy on the board. Mrs. Martha Long has resigned from her position and her first year would be up in June 2021, and her replacement would need to fulfill the last three years of her 4-year term. The clerk has already advertised the position on the website. The board agreed to advertise for a period of 30-days.

B. Speaker: Mr. J. Thomas Bridges: Mr. Bridges thanked Mr. Turner and the board for the opportunity to speak. He stated he attended the joint meeting and noted the cloud over the airport and the importance of that cloud being removed. He stated he is concerned as a taxpayer about the money being spent on the airport. He thanked the board and former manager Beth Thomas for putting the county in a good financial position. He spoke again about the latest joint meeting and removing the cloud and both of the boards considered having a 3-, 5-, or 7-year audit. One of Hart County's commissioners recommended doing 7 years. Mr. Bridges agreed with that but was not agreeable to the fiscal years chosen for the 7-year audit which were 2012 - 2018. He pointed out that the cloud happened in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 so this timeline would not include these fiscal years. He asked why the counties would pay \$40,000.00 and not investigate the years in which the cloud occurred. He provided a copy of the 2018-19 audit and explained it is not a complete audit, it simply shows money received and paid out. He stated



You Are Why We Are Here

that in the 18-19 audit the airport spent approximately \$106,000.00 for fuel and showed they only collected approx. \$103,000.00, which results in a \$3,000.00 discrepancy. The audit also did not show the number of hangars, rent payment, or land lease amounts. He stated he called commissioners from Hart and Franklin County to see why they are not including the years with the cloud in the seven years. In 2013-14 Rushton & Associates helped the prior county clerk with a full-blown audit, but in recent years the chairman of the airport had an independent partial audit done. Mr. Bridges stated upon questioning commissioners they told him they did not realize the timeline did not include those last two years.

Chairman Macomson stated Mr. Bridges was co-chair of the joint meeting when they chose those years, and he voted on it. The RFP's have already been submitted and both boards agreed the Airport Authority would pick up their own audits from here forward, as it is neither county's responsibility. There have been questions about the finances of the airport authority going back many years. Hart & Franklin agreed to pick a neutral non-affiliated party to look back at the airport authority's finances. The airport has said they will discuss a 2020 audit at their next meeting.

Mr. Bridges stated the minutes from the December meeting stated only 3-, 5-, and 7- year audits.

Chairman Macomson restated he had reviewed the recording from the December meeting and he and commissioner Wester stated they had discussed what years and how many years to determine cost. The discussion related around 2019 to be used as the baseline to go back and the seven years would serve as a good place to start and they may go back further if necessary.

Commissioner Wester noted Hart County's manager is who sent the RFP out for bid.

Mr. Bridges stated this would just cost the taxpayers money without addressing the two years with the cloud.

Chairman Macomson asked Mr. Bridges not to bring up issues of the past and stick to the questions.

Mr. Bridges asked when was the last meeting of the airport.



You Are Why We Are Here

Chairman Macomson stated he did not know, but they have a planned meeting for April.

Commissioner Wester stated that the airport authority's legislation requires only one meeting per year in April.

Mr. Bridges next question was who is running the airport.

Chairman Macomson stated it is currently run by the airport authority board, which is comprised of volunteers and Mr. Mike Ward the vice-chair.

Mr. Bridges stated that you couldn't find another airport in the state of Georgia without a full-time manager. He checked around with other airports our size and they all have managers working to bring in federal funding. According to the airport manager at Stephens County, Mr. Bridges stated they couldn't spend all the money they receive from the federal government. He noted with volunteers, no one knows who is there spending their time. He also stated if the taxpayers are spending thousands of dollars, there needs to be some type of management. He stated an IBA appointee stated the airport authority looked like a social club.

Chairman Macomson cautioned Mr. Bridges from making statements like that.

Mr. Bridges asked the board if we are going to have an airport authority to serve the citizens or are we going to have a social club that does not serve the public.

Commissioner Wester discussed how the cloud started a long time ago, not just in the last two years and questions were brought forward to the commissioners. He also noted how it came to light that appointments had not been made to the airport authority since its inception which flowed through several people's terms. He noted he did not think the board should've ever discussed the ongoing GBI investigation in open meetings in the past and how it contributed to past issues.

Commissioner Swails addressed the IBA comment stating that the airport authority hasn't contributed. The chair of the IBA was also the chair of the Airport Authority for quite a long time. Prior to working things out in these last two years, there



You Are Why We Are Here

were issues with two members of the airport authority making decisions for the whole without a quorum or vote. Commissioner Swails pointed out the issues went back for years prior to him coming on the board and no one knew the full extent.

Chairman Macomson noted that these facts should not be surprising as Mr. Bridges co-chaired the joint meeting in December when these decisions were made and the RFP's were set up to be sent out by Hart County in 3-, 5-, & 7- year intervals. He restated that this does not mean they won't look back further, if needed, but 7 years is a good place to start. In the meantime, the Airport Authority has agreed it is their responsibility to pick up audits from here on out for accountability. He thanked Mr. Bridges for his time and asked him to have a seat.

- C. **Lavonia Villas:** Mr. Andy Camp thanked the board for their time. He proposed a townhouse development for rent, scaled vertically or single-story cottages to accommodate younger and older people. He touched on the importance of and need for affordability of housing for those coming out of school with a lot of debt. Growth is coming and the community will need housing for these people. There will be approximately 200 units with a variety of floorplans with different amenities. This will create opportunities for those coming to the area to plant roots and stay here. He touched on the positive impacts of the project; these are anticipated to come in and be built fairly quickly, rooftops attract retailers, restaurants, and businesses, and opportunities for expanding water and sewer. He noted they have proven examples of this type of community working. Commissioner Swails asked about the example. Mr. Camp noted it is the Cottages at Ridgepoint in Athens. Chairman Macomson asked where they were in the process. Mr. Camp stated they were close to proving they could make things work. Commissioner Wester asked if they planned to hire local. Mr. Camp stated they try to hire within the local region which may include surrounding counties. Commissioner Foster asked if they planned to build in phases. Mr. Camp said no, it should be built fairly quickly. Chairman Macomson asked about the rent amount. Mr. Camp stated there will be a range and they try to base that range off of the market rate. It should be around 30% of an individual's income. Commissioner Macomson asked what assistance they would be asking for. Mr. Camp said they



You Are Why We Are Here

comment. Each person will have five minutes and can only speak once. The meeting will continue until all present who wish to speak have been given the opportunity. In closing, he thanked the public for their courteous response at the recent Planning and Zoning Meeting and at tonight's Work Session.

Commissioner Swails thanked the citizens for recent quality conversations over recent issues facing the county.


Commissioner Wester wished his son a happy 16th birthday.


Item 10: Adjournment


Commissioner Wester made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Foster gave the second. All were in favor, 4-0.

Signed on the 3rd day of May, 2021


Chairman Jason K. Macomson


Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner


Kyle Foster, District 2 Commissioner


Ryan Swails, District 3 Commissioner


Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner


Kayla Finger, County Clerk