



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
March 26, 2019
6:00 P.M.**

BOC: Commission Chairman Thomas Bridges
District 1 Commissioner Robert Franklin
District 2 Commissioner Dr. Jason Macomson
District 3 Commissioner Ryan Swails
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen Leader

Staff: County Manager Beth Thomas
County Clerk Elaine Evans

Item 1: **Call meeting to order** – Chairman Bridges welcomed everyone to the March 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 – Chairman Bridges asked if anyone would like to speak during public comment time. There was no one who wished to speak.

B. Presentations

Tommy Gill, Chairman of the **Board of Equalization** came forward to speak and thanked the Commission Board for the opportunity to give information. The Board of Equalization follows the Georgia Code Section § 48-5-311 with the administrator being the Clerk of Court. Mr. Gill explained the purpose of the Board of Equalization is to hear tax appeals from citizens. The Board of Equalization has six members consisting of three regular members and three alternates. Appeals are heard by three Board members who check for uniformity and consistency.

At the initial appointment to the Board of Equalization a member is required to take a 40-hour course that is usually offered through the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Eight hours of continuing education each year is required thereafter. If a reappointment is made with no break, the member is required to take an additional 20-hour course. The budget for the Board of Equalization is under the control of the Clerk of



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Court.

Chairman Bridges asked Mr. Gill about the number of appeals received each year. Mr. Gill said it varies based on how many appeals are received by the Tax Assessors office. The goal of the Board of Equalization is to give the determination to the property owner after the hearing to avoid the cost of certified mailings. If the property owner is not satisfied with the determination from the Board of Equalization, they have the right to appeal to the Superior Court.

Mr. Gill said more appeals may be received this year because some of the property values may be changed per the State of Georgia regulations which the Tax Assessors office is required to follow. The Board of Equalization and the Tax Assessors office have a good working relationship for the appeals process. Mr. Gill stated the employees of the Tax Assessors office are dedicated people who care about their jobs and work hard to get the work right.

Bonnie Bardey, Chairperson of the **Library Board** thanked the Commissioners for their support of the Library. She stated Maggie West will be taking over management of the libraries in Lavonia and Royston. The Library Board is focusing on community engagement with programs for all ages. An American Dream grant in the amount of \$10,000 was received and will be used for culinary programs in both Spanish and English. Mrs. Bardey said the Library Board is working with a company to provide equipment and mentorship for a Girls Makerspace Initiative. A grant was received to help pay for a new roof at the Royston Library along with local funding of \$50,000. At the conclusion of her presentation, Mrs. Bardey asked the Commission Board for a budget increase of \$2,307 for the FY20 cycle for State mandated increases.

Missy Holbrook, **Clerk of Court** asked for the constitutional officers to be included in the budget process and she be allowed to give input for the Clerk of Court as well as the Board of Equalization. The budget for the Board of Equalization is for the required classes and the hearings. Mrs. Holbrook stated the Board of Equalization does a great job and she is pleased with the way they manage the budget with efforts to save the County money. Real estate deeds and plats are handled through the Clerk of Court's office along with other duties. The Grand Jury met last week and 33 cases were indicted. Mrs. Holbrook stated there are 953 open criminal cases. She said they are beginning to have court back to back weeks. Chairman Bridges questioned if the cases seem to be growing. Mrs. Holbrook said definitely, without a doubt.

C. Charles Todd – Colston Drive

Charles Todd came forward and gave handouts to the Commissioners concerning the dam on Colston Drive. The information presented showed Franklin County as the owner of the dam. Based on this information Mr. Todd stated the maintenance for the road and dam should be done by Franklin County. Dr. Macomson questioned if anyone knew who built the dam. Mr. Todd said he did not know. He said he has lived on Colston Drive since 2004 and at that time the road was maintained. Mrs. Thomas said there are



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prior inventory lists that do not show Franklin County as the owner of the dam on Colston Drive. Beginning in 2012, Franklin County was listed as the owner of the dam. Mrs. Thomas said she has emailed EPD stating the ownership of the dam on Colston Drive is wrong, the County Commissioners have never taken over this road and this information was added in error. Dr. Macomson asked who owns the pond. Mrs. Thomas said according to the County information, it would be the property owners of that area. Mr. Todd told the Commissioners any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

D. Chandler Place Drive

Clint Tucker said he is a property owner on Chandler Place Drive since the early 1980's. The road has deteriorated and is almost impassable when it rains. Mr. Tucker said everyone on the road has signed off and is agreeable for the road to be worked. The residents would appreciate any help that can be given. Chairman Bridges said it is in place for the County to take roads over and work ditch to ditch as long as all the property owners have signed. He then asked for clarification if Mr. Tucker has all the signatures. Mr. Tucker said yes, everyone has signed. He also stated it was voted on in 2014 for the County to accept Chandler Place Drive contingent on the signatures. In the past there was one owner who would not sign but there was a change in property ownership and all owners have now signed. Chairman Bridges referred this to Mrs. Thomas for review by the County's management team.

E. LMIG Safety Project

Mrs. Thomas said Franklin County is eligible for an additional \$100,000 in LMIG safety funds. These funds are to be used for high build striping and signage according to GDOT requirements. The deadline to apply for this grant is April 1. Mrs. Thomas stated because this is a commitment of funds, she is requesting the Commission Board to authorize staff to submit the grant application. If Franklin County is awarded the grant of \$100,000 a match of \$30,000 is required. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve staff to move forward with the LMIG Safety Project grant application. Commissioner Franklin made the motion. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Swails seconded the motion. Commissioner Wester questioned if the County has \$30,000 available for the match. Mrs. Thomas said this would come out of SPLOST funds. 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, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails, Dr. Macomson and Chairman Bridges.

F. National Crime Victims' Week Resolution

Mrs. Thomas said Wendy Risner with Harmony House Child Advocacy Center has requested the Commission Board approve a resolution proclaiming the Week of April 17 as National Crime Victims' Week. The resolution was updated by the Clerk and given to the Commissioners. Mrs. Thomas said the reason for this request is Harmony House has an event scheduled for April 1 on the Courthouse lawn and has asked for a member of the Commission Board to come and read the resolution. Chairman Bridges asked for a



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*motion to approve the National Crime Victims' Week Resolution for Harmony House. Commissioner Wester made the motion to approve the resolution and for Chairman Bridges to read the resolution at the event. 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, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.*

G. Board Appointment discussion

Mrs. Thomas said notification was received from the Department of Family and Children Services that the position currently held by Marie Loftis will expire on June 30, 2019. There is an Avita position scheduled to expire on June 30, 2019 and the Joint Development Authority also has upcoming positions that will be expiring. Mrs. Thomas said she has contacted the IBA (Industrial Building Authority) to provide recommendations for the Joint Development Authority openings. The recommendation given by Mrs. Thomas is to begin taking applications for these positions along with the Airport Authority if the Commissioners so desire. Mrs. Thomas said the applications for the DFCS position will be sent to their director for review as the qualifications are set by the State of Georgia. Commissioner Wester clarified applications will be taken for all positions including the Airport Authority. Chairman Bridges said it is standard procedure to begin the taking of applications. Dr. Macomson questioned what the timeframe will be. Mrs. Thomas said the advertising is typically done for two weeks although applications can be taken until the end of April. The advertisement will be run in the Franklin County Citizen as well as be placed on the County's website.

H. SolAmerica – Planning & Zoning update

Mrs. Thomas presented a letter from the IBA concerning the conditional use permit for a solar farm. This item was tabled at a previous public hearing to gain feedback from the IBA. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commission Board to review the letter prior to the April 1 regular meeting as this item will be on that agenda.

I. Bowman Street abandonment for the County portion

Mrs. Thomas said the State of Georgia abandonment process is to advertise in the County's legal organ for four weeks, post a sign on the property and hold a public hearing. Franklin County's industrial character area is limited along I-85 in the Lavonia area with most being located in the unincorporated portion of the County. Of the 333 acres available for industrial use there is a city/county road that goes through it. Mrs. Thomas asked the Commissioners to consider abandoning the County's portion of Bowman Street from the city limits of the City of Lavonia to Hwy 59. The abandonment of this portion would open the land to be continuous instead of being split. Dr. Macomson questioned if this would dead end the road. Mrs. Thomas said yes, but the residents would still have access to Hwy 59 through another road. Chairman Bridges said this will be placed on the April 1 agenda for further consideration.



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J. Manager's Report

Mrs. Thomas said Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS) made a site visit to the County with good news being given concerning claims. ACCG (Association County Commissioners of Georgia) will be giving a dividend to Franklin County in the amount of \$29,135. Mrs. Thomas said she would like for this to go toward employees to continue reductions in work comp claims. Franklin County is also eligible for a grant in the amount of \$3,000 per year for the next three years. Mrs. Thomas said she would like for this grant to be used for fire training.

The construction for the sewer project is still on schedule. Mrs. Thomas said the equipment is in the plant and County staff have begun training. The line work coming into the City of Carnesville is progressing with the force main to be finished this week.

The mixing tank on Turkey Creek Road is continuing. The raw water lines are being installed. The pump is in the well and the pipe is in although the well house has not been completed. The elevated tank on Black Snake Road is scheduled to start construction in April. Mrs. Thomas said these projects were prepared for in 2018 and are going full force ahead in 2019 with the hope that infrastructure will bring growth to the County.

Mrs. Thomas said the SPLOST V borrowing is still being worked on with the placement agent and bond attorney for the required documentation. A public offering instead of a private placement is looking to be the most cost effective for the County. The bond attorney is working on the intergovernmental agreement and this will be distributed to the cities as soon as it is received.

The County is getting close to the end of the sewer project and is at the end of the interim loan with USDA. Mrs. Thomas said the County is now moving into the USDA grant portion and scheduling to close out the loan will be sometime in April.

Commissioner Wester said with the all the rain it is impressive that the sewer project is still on schedule. Mrs. Thomas said although it was not in the contract, the construction company placed additional gravel on those roads because of the mud.

K. Announcements

There were no announcements.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.



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Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2019

Chairman J. Thomas Bridges

Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner

Dr. Jason Macomson, District 2 Commissioner

Ryan Swails, District 3 Commissioner

Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner

Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk