



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES
April 30, 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
Mark Berryman, WLHR*

Staff: *County Manager Beth Thomas
County Clerk Elaine Evans*

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

Item 2: **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance** – *Commissioner Franklin led the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the American flag.*

Item 3: **Items for discussion**

A. Public Comment – *There was no one who wished to speak in public comment.*

Chairman Bridges announced that County Manager Beth Thomas won the Jerry R Griffin award from ACCG for excellence in public service. Mrs. Thomas is the first female manager for Franklin County as well as the youngest. The award was presented to Mrs. Thomas at the April Annual ACCG conference in Savannah. Chairman Bridges stated this award is an honor for Mrs. Thomas and Franklin County.

B. Presentations

Doug Kidd, chairman of the Franklin County Elections Board came forward to speak and thanked the Commissioners for allowing him the opportunity to share information. House Bill 316 was signed into law this past March by Governor Brian Kemp. A large portion of this bill sets the requirements and specifications for new voting machines. Each county will be furnished the new equipment beginning with the larger counties. Franklin County will probably receive the new machines by March of next year in time for the presidential election. The new machines will be touch screens that will print a paper



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ballot that will probably be taken to another machine for reading/scanning. Education for the public will be done prior to their first use.

Mr. Kidd said the general election for local elections for the cities and/or special elections will be held on November 5, 2019. The 2020 date for the presidential election has not been finalized yet. The date for the general primary election will be May 19, 2020 and the general election will be November 3, 2020. At this time the Elections Board is not requesting additional funds.

Chairman Bridges commended the Elections Board for running smooth elections. Mr. Kidd said the smooth operations of the Elections office is due to Elections Supervisor Gina Chappellear and Clerk Linda Payne. Ms. Chappellear clarified local qualifying for next year will be March 2, 2020 to March 6, 2020 at the Elections office.

Franklin County Superior Court Judge Lauren Watson thanked the Commissioners for the invitation to speak before them and expressed appreciation to them and the citizens of Franklin County for allowing the courthouse to be the home office of one of the three superior court judges who work in five counties. The budget given to Judge Watson has been sufficient for the needs and the transition. Judge Watson said there are possible upcoming expenditures for a pending death penalty case. The possible expenses for both the Clerk of Court and the Sheriff are for extra jurors and security. With a death penalty case there are also possible expenses for housing and meals for jurors. Judge Watson asked the Commission Board to please communicate with her if there is ever any question of how the budget is managed.

Judge Watson said she has plans to have an extra week of trials in August to clear up some of the misdemeanor cases. The Franklin County Law Library Board has agreed to update materials and add a computer and printer system. This update will largely replace the use of the books and go to online. Judge Watson said security will also be in place for website visitations. The initial cost will be about \$2,000. The County ordinances can also be placed on the computer during this update.

District Attorney Parks White said he and his staff have had a very busy few weeks with a guilty verdict being secured in Elbert County for a murder case by Mr. White and his Assistant Jeff Lee. Working with Judge Watson is a pleasure as she recently sentenced a man at trial to life without parole for the robbery of the Downtown Beverage in Lavonia. There have also been guilty verdicts in Madison County for murder and for intent to murder.

Mr. White presented a visual presentation of how a crime occurs with actual 911 calls and attempt to capture on I-85 with dashcam from Franklin County deputies Antwane McCurry, Brian Stovall and Kevin Stanfield. The subject drove in speeds excess of 90 mph which ended in a fatal crash. Mr. White said the crash scene was worked by GSP and Franklin County deputies. A search warrant for blood samples was obtained and served by Mr. White at this crash scene. Multiple drugs and a blood alcohol level of .057 was present in the driver's system. Mr. White said this person was offered a plea of vehicle homicide in



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the first degree but refused and was found guilty and sentenced at trial to a life sentence.

Visual presentation was shown of a murder in Hart County with one of the 911 calls being played. Mr. White obtained a guilty verdict for this crime of a husband who killed his wife. After the crime, the subject attempted to use his deceased wife's bank card. This led to his capture in Anderson, SC where he had registered under his own name. The GBI and members of the Anderson police made the arrest. The subject was captured with a firearm that matched the shell casings from the crime scene and bullets recovered during the autopsy. Mr. White said this person pled guilty to the crime which is a rare occurrence in a murder.

Mr. White said over the past six years 14,000 cases have been received. At this time there are 2,740 cases pending. There are six assistant district attorneys who handle around 2,500 cases each year. With this volume of work each case is allotted about five hours. Mr. White said the visual presentations have helped when going before the juries. He said it is frustrating that hours have to be taken away from other cases to work the jury trials. Even with a small staff and heavy caseload, Mr. White stated that his office is ahead of convictions handled for the City of Athens and the City of Atlanta. Both the City of Athens and the City of Atlanta have more personnel than Mr. White's office. Technology is being used with templates and other resources to help with the backlog of cases.

Clerk of Court Missy Holbrook stated she has worked with DA White since he was elected. Mr. White is dedicated to his job and spends his nights and weekends working cases because he does not have enough staff. The DA's office has one investigator for five counties versus the Public Defender who has two investigators for the five counties. Mrs. Holbrook said Mr. White has an excellent staff but more personnel is needed. There is a huge caseload in Franklin County with over 1,000 cases pending.

Sheriff Steve Thomas expressed his appreciation to Mr. White. The visual presentations that Mr. White presents to juries helps them to be able to make informed verdicts. Sheriff Thomas said Mr. White does all he can to work within the system to keep criminals off the street.

C. Betty LeCroy

Mrs. LeCroy thanked the Commission Board for the job they do. She said the building she owns has five offices in the upper level with a large conference room and two large rooms are located downstairs. This building could be used for storage because the courthouse is running out of room. Mrs. LeCroy said she had the building appraised and has given this to Chairman Bridges to share with the Commission Board. This building has historic value as it was the first post office in Carnesville.

D. Carol Pope – water

Ms. Pope stated she lives on Shackelford Road which is located between Hwy 106 and Bray's Lake Road in the Sandy Cross area. Several years back, Ms. Pope came to the



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Commissioners Office and asked about getting water. At that time, Ms. Pope was told her road was number three on the list. Last year, Ms. Pope asked again about water and was told her road was number six on the list. She questioned how she went from number three to number six.

Ms. Pope said the property next to her was sold to Aubrey Lunsford for chicken houses. Mr. Lunsford cut down trees near Ms. Pope's property and Ms. Pope came to talk with Mrs. Thomas about this. Ms. Pope asked Mrs. Thomas what Mr. Lunsford was going to do for water. Mrs. Thomas told Ms. Pope that Mr. Lunsford was coming in from Hwy 106 for water he and paid \$25,000 for the lines. Ms. Pope stated Mrs. Thomas told her it would cost her \$10,000 to \$15,000 to get water. Chairman Bridges said this would be looked at by the management team.

E. Chandler Place Drive

Mrs. Thomas said in 2014 it was requested for the County to take over maintenance of Chandler Place Drive. At that time all of the easement documents were not received. Mrs. Thomas said the citizens of Chandler Place Drive have been able to obtain all the documentation. County staff inspected and gave a recommendation to accept maintenance from the road to the existing driveway located at 495 Chandler Place Drive. The property past 495 Chandler Place serves one property and has a gate across the road. Mrs. Thomas asked for this to be placed on the May regular meeting agenda. Commissioner Franklin clarified the maintenance would be ditch to ditch. Mrs. Thomas said yes and the ditches will be worked on first because of the flooding.

F. GRP/Lender agreement form

Mrs. Thomas said Franklin County has been working with GRP for some time and they will be the County's largest water customer. In the paperwork from last fall was an agreement between the lenders. County Attorney Bubba Samuels requested some of the language be changed in the agreement. The Commissioners tabled this item last fall until the attorneys could agree on the terms. Mrs. Thomas said the layman's terms of the agreement is if GRP were to fold the lenders would take on the agreement which would benefit Franklin County. At the May regular meeting, Mrs. Thomas will ask for approval of the agreement and authorization for the Chairman to sign the document.

G. SPLOST IV excess funds – gas pump system purchase

Mrs. Thomas said a gas pump system for County use is located at the Sheriff's Department. This system needs to be upgraded with a new pump. A quote has been received in the amount of \$9,900. Mrs. Thomas said excess SPLOST funds were discussed in January and February meetings. There is about \$8,600 left in SPLOST IV funds which can only be used for capital projects. The gas system is used by all County departments and Mrs. Thomas stated it would be a good use of excess funds. Mrs. Thomas said the best options for the County will be considered and as more information becomes available it will be provided to the Commissioners.



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H. Board appointments discussion

Mrs. Thomas said positions were advertised through the County's website and the Franklin County Citizen with applications being accepted through April 29, 2019. A summary of applications received was given to the Commissioners by the Clerk. A recommendation was received from DFCS to reappoint Marie Loftis as she meets all their requirements. Avita recommended reappoint of Angela Whidby and no other applications were received.

Mrs. Thomas asked the Commissioners to leave the acceptance of applications open for the Joint Development Authority pending enough applications be received for a recommendation from the Industrial Building Authority. Information has been provided to the Commission Board and the County Attorney is searching term limits for the Airport Authority. Mrs. Thomas told the Commissioners they can make the decision from the information provided.

The positions to be appointed/reappointed at the May meeting are DFCS, JDA, Avita and Airport Authority. Dr. Macomson questioned what the Joint Development Authority entails. Mrs. Thomas said her understanding is that it is a group effort between Hart County, Franklin County and Stephens County and they were involved with the development of the Gateway project. Dr. Macomson asked if the Joint Development Authority worked closely with the IBA. Mrs. Thomas said the JDA does work closely with the IBA and this is the reason for asking the IBA for recommendations.

I. Manager's Report

Mrs. Thomas said a proclamation recognizing National Library Week was received after the event had occurred and wording was changed to reflect this. She said this proclamation was provided to the Commissioners for review. This will be placed on the May regular meeting agenda to retroactively recognize National Library Week as being important to Franklin County.

A budget modification is needed for the Sheriff's Department for a total loss of a vehicle. The reimbursements have to be received as revenue although an expense has occurred. A new vehicle will be purchased with funds from the General Fund and the Sheriff's asset seizure funds.

Mrs. Thomas said every 10 years a Joint Comprehensive Plan has to be updated. At the beginning of the process a statement has to be read. Mrs. Thomas read the statement, this notice is to inform residents and area stakeholders that the County has begun working with other communities in the development of the State required update to the Franklin County Joint Comprehensive Plan. This document which is used to coordinate capital improvement projects and ensure compliance with State policies and programs is being developed between March and October 2019 with the support of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission also known as GMRC. This process will involve public forums and



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opportunities for local residents and stakeholders to provide input, ask questions and help shape the future of their community. In addition, there will be an online public survey and opportunities to review materials throughout the process. Anyone wishing to offer any comments, or questions may do so by contacting Adam Hazell, Planning Director for GMRC, in care of ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov. Please indicate Franklin County Joint Plan in the subject line. As specific details about the online survey and the public meetings become available, they will be shared at regular Commission meetings, on community bulletin boards and via multimedia outlets where possible. We look forward to hearing from everyone and thank you for your interest in your hometown.

The flash flooding was an event that was never expected to happen in Franklin County. Mrs. Thomas said the County had about one million dollars in damage with a large portion being attributed to a bridge out. Currently there are three closed roads for an undetermined time, Rocky Ford Road, Banks Road and Bald Eagle Road with the closed bridge. Franklin County met the threshold for individual declaration of emergency but the State did not as a whole. Because of the State not meeting the threshold, Mrs. Thomas said she does not anticipate any public assistance. The County is exploring emergency LMIG funding that will come at a 30% match. The estimate to make repairs to Rocky Ford Road and Banks Road is \$80,000 to \$90,000 each. Mrs. Thomas stated the documents will be prepared and she will ask for approval at the May meeting to submit them. SPLOST V funds will be used for the match. GDOT has been approached for help with the bridge on Bald Eagle Road.

Mrs. Thomas said information has been gathered on uninsured individuals for damage. Six residents were identified through the non-emergency line with knowledge of a hand full of others. It is not expected that Franklin County will have any individual assistance come in. For two residences the Red Cross was called for help by the EMA Department.

Appreciation was extended to everyone who helped during the flood situation by Mrs. Thomas in particular the public safety personnel, the Sheriff's Office, Public Works employees who worked extra, and the 911 staff who handled the calls on Good Friday when the Commissioners office was closed. Calls continued on Easter Monday with immediate needs of 55 roads. Mrs. Thomas said during the clean up from the flood, the County has been operating four motor graders. The immediate needs were taken care of within three to four days after the flood and routine maintenance is ongoing as well.

Mrs. Thomas said the caterpillar lease balloon payment is now due and will be paid out of SLOST V. \$2,128.12 is needed for repairs at Recreation. Mrs. Thomas told the Commissioners this will need to be approved at the May meeting. It was suggested that the Recreation Board come up with a capital expenditure budget so purchases do not have to be approved each time.

Two town hall meetings were held for the inspections program. There was one person in attendance for the first meeting and three people for the second meeting. Mrs. Thomas expressed thanks to both the Planning Commission and Commissioners who had



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representation at both meetings. Mrs. Thomas stated her recommendation is to move forward with implementing an inspections program.

Mrs. Thomas stated Teresa Boudway the GCIC Clerk at E911 scored 100% on the compliance audit. Mrs. Boudway is to be commended for this excellent work.

J. Announcements

Commissioner Franklin said the Road employees have done a great job in repairing the washed-out places. He said the people in his district are happy.

Commissioner Swails stated he was glad the Road employees were able to help out so quickly. He is also thankful the damage to the County wasn't greater.

Commissioner Wester expressed thanks to the Sheriff's Department, Road Department, EMS, fire departments and everyone else who helped during the flooding. Things were handled smoothly and he is appreciative of this.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the April Work Session at 7:26 p.m.

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