



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 9, 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: Kandice Eberhardt, Franklin County Citizen Leader

Staff: County Manager Beth Thomas
County Clerk Elaine Evans

Item 1: Call meeting to order – Chairman Bridges called the September regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and expressed appreciation for those in attendance.

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

Item 3: Approval of Minutes

August 5, 2019 public hearing
August 5, 2019 regular meeting
August 12, 2019 public hearing – 10:00 a.m.
August 12, 2019 public hearing – 6:00 p.m.
August 22, 2019 public hearing – 7:00 p.m.
August 22, 2019 special called meeting – 7:30 p.m.
August 27, 2019 work session

Chairman Bridges stated each Commissioner has had a chance to review the minutes. He asked for a motion and second to approve the August meetings minutes. Commissioner Wester made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Swails seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The minutes 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.

Item 4: Items for discussion

A. Public Comment

Chairman Bridges asked for public comment which is only a chance for the citizens to give information. Please come forward and state your name for the record.



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Roger Wilson of 295 Whippoorwill Lane, located a half mile from the new biomass facility on Hwy 198, stated his concern and many of his neighbors' concern is the noise coming from the plant. Prior to the start-up of GRP Mr. Wilson said he was told there would be no noise and no pollution, only steam from the smoke stack. The noise from the plant is unacceptable to the people of the neighborhood.

Mr. Wilson said he and his wife have 54 acres and have lived there for 40 years. They are retired and it would be hard for them to move. Mr. Wilson said GRP has talked about being good neighbors and he would like for them to control the noise from the plant. He said he and his wife spend half of their lives outside and they are afraid the noise level will make them unable to do so. If the noise is not controlled, Mr. Wilson stated he will have to seek restitution for damage and loss of property usage.

Garvis McElroy stated he lives down the road from Roger and Gerry Wilson. He came to the Planning Commission meeting and at that time was told nothing could be done about the plant because it had already been approved. Mr. McElroy toured the facility and was told there would be no noise and no pollution from burning the chips but steam would be seen. He stated when the plant starts up it is a loud roar, 24 hours a day and does not get any better unless there is an equipment break.

Leaves are on the trees now which makes for a small buffer for sound but once the leaves fall off for winter there will not be anything to buffer the noise. Mr. McElroy said he has 20 acres and lives farther away from the plant than Roger and Gerry Wilson but the noise is so bad you can't sit outside. He said something needs to be done about this and the Commissioners need to go listen to the noise by touring the neighborhood. The trucks going in and out are not a problem, only the noise from the running of the plant along with the smell of smoke.

Angie Hart of 3820 Hwy 198 said she lives about a fourth of a mile from the GRP plant. She stated the noise is unreal and is a huge problem for the community. Her house has double paned windows and they do not help. The noise level is so great it shakes her house and Ms. Hart is concerned it is doing something to the foundation.

Linda Abbs of 181 Whippoorwill Lane said the view from her front porch is the plant and there is nothing to buffer the noise. She stated her quality of life has diminished. Her house is on the market and she has no hope of selling it because of the noise. Any help from the Commissioners would be appreciated.

Gerry Wilson of 295 Whippoorwill Lane stated the noise level from the fans is so incredibly loud she cannot sleep at night. GRP does pressure releases which can last as long as four hours and they are as loud as Niagara Falls. Mrs. Wilson referenced statements from GRP officers who said there would be no noise and no dust and they wanted to be good neighbors. She also referenced the visit to the Lumberton, NC made by Beth Thomas and several others from the County who said it was louder on the inside than on the outside. Mrs. Wilson said the Lumberton plant has a housing around it to buffer the noise. She asked the Commissioners to visit the area surrounding GRP to gauge the noise level and ask them to be a good neighbor and help.



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James NeSmith of 263 NeSmith Road said his land is about 500 yards from GRP. He said when the steam goes off it is really loud but the noise level is always bad. Anything the Commissioners could do to help would be appreciated.

Gerry Wilson said she had looked at previous meeting minutes and newspaper articles concerning GRP. She questioned how their permits could be amended with EPD to allow them to burn railroad ties or wood with chemicals and if the County or the public was notified.

B. Probation Lease

Mrs. Thomas said the Northern Probation Judicial Circuit has an office in Franklin County and in other counties they serve. In Hart County the Probation Office rents space from the United States Postal Service. The USPS is asking for a resolution from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners that states the County Manager Beth Thomas can execute the lease for five years with them. Mrs. Thomas recommended approval for the lease and resolution for the Northern Judicial Probation Services with the United States Postal Service. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation from Mrs. Thomas. Commissioner Franklin made the motion to accept. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester seconded.

Chairman Bridges said the rent amount in the lease will gradually go up each year but it is the responsibility of Franklin County to provide office space for the Probation. Dr. Macomson questioned the rent amount. Mrs. Thomas said the first year it is \$8,424, second year \$8,676 and the fifth year it is \$9,480. Probation Services is self-sufficient with their fines and fees and they are net neutral. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Swails and Dr. Macomson.

C. Water Tank removal bid

Chairman Bridges said the removal of the water tank on Hwy 59 was discussed at the work session. He asked Mrs. Thomas to give more information on this. Mrs. Thomas said the water tank removal was put out to bid and only one bid was received in the amount of \$36,300 (\$41,300 to take the tank down and \$5,000 credit for scrap metal). The recommendation given by Mrs. Thomas was to move forward with the water tank removal as part of the GEFA water system improvement project and loan. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation. Dr. Macomson made the recommendation to remove the water tank on Hwy 59 for \$36,300. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Franklin seconded the motion.

Chairman Bridges said painting was looked into but the cost would be about the same and would need to be done every few years and the removal cost is one-time. Commissioner Wester questioned if all the funding will come from the GEFA loan. Mrs. Thomas confirmed it would. 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 Wester, Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Swails, Dr. Macomson and Chairman Bridges.



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D. Announcements

Mrs. Thomas stated due to staffing shortages the Senior Center will be closed to congregate services each Thursday in September for administrative duties.

Each time Mrs. Thomas has gone to observe the noise level at GRP the plant has been down. Mrs. Thomas said she will continue to monitor the situation and try to get answers. Dr. Macomson questioned if there is reason to believe the noise level will decrease once it is operational. Mrs. Thomas stated according to lay people it should be quieter. Commissioner Swails asked if the County has a noise ordinance. Mrs. Thomas said no, only a nuisance ordinance.

Chairman Bridges said he visited the plant in North Carolina and it was running fully and the noise wasn't bad. The issue at GRP will be monitored closely for answers. Commissioner Franklin said he toured GRP and was assured there would not be noise.

Chairman Bridges announced on October 3 the Chamber of Commerce will have a meeting at the Airport. He will be attending the ACCG meeting in Athens on October 2, 3 and 4.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 6:43 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