



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 13, 2020
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
MJ Kneiser, WLHR

Staff: County Manager Beth Thomas
Interim County Clerk Gina Kesler
County Attorney Bubba Samuels

Item 1: Call meeting to order – Chairman Bridges called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the first ever video conference meeting.

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

Item 3: Approval of Minutes

March 2, 2020 Regular Meeting

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes for March. Commissioner Franklin made the motion to approve the March minutes as written. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Chairman Bridges asked for a show of hands. The motion passed by five **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Franklin and Commissioner Swails.

Item 4: Items for Discussion

A. Public Hearing items



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1) Application for Variance regarding setbacks for residence – Greg & Wendy Bentley

Planning Director Scott DeLozier stated that Greg & Wendy Bentley currently live in a single-wide mobile home and are wanting to move the single-wide and place a double-wide in its place. The single-wide was placed on the property prior to zoning regulations being in place in Franklin County and now that they are expanding the footprint to a double-wide it doesn't meet the setbacks that need to be met.

The Planning Commission voted to approve the variance and has recommended that the Board approve the variance. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept. Commissioner Macomson made the motion to accept the recommendation to approve the application. 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 Wester, Commissioner Swails, Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Macomson and Commissioner Franklin.

2) Application for Rezoning from AI Agriculture Intensive to CI Commercial Industrial – Neal Little Road - Aubery Lunsford

Planning Director Scott DeLozier stated that Aubery Lunsford is wanting to rezone a 17.468-acre tract of land from Agriculture Intensive to Commercial Industrial. The reason he is wanting to rezone the property is to open up a new business where he will manufacture new trusses on site, store lumber for the construction of poultry houses and will also have a storefront where he will sell poultry house supplies and products to the public. Mr. DeLozier's recommendation to the planning commission was to approve the rezoning but with conditions attached to it. His conditions included not allowing ingress and egress of the site off of Neal Little Road but to use either state route 51 or state route 106. Factors included the safety concerns of the road with commercial and non-commercial traffic and the addition of a vegetative buffer. The planning commission voted to approve Mr. Lunsford's application with no conditions attached.

Commissioner Swails asked if Susan Russell was still on the Planning Commission and had the Planning Commission formalized what type of vegetation is acceptable for use as a buffer. Mr. DeLozier stated she was still on the Planning Commission and that they had not had that discussion with her. He stated that an evergreen is preferred but specific plants had not been identified for use. Commissioner Swails asked that they consider formalizing an acceptable vegetation to be used as a buffer.

Commissioner Macomson asked if there was a better classification other than commercial industrial. He said he felt the operation would be good in that area, but was concerned about the classification. Could it not be classified as commercial business or ag business and give some type of variance or conditional use? Mr. DeLozier stated it was discussed at the planning commission and he had spoken with the county attorney as



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well about the issue. Commissioner Macomson again stated that once it is classified as commercial industrial the classification will stay with the property even if the present owner sells it. So, then in the middle of pasture land there is a tract of land that is zoned commercial industrial. Mr. DeLozier stated he understood the concerns and that's where the need for attaching the conditions to the application would be important.

Commissioner Wester stated that his concern was handicapping future commissioners. He stated he would like for everything to be in writing if there are conditions or attachments with stipulations and all legalities are taken care of.

Mr. DeLozier stated he had spoken with the county attorney and he did not recommend going with a lighter zoning classification given the way that the land will be used and what it will be used for.

Mr. DeLozier asked Mr. Lunsford if he intended on using the trusses for residential building as well at the current time. Mr. Lunsford stated they do some residential, mostly barn house type work.

Commissioner Swails asked could this conditional use apply to any sales or future purchases so if Mr. Lunsford decides to sell it then the purchaser would have to reapply for a zoning request. County Attorney Bubba Samuels stated there was a way to do that but wouldn't agree that it is appropriate to have a condition that provides for a conditional use process. County Attorney Samuels said that the current application was for commercial industrial and that is the application the Board had before them and it did not include a request for a variance.

Commissioner Macomson asked had there been any input from the IBA (Industrial Building Authority). Mr. DeLozier stated he had not heard from the IBA on this issue.

Commissioner Wester asked would this need to be tabled until the County Attorney could write up the recommendation? Commissioner Macomson asked how likely was it that something like this might be challenged in the future? County Attorney Samuels stated that since the planning commission had approved the application without conditions, and now that the Board had asked for conditions to be drafted that between the applicant, himself and the planning director they could draft something the applicant would be happy with.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to table the issue. Commissioner Macomson made the motion to table the issue until the county attorney could meet with Mr. Lunsford and come to a consensus on the issue. Commissioner Wester seconded the motion. Commissioner Wester asked was there any way we could get the item voted on at the April work session. Mr. Samuels asked was the next work session currently scheduled. The next work session will be held on April 28, 2020. Mr. Samuels stated he should have the conditions drafted this week and sent to Mr. Lunsford for his consideration.



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After no further 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 Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Franklin and Commissioner Swails.

B. National Library Week 2020 Proclamation

County Manager Beth Thomas recognized Mrs. West as the Director of the Royston Public Library and the Lavonia Carnegie Library. The proclamation recognizes National Library Week as April 19-25, 2020. Mrs. West stated that National Library Week would still be celebrated on their Facebook pages. She reminded everyone of their virtual library options.

Mrs. Thomas recommended that the Board consider approving this proclamation for National Library Week of 2020.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the National Library Week Proclamation 2020. Commissioner Macomson made the motion to approve the National Library Week Proclamation 2020. 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 Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Franklin and Commissioner Swails.

C. Resolution Authorizing Waiver of Penalties and Interest by Tax Commissioner

Mrs. Thomas stated the resolution was sent by Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin and updated to reflect Franklin County. She recommended that the date be inserted to allow the penalties and interest be waved for any tax returns with the original deadline of payments falling between April 1 – May 31. Mrs. Thomas recommended that the Board approve this resolution to authorize the Tax Commissioner to wave any penalties for personal property tax returns with the original deadline falling between April 1 – May 31.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to approve the resolution to authorize the Tax Commissioner to wave any penalties for personal properties tax returns with the original deadline falling between April 1 – May 31. Commissioner Franklin made the motion to approve the resolution. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Wester 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 Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Franklin and Commissioner Swails.



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D. Water Tower Proposal for Rental of Space for Equipment

Mrs. Thomas stated that Paladin Wireless (wireless internet service provider) had approached the county when the water tower on Black Snake Road was being erected. They said that given the height of the tower that placing their equipment on the tower would allow them to provide internet service to residents in the area. The water tower tank is being paid for through GEFA funds and an ARC Grant; which is a federal grant. Mrs. Thomas had to seek permission since the loan hasn't been closed out yet from GEFA who then reached out to the federal government to see if it would be ok to lease space on the tank. Since internet is provided to all citizens, they agreed to allow the county to move forward with the lease. She asked for the Board to consider not delaying the vote since access to broadband in our area is very important due to the public health crisis. She recommends the Board approve the lease rental of the tank space for the purpose of a wireless internet service provider and authorize the Chairman to work with the County Attorney and County Manager to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Paladin Wireless and during the pandemic period would recommend free rental on the tank.

Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to move forward with the water tower proposal. Commissioner Swails made the motion to allow the County Manager to enter into a lease agreements with not just Paladin Wireless so that it's not exclusive to one provider but that it would be open to future providers and allow her to provide this as a free service temporarily until an agreement can be reached once the COVID-19 situation is over and possibly make it so past due payments can be made to the Board retroactively after this is done. Chairman Bridges asked for a second. Commissioner Macomson seconded the motion. Commissioner Macomson asked Mrs. Thomas if Paladin had indicated what kind of service area they might serve. Mrs. Thomas stated that they showed a sample of the Royston area they were serving, but did not give specific numbers or a map. She said she would like a service area map and some number so that the Board would know what kind of benefit this is bringing to our citizens. This would also help in negotiating the price and keeping it as low as possible. Commissioner Macomson asked if the idea of Wi-Fi hotspots had been asked about since he had heard there were a lot of kids in the area that don't have good internet service that might benefit them until school is out. Mrs. Thomas said the school system would be a good source for that information. She said maybe they could negotiate free rent to the provider in return for WIFI hotspots and then transition over to a rental model. There was no further 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 Chairman Bridges, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Franklin and Commissioner Swails.



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E. C&D Landfill Permit Transfer Appeal

Chairman Bridges stated the Board needed to appoint a subcommittee to work with the County Attorney on the appeals process of the C& D Landfill Permit Transfer ruling handed down by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). He stated that since this is in District 1, he would like for Commissioner Franklin to be on the subcommittee and then he would take volunteers to serve with Commissioner Franklin. Commissioner Macomson volunteered to serve with Commissioner on the subcommittee with County Attorney Bubba Samuels.

F. Manager's Report

The County Manager thanked the Board and the public for participating in the Zoom Board meeting. The virtual meeting was held tonight to conform with social distancing.

The County Manager thanked the county employees and emergency services (Law Enforcement, EMS, 911) for all of their hard work during the current public health crisis.

County offices have been closed to the public during the public health crisis, and county staff have used this time to work on projects inside their county office. Several trees have been removed from around the courthouse during this time as well.

She stated there were around 55 roads that were blocked and cleared by the Road Department, Sheriff's Department, and the local Fire Departments throughout last night and during the day.

Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Wester, and Commissioner Macomson thanked the county employees for their hard work clearing the road ways, helping citizens out, and cleaning up during the night and during the day from last night's storms.

Commissioner Swails thanked the County Manager for doing everything she can to make the Zoom meeting happen and for coordinating with the staff and employees at the county level. He also wanted to thank the hard-working people of Franklin County, the small business owners, the farmers. The backbone of this county is the people doing things the right way, following the mandates and still doing the best they can for the county.

Chairman Bridges echoed what the other Commissioners' sentiments and thanked the county staff for using new technology and bringing the meeting together tonight.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.



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Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2020

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

Gina L. Kesler, Interim County Clerk

All meetings are held at the Franklin County Justice Center unless indicated. Please visit the County's website www.franklincountygga.gov for more information.

Individuals with disabilities who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting or the facilities should call the Office of the County Clerk at 706-384-2483 to allow the County to make reasonable accommodations for those persons.