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**FRANKLIN COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
June 1, 2020  
6:00 P.M.**

Present: 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  
MJ Kneiser, *WLHR*

Staff: County Manager, Beth Thomas  
Planning Director, Scott DeLozier  
Interim Clerk, Gina Kesler

**Item 1 & 2: Call Meeting to Order, Invocation, and Pledge of Allegiance** – Chairman Bridges called the June Regular Business Meeting to order at 6:00 pm and welcomed everyone. He asked Commissioner Macomson to lead the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

**Item 3: Approval of Minutes** – Commissioner Wester made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Macomson seconded the motion. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

**Item 4: Items for Discussion**

**A. Public Hearing Items:**

- a. **Conditional Use Permit for four house poultry farm & variance from Mr. Tyler Owenby:** Chairman Bridges asked for Planning Director Scott DeLozier to come forward and explain the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Director DeLozier explained that on May 14<sup>th</sup> the Planning and Zoning Commission heard Mr. Tyler Owenby's presentation. The nearest neighbors, the Sweatman's expressed some concerns over the poultry farm. The planning staff recommended that the planning commission approve the conditional use and the variance request on the condition that a



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vegetative buffer be planted between Mr. Owenby's property and the western property line. Director DeLozier addressed the differing recommendations on the vegetative buffer. The planning commission recommended the trees be planted at a height of 4-6 feet when planted and Director DeLozier recommended a 2 ½ inch caliper (diameter) that would put it to a 6 ½ - 8-foot tree when planted. The second difference was Director DeLozier recommended no more than 30% of the trees be planted of the same species, with the reasoning being that if you only plant one species and it fails for some reason, there are no others left surviving. Director DeLozier also made note of the importance of the board not dictating the type of trees to be planted, because if they fail there will be no buffer and it will come back on the board dictating that decision. If the 30% recommendation is used, the trees should reach 20-30 ft at the age of maturity and once the buffer has reached maturity it serves as a visual screen. It should be one row of trees planted 10ft wide. Chairman Bridges recommended the board follow Director DeLozier's recommendation of the vegetative buffer on the western property line of trees that have a 2 1/2-inch caliper and will reach around 20-30ft once they hit maturity. These trees will create a visual buffer and no more than 30% of the same species. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion to accept the recommendation. Commissioner Swails made the motion to accept the county Planning & Zoning Director's recommendation. Commissioner Franklin gave the second. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

- b. **Request for Variance for side yard setbacks for Mr. Joey Gilbert:** Director DeLozier explained that this was also heard by the planning commission on May 14<sup>th</sup>. The request includes a 5-acre tract with 5 separate houses, and the client would like to divide the property into 5 individual lots. Director DeLozier recommended that the board approve the 5-foot variance. Chairman Bridges asked for any questions, there were none. Commission Macomson made the motion to approve the motion. Commissioner Wester gave the second. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

**B. Public Works**

- a. **Water System Improvement Project (GEFA) Line Extension:** Chairman Bridges explained that this matter had been previously discussed in the work session and asked County Manager Beth Thomas to give a brief overview. County Manager Beth Thomas asked that the board consider and approve the recommendation of the lowest bid to Arrowwood General Contracting in the amount of \$571,493.30. This project includes installing water main on



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Shackleford Road, Arlon Williams Road, Keller Road, and Williams Bridge Road and will be funded through our GEFA water systems improvement loan grant and ARC funds. Commissioner Franklin made a motion to accept the water extension improvement. Commissioner Macomson gave the second. No discussion. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

- b. **Lime Slurry Injection for Sewer:** Chairman Bridges briefly acknowledged the sewage problem the county has been experiencing and invited County Manager Beth Thomas to go over the Lime Slurry proposal. County Manager Thomas asked the board to consider the recommendation presented at the work session and award the bid for a lime slurry feed system to Burnett Lime Company in the amount of \$147,600.00. This is a very specialized service. The sole provider and bidder was Burnett Lime Company. The project will be funded through our SPLOST V funds allocated to water and utilities. Chairman Bridges called for any questions and asked if anyone would like to make a motion. Commissioner Wester made a motion to approve the lime slurry project. Commissioner Swails made the second. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

**C. Intergovernmental Agreement with Public Defender:** County Manager Thomas explained that annually all 5 counties of the northern judicial circuit enter into an indigent defense agreement every year. This agreement is provided by the public defender to our county attorney who then sends it to us the FY 2021 agreement shows an increase of \$521.00 for the year. The county's expense is prorated based off of the number of cases in the circuit. Manager Thomas asked the board to consider the recommendation that was discussed in the work session to approve the indigent defense agreement for FY 2021. Chairman Bridges asked for a motion. Commissioner Macomson made a motion to accept. Commissioner Swails seconded the motion. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

**D. Distribution of Gateway Industrial Park Taxes:** Chairman Bridges explained that the percentage was broken down between Hart & Franklin County. County Manager Thomas stated that this intergovernmental agreement dates way back between Hart and Franklin County and it established the Gateway Park. In the official documents it reads that Hart County shall bear 75% of the cost and Franklin County shall bear 25% and that Hart County shall be the lead of this investment and both counties are entitled to Ad Valorem taxes and other taxes payable by any tenant of Gateway Park



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in an amount equal to the percentage of investment by said county. In 2015 Franklin County received their first check and there were questions as to where the money was supposed to go since the original agreement is silent on that matter. Manager Thomas reported that Franklin County is currently in receipt of several checks and this has been verified by the Hart County check register. Manager Thomas went on to make her recommendation that since the agreement does not dictate what to do with the funds that the board of commissioners should allocate the funds accordingly. Manager Thomas calculated what we have received thus far and the total came to \$129,477.77. Manager Thomas recommended that the county cut a check to the School System for \$80,608.67, and to the IBA \$1,154.29. The taxes for 2017, 2018, & 2019 have not been distributed to the county yet. The agreement does state that Franklin County can reach out at any time for that distribution to be reassessed. Manager Thomas asked the board to approve this payment and authorize her to work with the attorney to determine whether or not an intergovernmental agreement is needed between all of the applicable taxing authorities in Franklin County and also determine the best method for allocation of funds. Chairman Bridges opened the floor for questions. Commissioner Macomson stated he had talked with the tax commissioner Bobby Martin and he had some information that was pertinent to how it is broken apart. Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin stated that he was concerned that the state's portion of tax had not been taken out of the funds received by Franklin County and he also expressed concern that we did not have all of the records as they extend back to 2007 and County Manager Thomas only had records dating back to 2009. Manager Thomas explained that according to the notes and information she received from Hart County, the state tax had already been taken out and disbursed and if that was not the case it could be verified by Hart County. Mr. Martin also stated that the first check was received in 2012 not 2015 and that he has a copy of the 2012 check. Manager Thomas stated that according the copy of the Hart County check register the dates matched up regarding the checks, so if something else was distributed or if they were operating from a different tax system it could be checked with Hart County. Manager Thomas also noted that there were notices of tax abatements on the records received from Hart County. Manager Thomas offered to have Mr. Martin potentially meet with her and Hart County's new tax commissioner to verify all of the details. Chairman Bridges stated the board will authorize Mrs. Thomas to work with Franklin County's Tax Commissioner, Hart County's Tax Commissioner, and county attorney Bubba Samuels. Chairman Bridges called for any questions and Mr. Martin expressed his concern that the board of commissioners to the best of his knowledge is not authorized to collect and distribute Ad Valorem taxes and that they should be going through the constituted channels of the tax commission office. Chairman Bridges and Manager Thomas agreed. County Attorney declined commenting until he read the full agreement, but stated he did not mind working with the County Manager and the tax office on this matter. Manager Thomas asked prior to her cutting the check back over to Mr. Martin's office that there should be documentation allowing her to release those funds. Commissioner Macomson asked who the 2012 check originally came to. Mr.



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Martin stated it came to him and he was instructed to hold onto it. Commissioner Macomson asked if it was separate from the current funds. Mr. Martin claimed it is separate, but it was deposited into the county's account. Attorney Samuels stated that there seemed to be a question as to the actual amount in question. Manager Thomas concurred stating she would need to know the timeline of the 2012 check to check the green bars and find out why it was not documented in Hart County's check register. Mr. Martin stated it was in March. Chairman Bridges thanked Mr. Martin and asked for a motion to turn over the checks to the tax commissioner's office. Manager Thomas asked that commissions be withheld. Mr. Martin stated that commissions would be withheld and they would treat it the same as any other tax bill. Manager Thomas asked if this would reduce the amount of funds going to the school and the IBA and Mr. Martin stated they would not withhold for the IBA. Commissioner Macomson made a motion to send over the Gateway Taxes to the tax commissioner's office to allocate and disburse funds. Commissioner Swails made the second. No discussion. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

- E. David Jordan – Gateway Industrial Park Revenue:** Chairman Bridges welcomed Mayor Jordan of Royston to the meeting. Mayor Jordan stated his main concern was that he called Hart County's tax commissioner and they are not in possession of the original agreement and would like to have a copy. Mayor Jordan also requested that there be a review of all past transactions dating back to 2007. Mayor Jordan questioned if the money had been distributed and why did it take so long to be distributed and why there was a delay on the past 3 years for collection. Mayor Jordan recommended the Gateway Taxes be turned over to the tax commissioner's office fully and asked that the state allocation be sorted out. The second issue addressed by Mayor Jordan that was not listed on the agenda was the SPLOST allocation and how the cities are funding the county's sinking fund and the cities have not borrowed any money. Mayor Jordan further elaborated that he believed it was wrong and the cities should not be involved with the sinking funds and are not privy to the county's actions involving the sinking fund. Mayor Jordan asked that the commissioners review this matter, as well as the danger of depending on SPLOST in the current economic climate. County Manager Thomas stated that she was unaware this topic was to be discussed since it was not on the agenda, but could provide some information regarding Mayor Jordan's concerns. Manager Thomas explained that the county's initial borrowing repayment is over and the sinking fund is complete, this was the last year and following state law this information was provided to the auditors and she would be happy to send over a copy to the Mayor as well. Manager Thomas also gave a brief update on SPLOST, as of March, the pandemic hadn't fully hit and April should only show a small dip as everything is reviving. Manager Thomas also touched on the hospital, stating that it has nothing to do with Royston's allocations since it was just the initial borrowing and the last debt service payment will be made in July of this year. Mayor Jordan explained his concern that if the county chose to borrow anymore funds or bond it out that the burden would be on



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the cities to replenish the sinking fund only to be reimbursed six to eight months later, when the city is not making the choice to borrow. Commissioner Macomson asked about April SPLOST. Manager Thomas responded that what we receive in May is March's point of sales and an example would be if a consumer pays for a coke in March, the vendor pays the state in April, and the state pays the county in May. The amount ended up being approximately \$337,000.00, and the last 12 months have been running right at \$336,000.00. This information was emailed out to the board right before the meeting. Mayor Jordan asked didn't the agreement state that as soon as the funds hit the county's account they are to be disbursed. Manager Thomas stated that the agreement says you have to take care of the sinking funds first, then you have so many days to disburse, furthermore the statements were just received this past Friday and it will be done within the next check run. Manager Thomas reiterated that all check registers are sent to the auditors every year and the dates could be provided to the Mayor and his office. Mayor Jordan stated that it seemed to always run a month behind according to his records. Manager Thomas firmly disagreed stating she would be happy to meet with him and show him the records after the meeting. Chairman Bridges thanked Mayor Jordan for his time.

- F. Board Appointments Update:** An updated list of applicants was sent out to the board from the County Manager prior to the meeting. The library and DFACS board will have upcoming appointments in June. Appointments are advertised on the county website. Chairman Bridges gave an announcement that there is an ongoing GBI investigation involving the Airport Authority Appointments and he asked the county attorney to go into more detail. Attorney Samuels stated information was received information from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation that there is an open investigation into the financial dealings of the Hart-Franklin County Airport Authority and the conflict of interest issues particularly involving hangar leases owned by members of the airport authority board including the appointee serving as the airport authority chairman. Attorney Samuels provided supporting documentation from various sources on the subject and included his legal opinion and the Attorney General's opinion. According to the GBI, the law could not be clearer on the matter of conflict of interest, they expressed concern that no action had been taken previously. Attorney Samuels explained that the terms were almost up for reappointment. Historical research gathered by Attorney Samuels indicates that the term of office of both of Franklin County's Board of Commissioner appointments expired that day (June 1, 2020). Attorney Samuels stated that it was his recommendation to proceed with consideration of new appointees immediately. Chairman Bridges explained that Franklin County appoints two members, Hart County appoints two members, IBA from each county appoints one member, and then within the six people they appoint one more member. Chairman Bridges stated that up until last year when Mr. Addison was appointed it appears that the legislation had not been fully understood and the board did what the Attorney and GBI are deeming inappropriate. Commissioner Swails asked has the GBI stated that it is inappropriate or they are investigating it because some are saying that it is



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inappropriate. Attorney Samuels replied that from his conversation with the GBI, they stated the law could not be clearer and they wondered why Franklin County had not removed him before now. Commissioner Swails asked if the laws were state level or set up by the commissioners and possibly amendable. Attorney Samuels explained it is local legislation enacted by the general assembly and it is amendable by the board of commissioners, but further research would be required to see what circumstances were required to amend. Typically, local legislation enacted by the general assembly has to be amended by the general assembly. Chairman Bridges spoke with state representative Allen Powell who said it had to come from state legislation and Attorney Samuels was asked if this was a correct statement. Attorney Samuels concurred that it was enacted by the Georgia General Assembly the county board of commissioners did not enact the law, they created the Franklin-Hart Airport Authority. Commissioner Macomson asked if this was common practice because he had called around and the general consensus was that pilots do serve on airport authorities and commissions and there seems to be some disagreement over whether or not it is a conflict of interest. Commissioner Macomson also asked if the attorney general could give an opinion on it. Attorney Samuels stated the attorney general has given an opinion it which was included in the documents he provided to the board. Commissioner Macomson asked was the opinion on this specific case because it is happening all across the state and if we changed it would totally break apart the airport authority because half of the members are pilot-tenants. Attorney Samuels stated his opinion was not the only opinion and that it may very well break up the authority, but the law is what it is and the commission has control over it's two appointments. Commissioner Swails asked could the law be amended if the board discussed it with Hart County and agreed on adjustments. Attorney Samuels stated that the general assembly has the power to amend. Chairman Bridges stated from what he gathered the county is breaking the law. Attorney Samuels stated it was very concerning to the GBI investigator that the issue has been known and not dealt with. Commissioner Macomson asked the timeline of the GBI investigation. Attorney Samuels did not know. Commissioner Macomson wondered if it would be appropriate to wait until the investigation concluded to take action. Attorney Samuels pointed out that the vacancy was available today (June 1, 2020). Commissioner Macomson stated that appointees can serve until their appointment expires, as this has been done with several members. Chairman Bridges noted that no one knows when the GBI investigation will be over, and the legislation according to what Attorney Samuels sent to the board is a direct conflict of interest and one of the major things that came to the board's attention was the switch of a public hangar for a private hangar, and there is only one person that is not in line. Commissioner Wester asked if we had any communication with Hart County because it looks like the board was not on the same page. Attorney Samuels stated they have communicated with them. Chairman Bridges stated he had discussed extensively with the Chairman of Hart County and the Hart county attorney was part of the conversation as well. Commissioner Wester stated he had spoken with the chairman too. Chairman Bridges stated that it was suggested that the commissioners sit down



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together and solve the issue, but since the legislation cannot be changed by the commission then there is no way to make it correct without the proper legislation, we can allow the GBI make a determination as was discussed with all the commissioners except for one. Chairman Bridges continued that the responsible thing to do would be to let the GBI decide what is going on. Commissioner Wester stated the GBI has not yet reached a verdict, and that he felt the board was jumping in too fast and that they should sit down with Hart County who, according to Commissioner Wester has expressed their willingness to sit down together and discuss the issue. There was some discussion and disagreement between the Chairman and Commissioner Wester about conflicting conversations with the Hart County Commission and Representative Powell. It was brought up that Commissioner Wester and Commissioner Swails attended a meeting with the Franklin-Hart County Airport Authority Chairman and Vice-Chairman and a commissioner from Hart County. At this meeting the hangar swap was brought up by the Vice-Chairman Mike Ward. Commissioner Swails stated that it was a general invitation and the other board members would've received the same email. Commissioner Swails further expressed his feelings that they all want the best people in these positions and that he did not understand the concept of conflict of interest since other organizations like the Royston downtown development authority, that he is a part of encourages downtown businesses to be on the board and be part of that success. Commissioner Swails explained that the pilots have a vested interest and put in a lot of personal time and money into the airport to make it nice for the entire community and attract businesses. Furthermore, Commissioner Swails suggested that the board wait until more information comes from the GBI and also suggested reaching out to Allen Powell and communicating with Hart County for clarification. Commissioner Macomson stated he wants the board to be in compliance with the law but from his investigation this is a common, widespread practice. Commissioner Macomson also expressed his belief that Hart County as a joint controlling member should have the same qualifications for their appointments. Chairman Bridges stated his views that there is a clear opinion from the highly qualified County Attorney of a conflict of interest and when there is a person that wants to have a plane in the hangar and this person is in a position of power to determine their own rent, common sense dictates that it puts these individuals in an awkward position to be able to set their own rent and switch hangars from a public to a private hangar. In Chairman Bridges experience as a superintendent and educator the proper protocol dictates advertising a public facility, taking bids on it, and analyzing those bids to make a decision whether or not to accept. Chairman Bridges continued that when an individual is on an authority and they make a decision without doing those things and they go ahead and make a switch ... He digressed that he had not been educated that way and was interested to see how the GBI interprets it and that he fully trusts the opinion of the county attorney in this matter. It was also made clear by Chairman Bridges that the intent of this discussion was not to try to remove or replace anyone, it was for transparency and discussion. Commissioner Macomson inquired if a conflict of interest issue had ever come up before. Chairman Bridges



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responded that it had not until this recent issue came to his attention. Commissioner Macomson asked what would be the extent of the GBI's authority regarding pilot tenants if they come to the conclusion that it is a conflict of interest. Attorney Samuels explained that they have the authority to refer the case to the district attorney since it is arguably a crime. Commissioner Macomson asked for further explanation on whether the individual would be brought before the district attorney or if they would bring the whole board for appointing this individual. Attorney Samuels explained that the GBI has the authority to bring a criminal case before the district attorney to decide if they want to bring it before the grand jury and there are felonies (cited in the documentation provided to the commissioners) that are implicated by the existence of the conflict of interest and the board does not need to rely on the GBI to determine whether or not this is a conflict of interest. Commissioner Macomson stated he understood, he just wanted clarification on the extent of the GBI's authority. Chairman Bridges felt from what was presented that the board is breaking the law by having this individual on the board and now that it has clearly been brought to the boards attention that if they do not take action the GBI could potentially charge the board. Attorney Samuels stated the way it was put to him by the GBI investigator was that it was suspicious that this situation has not been handled already. Commissioner Macomson asked if the GBI was addressing this issue with Hart County as well since they have three pilot tenants. Attorney Samuels stated that he was there in his capacity as Franklin County's representative on this issue. Commissioner Macomson asked to get the attorney general's official opinion on this issue since it is binding to cities and counties. Attorney Samuels stated that individual opinions can be requested from the attorney general. Mayor Jordan attempted to interject his opinion that it is not binding and Attorney Samuels along with Chairman Bridges asked him to refrain since he was not the county's attorney. Chairman Bridges reiterated his sentiments that he would like to follow the county attorney's recommendation and that he does not want people coming up to him a month from now saying "Thomas Bridges, you knew about this situation and did nothing about it." Chairman Bridges asked for his opinion to be documented in the minutes that the board needs to deal with this situation and we will let the GBI decide. Attorney Samuels emphasized to the board that he has told them it is a conflict of interest and that they have a vacancy in the position and along that same line of what the Chairman just said, by not taking action to replace him tonight the board is making an affirmative decision to allow him to continue to serve another month or until you appoint a new person and that is contrary to his legal opinion and advice. Commissioner Swails asked who had applied and how many applications had been received. County Manager Thomas answered that in the last twelve months some had applied with no preference and others with specific interest. Those individuals were: Jennifer Renzetti (JDA, open to other boards), Carolee Coker (appointed to Planning Commission, open to other boards), Courtney Umbehant (JDA, no other positions desired), Allen Bryant (Recreation, no others), Andy Myers (Recreation, maybe open to other boards), Eddie W Grizzle (Appointed Tax Assessors, no others), Boyd Sewell (Planning, willing to serve on JDA, & IBA),



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Eddie Addison (Airport, no other boards), Johnny Cox (Airport, no other boards), Sheila Brock (Any), Andrew Murphy (JDA, open to others via phone call first to discuss), Bill Flowers (Airport, no others). Commissioner Macomson asked if the Airport Authority Board made any recommendations. Manager Thomas stated she would have to check the Airport Authority's minutes and that they should be posted online. Commissioner Macomson asked if any of the applicants were pilots and asked if Mr. Cox was a pilot. Commissioner Swails said he is. Manager Thomas explained that the issue is not if they are a pilot or not but if they are a pilot-tenant or have a financial contract. There is a provision on the initial questionnaire all applicants fill out that asks if they are aware of any potential conflicts of interest that would keep them from serving on the board and it states they must disclose that information. Commissioner Swails stated there are a bunch of people applying, other than one that don't know anything about aviation that are okay with serving on an aviation board and he has a hard time seeing how they could serve effectively unless they plan on working on business relationships or bringing businesses to our area. Chairman Bridges stated the need for a board free of any conflicts of interest and that all these people serving with planes in the hangars and so forth keep doing what they're doing with exception to rules and regulations that is conflict of interest. Chairman Bridges continued that when money goes missing from the fuel fund and one person says just write it off, they need a person to step up and say we need to look into that rather than just writing it off. Commissioner Wester asked what was Chairman Bridges talking about with the fuel fund. Chairman Bridges continued that people should not be placed in a position where they would have a conflict of interest and that he was in favor of pilots serving and wants volunteers to continue helping. Chairman Bridges asked if the board needed to remove the one that is in conflict tonight and pick out a replacement because he stated the need to take a look at the applications before making a decision on a replacement. Attorney Samuels stated that there is a provision for removal, but in his opinion, it does not apply to this particular situation. Commissioner Macomson asked didn't both of the appointee's terms expire tonight. Attorney Samuels stated yes, so replacement would not be an issue, but the provision in the law states that an individual once appointed will continue to serve until a successor has been appointed. Chairman Bridges asked if a conflict of interest was discovered does the law say the board can take him off. Attorney Samuels stated that the board would have to appoint a successor. Chairman Bridges stated since they did not have anyone prepared, they would need to look at the applications. Commissioner Macomson stated according to the county attorney the board must take action tonight and cannot leave this individual in place. County Manager Thomas distributed the applications to the board and stated that from her experience serving on a board requires an interest in the community, it doesn't require a skill set. Manager Thomas continued that when she looks at the airport she thinks about economic development from when she has hopped on planes in a company jet someone else today mention the public safety aspect as well, we all take different views so experience doesn't necessarily prevent someone from doing a good job on a board. Jennifer Renzetti, Carolee Coker, Courtney Umbehant, Alan



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Bryant, Andy Myers, Eddie Wayne Grizzle, Boyd Sewell, Eddie Addison, Johnny Coxx, Sheila Brock, Andrew Murphy, and Bill Flowers. Commissioner Macomson asked if Mr. Sewell's application listed that he would serve in other areas. Manager Thomas stated he did and he specifically listed planning, JDA, & IBA. Manager Thomas explained that she would hate to suggest this, but the board could always appoint someone and that person could resign, if they so choose. Commissioner Macomson asked is there any conflict with someone like Andrew Murphy serving on city council. Manager Thomas stated that this would be a matter to direct to the attorney but in her opinion, there would be no influence from the city side. Attorney Samuels stated at this time he did not know but he would be happy to research it, his best guess would be probably no, he cannot serve. Commissioner Swails inquired if Cody Grizzle had applied. Manager Thomas replied that they went through both email accounts and the county clerk email to gather applicants and they did not come across one from him. Commissioner Macomson pointed out that he is the magistrate judge and that wouldn't work either. Manager Thomas asked if staff could be appointed. Chairman Thomas stated it was good to have lines of communication from the airport authority to the commission and wondered if it would be permissible for the board to appoint a volunteer employee of the county without conflict of interest until they can solve this issue. Attorney Samuels stated that being an employee of the county would not exclude someone from serving. Commissioner Macomson raised the past issue involving the county clerk and explained that he could see how this could be an issue asking an employee to serve on a completely autonomous board and that he was not in favor of that. Chairman Bridges expressed the opinion that it would be a plus for the county to have a person on the board. Commissioner Wester asked when did the board know that we were going to be reappointing someone at this meeting. Commissioner Swails commented that it felt like bait & switch. Commissioner Wester felt four of the board members were being blindsided. Chairman Bridges stated he had talked to three of the board members about it. Commissioner Wester asked when did it come up that the board would have to immediately appoint somebody without doing their homework. Chairman Bridges stated that he agreed that the board did not need to move too quick and this involves communication. Commissioner Wester and Swails expressed their disdain that they were both unaware that action would be required immediately according to the county attorney. Attorney Samuels stated that if he was on the board, he would be making a reappointment for his successor. Commissioner Macomson expressed that from what the attorney is saying, the board would be derelict and he would be uncomfortable leaving this hanging. Chairman Bridges stated that he felt the board should appoint a county employee for the time being and Commissioner Macomson disagreed stating that they have a stack of applicants to choose from. Commissioner Swails asked if Johnny Coxx had a rental space at the airport. Manager Thomas stated she did not know but she could find out. Tax Commissioner Martin spoke up that if the situation is this serious, has the GBI reached out to Hart County as well. Chairman Bridges noted that the GBI is currently looking at Franklin County's appointees, specifically. Commissioner Macomson stated that if the GBI are looking



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at their two pilot tenants as well as our one pilot tenant. Commissioner Macomson made it clear that he was not comfortable making a decision until the GBI investigation concluded, but our attorney is advising us that we must take action immediately. Attorney Samuels stated he understood the concern and offered up the option of the board requesting the individual's resignation and that would show official action demonstrating that the board is not being complicit. Commissioner Wester announced that Boyd Sewell texted him stating that Chairman Bridges had spoken to Mr. Sewell about being on the airport authority board on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and he said no that he would not be interested. Commissioner Wester also explained that he did not think it would be a good idea to put a county employee in the position of serving on that board with a negative outcome and he reminded the board of the situation with the prior county clerk. Open discussion was had over the remaining applicants. Commissioner Macomson made a motion to take a fifteen-minute recess. Commissioner Swails made the second. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

**- 15 Minute Recess -**

Chairman Bridges called for the meeting to resume. Commissioner Macomson made the motion. Commissioner Wester made the second. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges. Commissioner Macomson made a motion to ask for the resignation of both appointees: Eddie Addison & Bill Flowers and the board will have a special called meeting within the next week to appoint new representatives to the Airport Authority. Commissioner Swails gave the second. Manager Thomas asked did the board want her to draft the letter for the resignations. Commissioner Macomson responded that the board would authorize County Manager Beth Thomas to draft that letter and the special called meeting will be Monday June 8, 2020 at 6 pm. Chairman Bridges opened the floor for questions. Commissioner Wester believes this issue was politically and personally driven and that the board was blindsided by this coming about with the GBI at such an odd time with it being a week before appointments. Commissioner Swails stated that he agreed fully with Commissioner Wester's statements and that this was a clear example of bait & switch tactics. Commissioner Swails elaborated he was led to believe that the board was only supposed to discuss appointments and there were no plans to take any action, but now the GBI is down the board's throat and this information should've been disclosed prior to the meeting. Chairman Bridges stated that the attorney gave his opinion and we only learned about the GBI today. Commissioner Macomson stated that he was also unaware that action would have to be taken when the board was not prepared to appoint replacements and according to prior discussions that were had amongst the Chairman and commissioners, the general consensus was to wait until the GBI concluded their investigation. Commissioner Franklin stated that it would've been nice to have at least gotten and email giving some prior notice. Commissioner Macomson asked for the origins of the GBI investigation. Chairman



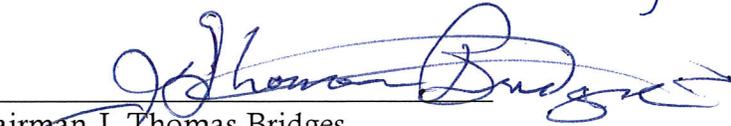
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Bridges stated he did not initiate the investigation, and that the county had been conducting its own investigation into the hangar leases that mysteriously disappeared when the county clerk left. Sheriff Stevie Thomas stated that he had only been involved on the matter of the missing files and he was not involved with the GBI portion of the investigation. The motion passed by five (5) **YES** votes to zero (0) **NO** votes. The **YES** votes were Commissioner Franklin, Commissioner Macomson, Commissioner Wester, Commissioner Swails and Chairman Bridges.

**G. Announcements:** Chairman Bridges thanked Shane Scoggins and staff for working so hard to get the T.V. situation sorted out. Commissioner Eddie Wester stated that he has been honored to serve the county up until tonight's meeting.

Chairman Bridges thanked everyone for attending. Commissioner Wester made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Macomson seconded the motion. Chairman Bridges adjourned the meeting.

Signed on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of July, 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 Kesler, Interim Clerk