

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
January 8, 2020

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred "Buster" McCoy, Commissioner Shirley Hines, Commissioner Mary Bray, and Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley,
Staff Present: County Administrator Theron Gay, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Director Bill Gregory and County Attorney Nathan Lee

I. CALL TO ORDER – Commissioner Hines at 9:00 a.m.

INVOCATION – Commissioner Hines

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Motion was made by Alfred McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely Hadley to nominate and appoint Bryan Threadgill as the 2020 Chairman. There were no other nominations. All were in favor.
Former Chairman Hines turned the meeting over to the newly elected Chairman, Bryan Threadgill.

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to appoint Alfred "Buster" McCoy as the 2020 Vice-Chairman. Voting in favor were; Beth Neely-Hadley, Chairman Threadgill and Alfred McCoy. Shirley Hines and Mary Bray were opposed.

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to reappoint Beverly Thomas as County Clerk. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to reappoint Allyson Stephens as Deputy Clerk. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to reappoint Nathan Lee as County Attorney. The motion was amended by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to appoint Glover & Davis, P.A. as County Attorney. All were in favor.

There was discussion of changing the Work Sessions to quarterly rather than every other month. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Mary Bray to set the meeting schedule as: Regular Meetings - 2nd Wednesday at 9:00 am, 4th Tuesday at 6:00 pm and Work Sessions every other month at 4:30 pm. All were in favor. Administrator Gay stated if there was a need for additional meetings they could be set by the Board.

Administrator Gay has been working on a draft of Rules and Regulations for Public Hearings and Regularly Scheduled Commission Meetings. A copy will be sent to all Board members to review. Administrator Gay would like the Board to consider allowing Department Heads to only attend the day meetings, or to allow them to continue working and send a report to the Board.

II. ADOPT AGENDA

Administrator Gay asked the Board to add Kennard Rawlinson to the Agenda since he had met the timeline to be placed on the Agenda to speak about the White Oak Creek Bridge. Chairman Threadgill asked to add Discussion of refiguring the 2019 Tax on a house donated by a private citizen to the President Theater. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Mary Bray to amend and adopt the Agenda with the following additions under New Business – 9. Kennard Rawlinson discussion of White Oak Bridge 10. Discuss refiguring 2019 taxes of a house donated to the President Theater. All were in favor.

III. MINUTES

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy to approve the Minutes of the December 11, 2019 Regular Meeting at 9:00 am. All were in favor.

IV. MUNICIPAL COMMENTS

Greenville Mayor, Charlene Glover, looked forward to a productive 2020.

Woodbury Mayor, Steve Ledbetter, reported the City of Woodbury was the first town in the State to be designated as Broadband Ready.

Carolyn McKinley, Chamber of Commerce Director, reported Tourism had received a grant from the Georgia Council for Arts which will be used to bring the play "Jungle Book" to Meriwether County from Serenbe. The Chamber has partnered with MC 4-H for the Youth Leadership Program which will start in February. Leadership Meriwether is being finalized. Ms. McKinley asked all to share information from a flyer she presented on the upcoming tribute band that will perform at the President Theater.

V. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Sheriff Smith wished everyone a Happy New Year.

VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS

Shawn Downs, Animal Shelter Director – reported tops had been added to existing kennels to provide more space. The Shelter operated at a 98.89% live release rate which is the highest in the State of Georgia. There were only six dogs remaining at the end of the year. Mr. Downs invited everyone to come by the Shelter and adopt a pet. Chairman Threadgill stated funding for the kennel project was provided to the County by a donor and there was not cost to the County Taxpayers.

Tyrell Johnson, Public Works Director – reported Massengale Mill Road is closed due to the pipes washing out. Pipes have been ordered to make the repairs.

Commissioner Hines stated the County applied for a grant for work on County Line Road. If the Grant does not come through, we will need to discuss what can be done.

The new inmate program will start on Monday.

Bill Cawthorne, Public Works Consultant – reported the steel package should arrive on the 20th for Pebblebrook Fire Station and steel for the Woodbury Fire Station will follow.

Alfons Pynenburg, Fire Chief – Reported fire calls and people who walked in the stations were at 398 last month.

Cathy Johnson, Planning, Zoning and Community Development Director – reported permits in excess of \$2.7M had been issued. The deadline to renew business licenses is January 15, 2020. There will be a penalty after that date. Quarterly building meetings will start on February 12, 2020. Safebuilt will sponsor.

Ashley Harmon, 4-H Agent – echoed on the report for Youth Leadership provided by Carolyn McKinley. The students have been busy over the holidays and Ms. Harmon is promoting summer camp. The onion sale will start soon. The students are gearing up for the public speaking competition.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING

None

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Shirley Hines to table the appointment to the Recreation Advisory Board, at Large. All were in favor.
2. Motion was made by Mary Bray and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to appoint Vivian Smith to the Zoning Board of Appeals. All were in favor.
3. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy to appoint Bubba Allen to the Water & Sewerage Authority to fill the unexpired term of Tommy Arnold, District 4. All were in favor.
4. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to table the appointment to the Planning Commission, District 4. All were in favor.
5. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Mary Bray to approve the Resolution confirming the re-appointment of Robert Gregory Hobbs to the Meriwether County Board of Assessors. All were in favor.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Haley to appoint Bryan Threadgill to the IDA, District 4 with a term to expire 1-08-2024. Voting in favor were, Chairman Threadgill, Vice Chairman McCoy and Beth Neely-Hadley. Opposed were Shirley Hines and Mary Bray.
2. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Shirley Hines to appoint Bobby Moreland to the DFACS Board. All were in favor.
3. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to appoint Vice Chairman McCoy to the Broadband Authority to fill the unexpired term of Bryan Threadgill. The term will end on 4-17-2020. All were in favor.

4. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to table the appointment to the Pathways Community Service Board to fill the unexpired term of Bryan Threadgill. All were in favor.

Following discussion, motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to appoint Beth Neely-Hadley to the Pathways Board. All were in favor.

5. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Shirley Hines to remove last year's Chairman and Vice Chairman from the banking signatures and add this year's Chairman and Vice Chairman, to the banking signatures and also add signatures on the new 2020 SPLOST and 2020 T-SPLOST accounts with F& M Bank. All were in favor.

6. Administrator Gay reported the State of Georgia requires the governing authority of any county or municipality to fix and publish a qualifying fee for each county or municipal office not later than February 1st. Administrator Gay provided a list of the qualifying fees for each county office and the required advertisement. The fees are based on 3% of previous year's salary or base salary as outlined in O.C.G.A. 21-2-131. Sheriff: \$1,779.86, Clerk of Court \$1,491.65, Probate Judge (Nonpartisan) \$1,491.65, Tax Commissioner \$1,491.65, Coroner \$630, County Commissioner \$249, Board of Education \$90. Motion was made by Shirley Hines and seconded by Mary Bray to approve the qualifying fee and allow Patty Threadgill, Elections Supervisor, and the Elections Office to publish this. All were in favor.

7. Mike Watson and others from the Airport Authority reported they were coming to the end of the obstruction removal project at the Airport. The Fuel Farm was approved and is in the works. The existing fuel farm does not work. The T-Hangers are full and there was one tenant that violated their contract. There is a waiting list for the new hangers when they are built. The Authority voted to pay the County \$25K. Phil Eberly spoke about the Authorities intent to get their own loan for construction of a hanger, and structure the loan where they can pay the debt service with rental fees. A new T-Hanger should be maintenance free for 10-15 years and that will allow time to pay off the debt. An Agreement would be needed to support the Airport Authority in obtaining a loan. The Board was in agreement for the Airport to move forward with building a hanger.

8. Administrator Gay stated during the July 23, 2019 meeting the Board approved abandonment of Overby Road from Cedar Rock Road to SR 18. In the presentation the applicants were requested to provide Quitclaim Deeds for the properties included in the abandoned roadway. In the staff's review of the deeds, it was noted that Weaver Parks Road was mentioned as the former name of the road section. That was incorrect and should read Overby Road. The County contacted the party and the deeds were corrected. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to approve the deeds and allow the Chairman to sign. All were in favor.

9. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to allow Administrator Gay to recalculate taxes due on a home that was donated by a private citizen to a not for profit organization and bring back to the next Commissioners Meeting. All were in favor.

10. Kennard Rawlinson, representative of the White Oak Bridge Steering Committee and Citizens for Action, stated the Commissioners voted to leave the bridge open and the problem is getting a plan for the bridge. There was discussion of the design chosen that would have a concrete floor with a walkway and lattice design. Mr. Rawlinson discussed funding and several people who can assist in building the bridge. The group has been waiting on plans from GDOT. Mr. Rawlinson stated they will contact a civil engineer that did work for GDOT. Pictures will be taken of the bridge and design and sent to GDOT for approval. The problem is the group needs a letter from the County stating they can go into businesses etc. and make requests. Local help would be used to build the bridge. Chairman Threadgill stated the Board had approved for the group to go out and get plans and let the BOCC look at the plans. There was discussion of the proposed letter and Attorney Lee asked them to submit a letter and let him review the letter and make any changes. This would not be seeking financial support. Mr. Rawlinson stated the bridge would be rebuilt.

Bruce O'Neal reported landowners had moved a fence against the rock wall at the White Oak Covered Bridge Road area. Mr. O'Neal showed pictures to the Board Members. This made the road narrower and Mr. O'Neal feels the fence needs to be moved back to where it was. If a walkway is built on the outside of the bridge, they would need room for bikes to go along the outside of the wall. Administrator Gay will review with Bill Cawthorne to make sure the fence is outside the County ROW.

X. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR

Mr. Gregory reported the General Fund has \$3.5M and there will be another check from the Tax Commissioner around 1-15-20. There is \$1.2M in SPLOST which does not include December 2019, January 2020 and February 2020. The final payment to Regions Bank is \$1.6M. Any excess funds will be distributed accordingly. We will collect for the new T-SPLOST and new SPLOST on April 1, 2020. Vendors will be notified.

Mr. Gregory stated the County had not received the voting machines due to dropping the ball. There was no heat in the building. Mr. Gregory apologized to Ms. Threadgill and the Board for dropping the ball. Commissioner Hines asked about the State's mobile bus that is used for demonstrations. Ms. Threadgill stated it is normally used when there is a large venue. They look at attendance.

XI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Administrator Gay reported the Safebuilt contract is in place and they are doing inspections. The Code Enforcement position is in place.

The Inmate Program starts on Monday.

We will need to bring the changes to the Ordinance Book before the Board and vote to adopt the codified copy of the Meriwether County Ordinance Book.

A meeting was held yesterday with a Utility Firm to discuss a plan for placement of utilities in the County right of way.

T-SLOST will begin in April 2020. Vendors will be notified.

A local person is coming in today to discuss ROW spraying.

At the last Board Meeting a lady made a statement of a person living in a storage building. This was checked out and it was not true. He is building a home and storing items in the building.

Commissioner Bray asked to revisit members on the Recreation Advisory Board at the next meeting. Mr. Gay will send a copy of the Ordinance. Commissioner Bray stated we needed to downsize the Board and wants the Commissioners to make the 5 appointments. The time of the Advisory Board meetings will also be addressed.

XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Shirley Hines: Lone Oak is hosting events for Community Outreach at the Country Store. One program is to get people reading. It is open to local vendors to display crafts etc. and it supports local people and local businesses.

Commissioner Hines asked to add the discussion of dirt roads to the next Work Session and identify and grade roads. Chairman Threadgill asked how the Country Store worked and if anyone profited.

Commissioner Hines stated an event was hosted there with toys donated by the Salvation Army in LaGrange. There is an outreach with pancakes for kids and the fireman came and read to the kids.

Commissioner Mary Bray: Wished everyone a Happy New Year. The toys given by the Salvation Army was a blessing to families in Meriwether County. Commissioner Bray stated she had completed a Grant Writing Course and wants to get on the ball with the Recreation Program.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: Wished everyone a Happy New Year and thanked his peers for allowing him to serve in his post as Chairman. The goal is to keep the meetings on task and take care of County Business. Chairman Threadgill wanted Department Heads to attend the first meeting of the month or have someone attend in their place or provide a brief report to the Administrator. Some departments will be different such as Cathy from Planning and Zoning and Tyrell from Public Works. Some would not have to attend unless their presence was required by the Board.

Chairman Threadgill stated he knew we need to rely on Cities to help with Countywide water and suggested we have a study conducted to address water, garbage and recycling in the County. Chairman Threadgill asked the Board to think about this. Turkey Run Landfill is at the other end of the County for some and there was discussion of dumping large items and possibly fencing in another area for trash.

Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley: stated StarLine launched their 3rd satellite last Monday and it will rival fiber optic speed.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated we may need to discuss garbage with Waste Management and clarify what can go there and the hours of operation. This need to be posted at their location and on our website. Commissioner Neely-Hadley worked with Operation Empty Stocking. This is the 35th year of the program and 1200 people were helped this year. This includes 260 families. Many participate in helping with this program.

Vice Chairman McCoy: reported work will start on Massengale Mill Road once the pipe has been received. Vice Chairman McCoy enjoyed the road report. There is a problem with dumping on Hwy. 362 Alva-ton.

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

An Executive Session is needed for Personnel, Litigation and Real Estate.

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Charlene Glover asked about old SPLOST funds remaining at Regions Bank. Mr. Gregory stated the funds would be moved to the County and disbursed to the Cities.

There was a question of forgiving unpaid taxes on properties where the taxes were more than the value of the property. Attorney Nathan Lee will look into the law regarding that from the County's prospective. There was some discussion of land trusts.

Bruce O'Neal stated there had been vandalism on the Red Oak Covered Bridge in Imlac. Trash can lids were thrown into the creek and wooden pegs were missing from the Bridge. Some have been writing on the walls in magic markers. There was discussion that the activity had increased with people hanging out there after dark. This started when a light was installed.

Ella Rosser of Strickland Town Road, Luthersville asked about having work on her road and ditches.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Mary Bray to go into Executive Session at 10:52 am to discuss Litigation, Personnel and Real Estate. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to go out of Executive Session at 11:48 am. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to go back into the Regular Meeting at 11:51 am. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to approve \$468.60 for settlement with Jeremy Phillips for taxes, penalties, and interest for 2381 Allie Road. All were in favor.

XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Threadgill announced Future Meetings and Announcements prior to Executive Session.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to adjourn at 11:52 a.m. All were in favor.

Approved by:

Attest:

Date:

Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners
Beulley A. Thomas, County Clerk
January 28, 2020