

**MINUTES**  
**MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**March 9, 2022**

**This meeting was held in person and also by Zoom due to COVID-19**

Commissioners Present: Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley, Vice Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Commissioner Shirley Hines, Commissioner Rosla Plant and Commissioner Alfred "Buster" McCoy  
Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and County Attorney Nathan Lee  
Staff Absent: Director of Special Projects Theron Gay

**I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**II. INVOCATION** – Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley

**III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - All

**IV. ADOPT AGENDA**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Bryan Threadgill and seconded by Alfred McCoy to adopt the Agenda with the following change: Add under New Business 4. Lake Meriwether Expansion. All were in favor.

**V. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Finance Director, Bill Gregory, introduced Tammy Lackey. Ms. Lackey was hired to work in the Finance Department and started work 3 weeks ago. Ms. Lackey has 20+ years of experience from Fayette County in Finance and with Fire/EMS.

Mr. Gregory reported the Bank balances looked good. The two Fire District accounts are significant. The note payment was just paid and the receipts in the Fire District accounts come from Property Tax. Other accounts look good. Mr. Gregory reported the SPLOST and TSPLOST collections were lower in January and February and feels this may be due to a carry over from Christmas. There is a strong balance in both accounts. F&M has fully pledged all of the balances.

The Audit Report is not complete. The Audit firm is waiting on the Tax Commissioner to provide the needed information to complete the 2021 Audit. The report is due to the State on March 31, 2022. Mr. Gregory read from the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts regarding requests for extensions for report submissions. There are concerns of how an extension will affect the County's ability to receive grants. Mr. Gregory stated he would contact DOAA for more information.

**IV. CITIZEN COMMENT**

Chairman Neely-Hadley read the Citizen Comment protocol as listed on the Agenda.

Tax Commissioner Catherine Jenkins signed up to speak, per an email that was received on March 7, 2022, regarding a request for Open Records on a Forensic Report concerning the Cyber-attack noticed on January 10, 2022.

Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated she was still having IT issues in her office and cannot get on the Vehicle Registration system, DRIVES which is the State Department of Revenue DRIVES. It has been that way for one week. This issue has been brought up through the process and is not satisfactory. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated she cannot do anything with vehicle registrations or license plates through her computer and log in. The office still doesn't have a scanned drive and a scanner that can be used. Tax Commissioner Jenkins wondered if this was on purpose and stated she had these problems since she took office in January of last year. The cyber-attack has done more to make these problems more apparent and she has not received any extra support from what she has requested. Tax Commissioner Jenkins appreciated the Board allowing her to use the \$6K, that was given to her office at the last Commissioners

Meeting, but that does not make up for the fact that the rest of her office is going into overtime and still using a budget that was insufficient to begin with. Another issue is her office was denied information stemming from an Open Records Request about the Forensic Report from the Cyber Attack. Tax Commissioner Jenkins reminded the Board that it was information that was from her office and her data. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated she was still trying to find out what was going on with that and felt that is also insufficient. The data storage, on the questions that have been answered in an email, is only being stored in one location, the backup, so that is insufficient. There was no input from her office on how this was to be done. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated she still could not get the IT Department to answer a telephone call, and all of this was causing more problems for her office. Tax Commissioner Jenkins has been trying to implement a new payment platform that will benefit the Citizens of Meriwether County. This will allow that Tax Office to take payments by telephone and reduce the cost rather than the 3%.

#### **VII. MINUTES**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Alfred McCoy to approve the Minutes of the February 22, 2022, 6:00 p.m. Meeting. Voting in favor were Chairman Neely-Hadley, Vice Chairman Threadgill, Rosla Plant and Alfred McCoy. Shirley Hines abstained.

#### **VIII. PUBLIC HEARING**

None

#### **IX. APPOINTMENTS**

1. Motion was made by Chairman Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman Threadgill to table the appointment to the Water and Sewerage Authority, District 5. All were in favor.

#### **X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **XI. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Administrator Irizarry stated the agreements renewals had been reviewed and approved by Legal. It is a one-year agreement with an automatic renewal not to exceed a 4-year renewal term. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Alfred McCoy to approve the renewal Agreement for Probation Services through Community Supervision Services for Superior/Probate/ and Magistrate Court, and not to exceed a 4-year term. All were in favor.

2. Administrator Irizarry stated the Human Resources Director had prepared a recommendation with the request to purchase new equipment for the County Gym using some of the \$12,000 Wellness allotment funds provided by UHC. The recommendation was to purchase 2 Ellipticals, 2 Treadmills, 1 Row Machine and 1 Recumbent Bike. The quotes ranged in price from \$8,398 -\$8,994. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Alfred McCoy to move forward with the purchase of the Gym Equipment as discussed. All were in favor.

3. Administrator Irizarry stated the County has required all employees to have GDOT physicals that are offered through a WellStar Clinic. The Human Resources Director has recommended that the County begin doing drug screens only for the office staff and clerical employees and doing physical examinations and drug screens for Public Works, E-911, Fire & Rescue, Public Safety, and the Animal Shelter. Motion was made by Bryan Threadgill and seconded by Rosla Plant to follow the recommendation of the Human Resources Director. All were in favor.

4. Commissioner McCoy discussed the Lake Meriwether RV Expansion. Until we have the septic tank and drain field areas addressed we cannot go further. Bill Cawthorne stated the estimated material cost will be between \$25K - \$30K+ with the County doing most of the installation of the drain fields and the camp sites. Meetings were held with Georgia Power, for additional power source, and with Environmental Health where we received approval for the drain field areas. We can't work on the campground area until the sewer is relocated because the existing drain field is in the new camp site area. The dump site will be separate. Commissioner McCoy stated during the Lake Meriwether Advisory

Board meeting last night, it had been determined they could pay for these changes within a two-year time period because of their steady income from Lake Meriwether. Motion was made by Alfred McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to move forward with the RV Expansion Plans and not to exceed \$30K. All were in favor.

## **XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Administrator Irizarry reported Public Works was in the process of closing Betty Dunn Road Bridge. Bill Cawthorne will look at the Bridge and determine what repairs need to be done.

Meriwether County 4-H is traveling to Rock Eagle this weekend to compete at District Project Achievement. The Northwest District Jr. Board President, Landin Cunningham, will preside over the weekend activities. She has made Meriwether County shine since serving as President.

The full depth reclamation and paving has been done on Luthersville Road and Oak Street. All that remains is striping and shoulders.

Advanced Firefighter Training, through West Georgia Technical College and Workforce Three Rivers, starts next month. Fire & Rescue/EMS is working with Faithful Guarding Training Center to start a satellite program in Meriwether County this year for Paramedic Certification Training. Four EMT's received their certification last month. The Fire Department is working on updating all Automatic Aids. Emergency calls for February were 541 averaging over 19 calls per day. Fire Inspections are up due to new builds, remodels, and churches. Fire Rescue/EMS will participate in a local job fair at the local High School this month.

With the help of Staff and ACCG, a letter was compiled and sent to Representative Jenkins in opposition to HB 496 because it raises the gross weight of Timber Trucks up to 95K lbs., which is in excess of Federal and State levels at 80K lbs. Representative Jenkins serves on the Transportation Committee.

## **XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Hines – No report at this time.

Commissioner Plant – reported the Brown Sugar Festival and Park Dedication that was held a few weeks ago in Greenville was great and well attended. Festival proceeds were used to award two scholarships. The food trucks were a big hit.

Commissioner McCoy – has received telephone calls about road issues and Public Works has responded as soon as they can. We have 11 positions open at Public Works.

Commissioner McCoy reported on the incident with the gate at Lake Meriwether. Weekend before last someone ran through the gate and bent the cylinder. It happened again this past Friday. Large Stop signs will be added on the gates along with reflective tape to help prevent this from occurring again. The gate closing time will be at twilight so people would not have sun in their eyes. The last accident was not intentional. The driver said the sun was in his eyes.

Vice Chairman Threadgill- No report at this time.

Chairman Neely-Hadley- this Friday in Warm Springs the "Wreaths Across America" exhibit will be coming in and led by Woodbury to Warm Springs. It is a great exhibit that honors Veterans. There will be a program around 11:00 a.m. The exhibit will be there until 4:00 p.m. All were invited. The Spring Fling in Warm Springs will be held on April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. They will also have food trucks.

## **XIV. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY**

Chairman Neely-Hadley asked Attorney Lee to provide a response regarding the Open Records Request. Attorney Lee stated when the County experienced the Cyber-attack, staff tendered it to the Insurance Company, ACCG. The Insurance company hired a Lawyer to help get to the bottom of what had occurred. All of us are new to a Cyber-attack. The lawyer hired will help protect us resolve all the legal

issues that best protect the citizens and gauge consultants. The Open Record Act Request that Attorney Lee saw from the Tax Commissioner's Office was for one of the reports prepared from one of the Attorney's Office. The report is an Attorney work product. It needs to be kept confidential to try and protect the citizens, Board of Commissioners, Tax Commissions Office, and everybody until this is over with. Attorney Lee spoke with the Attorney hired by ACCG to represent the County, and he stated this report has nothing to do with the operation of the Tax Commissioners Office. Attorney Neditz stated everything has been backed up apparently, after speaking with the Tax Commissioner. Attorney Lee did not know a lot about computers but did know the report that was prepared has nothing to do with the Tax Commissioners office. Once this is over it will be an open record.

**XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Administrator Irizarry stated an Executive Session was needed for Litigation, Personnel, Real Estate and Tax Matters.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Alfred McCoy to go into Executive Session at 9:24 a.m. to discuss Litigation, Personnel, Real Estate and Tax Matters. All were in favor. Vice Chairman Threadgill left the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Alfred McCoy to go out of Executive Session at 11:25 a.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Alfred McCoy to go back into Regular Session at 11:27 a.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Alfred McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to approve unpaid leave for an employee from March 7, 2022 -March 25, 2022. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Shirley Hines to approve the background requirement changes from Human Resources. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Alfred McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to authorize Theron Gay to sign off on behalf of the Community Planning and Development Office. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Alfred McCoy to allow the Chairman to sign a letter to the Tax Commissioner to render official accounting. All were in favor.

**XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES**

Chairman Neely-Hadley announced Future Meetings and Notices prior to Executive Session.

**XVII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Alfred McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to adjourn at 11:28 a.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Beverly A. Thomas, County Clerk

Date: March 22, 2022