

**MINUTES  
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**March 23, 2021**

**This meeting was held by Zoom due to COVID-19 for the public with Board Members and County Staff attending in Person**

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy, Commissioner Rosla Plant, and Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Shirley Hines

Staff Present: County Administrator Theron Gay, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and County Attorney Michael Hill

**I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Threadgill called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**INVOCATION** – Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**II. ADOPT AGENDA**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to adopt the Agenda and add under Public Hearing, 2. Case #12-2021 and 3. Case #14-2021. All were in favor.

**III MINUTES**

Rosla Plant motioned to approve the Minutes from the March 10, 2021 Regular Meeting and Beth Neely-Hadley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**IV. MUNICIPAL COMMENTS**

None

**V. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS COMMENTS**

Catherine Jenkins, Tax Commissioner, let all know that the Board had voted for Court Action and Ms. Jenkins stated she wants to work with the Board and wants to get things fixed in the office. Ms. Jenkins provided her cell number. Ms. Jenkins stated by seeking Court Action against her office, which differs from her personally, there are seven staff members, and this action has made it stressful to all. Ms. Jenkins stated everyone in her office works hard and it is a thankless job. They are not perfect, but they are working on getting the office up to top notch. The office was closed for a week due to COVID-19. They are only able to bring three people in at one time. Ms. Jenkins stated she mentioned before that she wanted to install an outside window in order to see more people. Ms. Jenkins asked the Board to facilitate these changes. Ms. Jenkins stated you can poke your finger through a hole in the window. Ms. Jenkins stated the County received money through the Cares Act, they see more customers, and she wanted money to keep her personnel safe. Ms. Jenkins asked to have COVID fogging done and stated they will do that themselves if necessary. Chairman Threadgill stated the County had been fumigating since COVID started. The staff could not get into her area to fumigate after Ms. Jenkins locked the doors. Administrator Gay stated the staff fumigates the buildings before everyone arrives or after they leave. It was eluded by Ms. Jenkins that the County would have to find another product since that one had a bad smell. The County cannot get into the building for fumigate or cleaning since the locks were changed by Ms. Jenkins. We received a call from Ms. Jenkins last week to come in and spray which we did. We cannot spray when people are there or when we are locked out. The remainder of the building has followed COVID protocol, and they wear masks. There have been a lot of complaints of the Tax Office not following protocol. A meeting was scheduled for Friday a week ago at 2:00 pm and Ms. Jenkins did not show up for the meeting. Administrator Gay stated he would be happy to talk when Ms. Jenkins was available to meet. Ms. Jenkins disputed and asked for Administrator Gay to her call back. Administrator Gay stated the meeting was set up and confirmed but Ms. Jenkins did not show up. Chairman Threadgill stated we need

someone present at that location to let us in to spray. We have to set times that work with the other offices in that building so that it does not interrupt others. Ms. Jenkins stated to Chairman Threadgill that if he wanted to be referred to as Chairman then she wanted to be recognized as Tax Commissioner Jenkins. Ms. Jenkins wanted to verify that the County had received Care Funds and hopes to get funds to help with their building. Chairman Threadgill asked Tax Commissioner Jenkins when the County would receive the two Tax Payments that were in arrears. Ms. Jenkins stated she had the check signed but had tested positive for COVID and did not think the Board would want her to bring the check to the office. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated the payments were previously due and before she had COVID.

#### **VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS**

None

#### **The Board moved New Business 1. Presentation by Airport Authority and Lead Edge Design on Airport accomplishments and discussion of preliminary project funding prior to the Public Hearings.**

##### **New Business:**

1. Mike Watson from the Meriwether County Airport Authority and Phil Eberly, owner of Lead Edge Design Group, provided an update to the Board and what their requests are to go forward. There has been a lot of activity at the fuel farm. Administrator Gay thanked the Authority and Mr. Eberly for all they have done for the Airport. Mr. Eberly showed a video and stated the Meriwether County Airport is unique to the 103 airports in Georgia. Most of the Airports were built in the 1960's but the Meriwether County Airport was built in the 1930's. Today the runway is a 5,000' long which is good for corporate jets and other aircraft. Mr. Eberly showed the Board a photograph of the mural. Other Counties have contacted the Airport Authority to gather information about the fuel farm. There has been a 1,100% increase in fuel sales since the fuel farm was installed. Mr. Eberly mentioned the amount of advalorem tax charged for planes and small jets. Warm Springs Memorial Airport is 62nd in the Georgia Airports based Aircraft Ranking and we will move to 39<sup>th</sup> with our new 10-unit T-Hanger. The brand is sustainable, and they will build on that brand and support community events such as the Fly-in. Next May 2022 is the Airport's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Future projects were discussed and included: Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) Installation, Runway Crack Seal and Marking, Repainting Beacon Tower to current FAA Standards. The cost for each were: Runway & Turnarounds Crack Seal 7 Marking: Federal Share \$47,968.35, State Share: \$2,524.65, Local Share: \$52,570 for a total cost of \$103,063.00. AWOS Installation: Federal Share: none, State share \$124,123.50, Local Share \$51,374.50 for a total cost of \$175,498. 3-Year DBE Plan Federal Share: none State Share: none Local Share \$8,258 for a total cost of \$8,258. Repaint Beacon Tower Federal Share: \$9,025. State Share: \$475, Local Share: none for a total cost of \$9,500. Mr. Eberly stated they have a waiting list for hangers.

#### **VII. PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Case #11-2021 -Sandra Tigner requested a Special Use Permit to operate a 4-Wheeler Dirt track. The property is located at 370 Branch Hebron Rd, Greenville, GA, LD#7, LL#90, in District 2. Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to go into a Public Hearing for Case #11-2021. All were in favor. Administrator Gay stated this Public Hearing was continued from February 23, 2021. The Board had heard the Special Use Request from Ms. Sandra Tigner to operate a 4-wheeler dirt track. Administrator Gay stated the property is currently zoned as RD per the Meriwether County Zoning Ordinance and established as medium density residential area to preserve the character of Meriwether County. It was noted during the February 23, 2021 presentation that it had been looked at as a Parks and Recreation facility. Administrator Gay stated after further review and looking at our categories of zoning he did not feel this qualifies as Parks and Recreation. It is closer to an Automobile/Motor Vehicle Racing and Racetrack which is only allowed in a New Community Zoning District as a special use, or an allowable use in Industrial Zoning. Based on this category,

Administrator Gay did not see how that proposed use would be allowable in a RD Zoning category. The reason those uses are restricted to Commercial and Industrial is for the reasons previously mentioned which included noise, time, liability issue, and disturbance to the neighbors. Another area of concern was crossing the stream. The buffer is 25' on each side and to cross the stream a bridge would need to be built at each crossing and barricades installed along the creek bank. Administrator Gay recommended denial. There were no other comments. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Beth Neely Hadley to go out of the Public Hearing. All were in favor. Commissioner Plant stated in respect to Ms. Tigner for her desire to provide recreation, Commissioner Plant would have to follow the recommendation of Administrator Gay and deny the request. Beth Neely-Hadley seconded the motion, and all were in favor on denying the Special Use Permit to operate a 4-Wheeler Dirt Track.

2. Case #12-2021 – Deborah Bremer requested to rezone 6.96 acres from LDR to RD.

The purpose of the rezone was to split current property to create a new 2–4-acre parcel to deed to family to construct a residence. The property is located on Map and Parcel #078-006, 7697 LaGrange Hwy., Greenville, GA, in District 2. Butch Oliver, Consultant for Community Development, Planning and Zoning, stated existing nearby parcels include residential, agricultural, and commercial parcels consisting of less than 2-acres in size up to hundreds of acres. The newly created parcel will have access via a 30' perpetual, deeded easement using the current drive off LaGrange Hwy. No new driveways will be created. The use of this property is consistent with the neighboring parcels and will not adversely affect the existing use or property values. It is the recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Department to approve the rezoning to RD. There were no other comments. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to go out of the Public Hearing. All were in favor. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to approve the request for rezone. All were in favor.

3. Case #14-2021 - Darlene McDaniel requested to rezone 2-acres from A-1 to NHC (Neighborhood Commercial) for a Country Store/Outfitter and Restaurant. The property is located on Map & Parcel #198-021-001, 29 River Cove Road, Woodbury, GA, in District 3. The convenient store will offer items that will include the sale of live bait, tackle, kayak and canoe rentals and shuttle service for delivery and pick up of river floats. The business will be in phases. Phase I will be the Country Store, Phase II will be a restaurant offering indoor and outdoor dining to include lunch and dinner and Phase III will be 2-3 years later with the possibility of rental cabins and shower facilities for guests and visitors. This will be a family-owned business with a family atmosphere. Properties near this location include large timber parcels, personal residence, and agriculture tracts with active farming. With the proximity to the launch area at the Flint River, the location of this venture will be of great service to locals and visitors enjoying the outdoor activities available. A definite draw for anyone who enjoys river activities with supplies located within feet of the waters edge. The improvement of the longtime vacant property and the conveniences and activities it can offer to all will benefit this area in Meriwether County. The Planning and Zoning Department recommended approval. During the Planning and Zoning Meeting, Carolyn McKinley from the Chamber of Commerce and Meriwether Tourism spoke in favor. Vice Chairman McCoy stated this was a good supplement of what we want to do since we have leased two acres to the State who will add a new boat ramp and landing. Ms. McDaniel stated she and her son, Cody, will run and manage this family-oriented business. Ms. McKinley stated she recommended approval and stated it will add a lot to the County and will be a big boost for tourism. There were no other comments. Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to go out of the Public Hearing. All were in favor. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to approve the request for rezone. All were in favor.

#### **VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to remove the appointment to the Recreation Advisory Board until we have something back from the Board of Education. This appointment is to fill an unexpired term representing the Board of Education (term to expire 12-31-2021). All were in favor.

2. Motion was made by Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to table the appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals until the first meeting in June, 2021. All were in favor.

#### **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

1. This was moved to the section between Department Head comments and Public Hearing.

2. Motion was made by Beth Neely Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to appoint Dr. Victor Lambert to the Hospital Authority. This will be retroactive to the last meeting on March 10, 2021 where others were appointed for this Authority. All were in favor.

3. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to confirm the Chairman's signature on the Project agreement between the Meriwether County Industrial Development Authority, KB Autosys Manufacturing America, Inc., and the Meriwether County Board of Commissioners. All were in favor.

4. Sealed Bids for the Roadside Vegetative Management for Chemical Mowing 2021 were opened on March 12, 2021 at 12:06 p.m. Bids were received from the following: ChemPro Services \$75 per mile round #1 and \$41 per mile round #2. NaturChem \$80.17 per mile for round #1 and \$46.47 per mile for round #2. Volunteer Vegetation management \$84. per mile round #1 and \$60 per mile round #2. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely Hadley to award the Roadside Vegetative Management for Chemical Mowing 2021 to ChemPro Services. All were in favor.

5. Sheriff Smith offered two quotes and specifications for purchasing ten 2021 Dodge Ram SSV Patrol Package Trucks. The order would need to be placed by April 1, 2021 for a receipt date somewhere around September 2021. Sheriff Smith had understood if the deadline was missed, we would have to wait until 2022. The cost would be \$280K for ten trucks and funding would be from SPLOST. Sheriff Smith stated the vehicles, that were there when he took office, have 190K miles. The Dodge pickup/4-wheel drive trucks perform well. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to approve the purchase of ten 2021 Dodge trucks as discussed. All were in favor.

6. Administrator Gay stated there was conversation regarding the County Line Road Project. This is a small area of dirt road from the Coweta County border to along the Troup and Meriwether County line. We reached out to Georgia Road and Tollway Authority to see what assistance they may be able to find for us.

They came back with an offer of a \$100K grant with a \$150K loan for this project. We had an engineer look at the cost for this project and after looking at this they estimate it will be in the \$800K to \$1M range. Administrator Gay wanted to see if the County wanted to move forward with this due to the cost. This road does serve the backside of the Industrial Park and has traffic that travels into Coweta County and back into Troup County. Administrator Gay stated he wanted to make sure that the Board wanted to move forward before the County spends approximately \$75K+ on engineering cost. Commissioner Neely-Hadley left the meeting. Administrator Gay stated we will need to know soon if the Board wants to proceed. Commissioner Plant asked if the project was completed in stages, what would be the cost for the bridge replacement. Commissioner Plant was concerned of reports shared with her regarding Public Safety and the Bridge. This will be added to the next Agenda.

7. Administrator Gay stated we are in the final stages of the \$200K grant with a \$200K match and in-kind service for the Greenville Recreation Park. We have done all we can and now must have the engineering completed before the end of April. A survey is needed, and the topo will be through the use of lidar. An engineer who has worked on recreation projects in the past, estimated the cost for environmental would be approximately \$35K and the Geo Tech would be approximately \$7,700. The survey is estimated at \$5K- \$6K. The balance can be spent after the paperwork for the award of the grant has been received. These amounts cannot be included in the County's match. Commissioner Neely-Hadley returned to the meeting. Once awarded the Engineer would oversee the specs. There is no charge if the project does not get funded. Administrator Gay stated he feels the County will get the grant if we submit the paperwork for this project. Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to move forward. Voting in favor were Beth Neely-Hadley and Chairman Threadgill. Vice Chairman McCoy and Rosla Plant were opposed. The motion failed.

Commissioner Plant stated she does not know everything about this and was concerned of the High School students not being able to use the park. Administrator Gay stated he had been told not having the school system involved was a plus for this type of grant. If the Board desired to bring this back it may be too late at the next meeting in April. The design has a grassy field and would have playgrounds and a grassy play area. There would be restrooms, a pavilion, nature trails and a paved walking track around the grass area. The Board had a 5-0 vote last year to move forward with this grant. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated when we sold the ballfield that was located on the north end of the County, we said we would plan a more centrally located area for recreation. Administrator Gay had laid out the road entrance where the park could continue to expand in the future. Following additional conversation among the Board members Administrator Gay stated if the Board wants to bring this back at the meeting in April there may not be enough time to process the package.

#### **X. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Finance Director Bill Gregory provided the 2020 SPLOST and T-SPLOST reports. They have increase in collections each month.

#### **XI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Administrator Gay reported the City of Greenville has car shows scheduled throughout the summer and fall. They asked about the Courthouse and stated they would not be on the grounds but on the sidewalk and around the courthouse. GDOT has approved the request and they are not using County property for the events.

During a previous Commission Meeting there were comments made regarding long response times during a recent fire on Kodiak Lane. Administrator Gay investigated this and provided the facts and the actual time it took to have someone on site and the condition of the property once the responders arrived.

Administrator Gay stated he felt it was important to get the correct information to the public since information that was provided to the Board was not accurate.

Paving bids have gone out for Peaceful Lane, Tuskegee Lane, and Mt. Pilgrim Road.

Administrator Gay and Vice Chairman McCoy met with Waste Management to discuss litter. Drivers have tarps but they do not have to use it when they leave. The County will write an Ordinance regarding this.

The Alvaton Fire Station is the only available facility in that area that can be used for a voting precinct. A meeting was held to discuss how to expand, and Administrator Gay will bring this back before the Board soon. Vice Chairman McCoy stated they had a good conversation and Waste Management was responsive. There is an 8.2-mile area they maintain and pick up trash. There was conversation about a partnership for recycling with them supplying the roll offs. We must have the Landfill involved with any recycling we have.

Administrator Gay sent the progress report to the Vindicator Newspaper today. Administrator Gay has reached out to Georgia Trust about the Red Oak Bridge and a meeting has been scheduled at the Bridge on March 31<sup>st</sup> at 2:30 p.m.

Administrator Gay stated we had heard earlier tonight that the Tax Office had not paid the County for disbursements that were due on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of March. The Tax Office dealt with some COVID issues last week and we hope that it will work out well. Administrator Gay stated he is not on Facebook but was told that a State Representative blamed the Board of Commissioners on Face Book for the COVID outbreak at the Tax Office and for putting the staff at risk. Administrator Gay stated the County has not put the staff at risk. The Tax Office called and asked the County to come over and spray. Maintenance went over that day and sprayed. The Tax Office asked for a desk yesterday and we delivered the desk. We have done everything to accommodate the Tax Office. The Tax Commissioner has not followed the County protocol regarding COVID and they have not allowed us to come in and spray or clean. All of this is supported in a vast number of emails. It is distracting and we are having to deal with Open Records regarding this. It was reported that State Agencies had contacted us, and we refused to meet.

Administrator does not know of anyone who has contact him but was aware of a brief conversation with

ACCG about what was going on down there. Administrator Gay spoke again with the State Revenue Commissioner because he was told the phones in the Tax Office were broken and the County would not fix them. That is not correct. Administrator Gay found it appalling that a State Representative would go on Facebook and make these accusations. That Representative has not called us one time to update us on what is going on in this legislative session. Representative Buckner has called and updated us. It was interesting that some of the things Representative Buckner had put together were only attended by her and not by the other Representative. Administrator Gay appreciates all that Representative Buckner has done for us and hopes the other Representative will represent Meriwether County too. Administrator Gay was bothered by the Representative not trying to find the facts and making a comment about the development on dirt roads. If they would contact the Commissioners, they could get the facts without getting on social media and making a big issue of something that does not exist. The Commissioners have done a great job regarding COVID and our office along with other offices were impacted by COVID and continued to operate. Chairman Threadgill stated the County had put in place a mask mandate. The Tax Commissioner is a Constitutional Officer, and she has been non-compliant. Administrator Gay stated he was sorry the Board had to deal with these issues since there were more important things to be done.

## **XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Shirley Hines: Absent

Commissioner Rosla Plant: reported Keep Meriwether Beautiful clean-up day has been scheduled for April 17, 2021. A container will be placed at Public Works. More information will be sent out soon.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley: reminded everyone of the Spring Fling in Warm Springs on April 10, 2021. Commissioner Neely-Hadley wanted someone to reach out to GDOT regarding the Little White House sign that has been on the ground for a long time. It is located close to Exit 41.

Vice Chairman McCoy: No reports currently.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: No reports currently.

## **XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY**

No reports currently.

## **XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sue Ann Reid, 3398 Mt. Pilgrim Road heard that paving would begin next month on Mt. Pilgrim Road. Mary Bray, Bray Drive, Greenville, stated it was a shame that the Board chose not to move forward with the \$200K grant we could have used for the Greenville Park. It was said that the funds from the sale of the ballfield would be used for this project. Money has been spent on everything else and the citizens deserve better. Ms. Bray told Commissioner Plant that she will hold her accountable. Ms. Bray stated the citizens need to speak up and the Board has not done anything.

Sean Tallman, 305 5<sup>th</sup> Street sold his property last year and was told to disregard the tax bill that he received in November. He does not own the house. He was told the tax system would update in 2021 and that was not the case. It did not update. Administrator Gay stated he would call the Tax Office in the morning and look into this matter. Taxes usually follow the property not the owner. Catherine Jenkins, Tax Commissioner addressed Mr. Tallman. Ms. Jenkins was not sure why this did not update but will make sure this gets fixed. Ms. Jenkins provided her cell phone number to Mr. Tallman.

Catherine Jenkins said she seconded what Ms. Bray said. Recreation is lacking. Ms. Jenkins stated she is glad we are moving forward with the water trail. Ms. Jenkins wanted the County to reconsider getting the work done that Mary Bray and others had worked on. It was noted the School System was unable to utilize the fields. Commissioner Plant stated she had been told we could not use the valuable property behind Greenville High School for a High School Ballfield. Commissioner Plant stated the High School

students deserve to have a ball field. Commissioner Plant stated if she had heard the presentation she may have felt differently.

Michael Robertson stated the High Schools were offered to help put the Recreation Grant together, but they refused. That was based on what had happened in the past. This grant has nothing to do with the High School and is for Pre-K - elderly as was stated in the proposal. The High School can take care of their own matters.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley was disappointed this did not pass. We needed this for our citizens not the school system. We had already voted to fund this.

**XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES**

Chairman Threadgill announced future meetings.

**XVII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 pm. All were in favor.

Approved by: *Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners*

Attest: *Beverly Thomas, County Clerk*

Date: *April 14, 2021*