

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION

May 18, 2020 - 4:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy, Shirley Hines, Mary Bray, and Beth Neely-Hadley

Staff Present: County Administrator Theron Gay, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, and County Attorney Nathan Lee

Staff absent: Finance Director Bill Gregory

I. WELCOME – Chairman Threadgill, 4:30 p.m.

II. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Hines asked to add discussion of the Primrose Fire Station and Public Works to the Agenda. After reviewing the time needed for this meeting it was decided to add this request to the next Work Session on May 26, 2020.

1. Administrator Gay discussed changes/revisions to the existing Ordinance for the Meriwether County Recreation Advisory Board. In Sec. 8-59 Administrator Gay asked if they wanted to leave “Parks” in the Ordinance since there is already a Lake Meriwether Board. Commissioner Hines stated most Counties have a Parks and Recreation Board and hopefully the County will have some Parks in the future. Commissioner Hines wanted Parks to stay in the Ordinance for the future. Chairman Threadgill agreed. Vice Chairman McCoy stated Lake Meriwether was in a construction phase now and there have been requests to help build an ADA boat ramp at the Flint River recreational site. Commissioner Bray thought Parks need to be left in the Ordinance to identify what we have. It was promised that we would have Recreation included in the last two SPLOST elections. The Board discussed how other Counties handle Parks and Recreation. If each entity is separate, each could apply for grants. There was discussion of applying for smaller grants in the beginning and using matching funds from SPLOST. Commissioner Hines stated the Advisory Board could not write or oversee the grants and wanted to know how to move forward with an action plan and thought Lake Meriwether could apply for a grant apart from other groups. There was discussion of needing a Resolution. Administrator Gay stated we have the capability to write and manage grants we just do not have the time. Maybe we could find someone who can do this and use matching in-kind work. There was discussion of designating County land for recreation that includes parks and a dog park. The Board spoke about the land in Greenville close to the school and how it could be developed into a park that could include restroom facilities. Vice Chairman McCoy stated we may need to look at this once the area has been cleared. Commissioner Bray would like to include development in the text of the Ordinance.

The Board discussed the number of members on the Recreation Advisory Board and the challenge it had been to have a quorum of members at the meetings. If a member misses three consecutive meetings without cause the Board of Commissioners may fill the vacancy.

Administrator Gay discussed changing the Ordinance from Chairman Pro Tem and Secretary Pro Tem to Vice Chairman and Vice Secretary. With that change either the Chairman or Vice Chairman must be present to conduct the meeting. There was discussion of what makes a quorum.

Administrator Gay suggested changes regarding duties of the Recreation Advisory Board. Replace wording in section 8-61 (a) 2, to read: The Board shall review the approved annual budget for the recreation department at their first meeting after October 1st of each year or at such time as budget is approved by the Board of Commissioners. In Section 8-61 (a) 3, it was suggested to add “to include both old and new facilities”.

Commissioner Hines wanted to include how money was spent and funding so the Advisory Board would know how funds are included and if they have the budget to match any grants they may want to pursue.

Commissioner Bray and Chairman Threadgill spoke of bringing someone in to do a master plan. This is something Three Rivers and the Georgia Rec and Parks Association may be able to assist with.

Cat Jenkins, Chairman of the Recreation Advisory Board, updated the Commissioners and asked if the Commissioners would like to have someone from the Lake Meriwether Advisory Board to serve on the Recreation Advisory Board. A preliminary Recreation Plan will be drafted. The Recreation Advisory Board will meet on the 1st Thursday of each month. The goal is to get the regular meetings set up and work on behalf of the Board of Commissioners and a report back. It is a volunteer board and they need strong directions in the Ordinance. It was decided not to add additional members to the Recreation Advisory Board from the Lake Meriwether Advisory Board and the Advisory Boards would remain separate.

A video was presented to show progress made at Lake Meriwether. There are twelve new 12 X 12 tent sites that were built by volunteers. The sites will include a fire ring, a post that could be used for a light and a picnic table. Commissioner Bray asked about the Lake Meriwether Budget. Administrator Gay stated they were using funding from a previous grant. Vice Chairman McCoy stated the work must be completed by June 30, 2020. Georgia Pacific donated \$5K for the electric for Peaches in the Pines. Commissioner Hines wanted to keep funds separate in a Budget line item so you can see what is generated from where. Commissioner Bray asked how the funds were distributed. Vice Chairman McCoy stated Lake Meriwether generates money each month and some months they have brought in as much as \$2,300. Chairman Threadgill agreed they needed separate line items similar to how it works at the Animal Shelter.

Administrator Gay will make the Ordinance changes as discussed and bring this back to the Board to approve the changes in the Ordinance.

2. Administrator Gay wanted feedback from the Board regarding reopening County Offices to the public. Lake Meriwether has reopened for fishing and hiking. We have not allowed camping and closed the restroom facilities when COVID-19 started. Many have asked about camping and we plan to reopen all Lake Meriwether facilities on Friday, May 22, 2020 which is Memorial Day weekend.

Disinfectant/cleaning Stations will be set up at the restrooms and at the cabin. We will post signage regarding COVID-19 and social distancing. We will also install hand dryers in each restroom.

Chairman Threadgill stated we had followed the guidelines from the State and had encouraged citizens to take safety measures to protect themselves. Offices were closed to the public but citizens have been able to call, email or make appointments. There was discussion of the next Board of Commissioners Meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 6:00 pm. There will be a Public Hearings at this meeting. Attorney Nathan Lee will review the latest order by Governor Kemp and advise.

Due to the evening meeting and the time needed the Board felt it best to hold off on having a Work Session on May 26 at 4:30. Commissioner Hines stated she could share information at a later time on what her constituents said and she wanted them to be able to participate. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated we need to reopen as much as we can with safe distancing.

Administrator Gay will walk through the areas and come up with a way to reopen County Offices with stipulations and in accordance with the law. We will also reach out to GEMA for PPE in an effort to reopen. Plans are to reopen on June 1, 2020 with stipulations from Governor Kemp.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy to go into Executive Session at 5:56 p.m. to discuss Legal, Personnel and Real Estate. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to go out of Executive Session at 7:34 p.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Mary Bray and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to go back into the Work Session at 7:39 p.m. All were in favor

There was no action taken from Executive Session.

IV. CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The Work Session concluded at 7:39 pm.

V. FUTURE MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Future Meetings were listed on the Agenda.

Approved by: *Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners*
Attest: *Beverly Thomas, County Clerk*
Date: *June 10, 2020*