

**MINUTES**  
**MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**October 10, 2023**  
**9:00 A.M.**

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Commissioners Present: Vice Chairman Gene King, Commissioner Rosla Plant, Commissioner Emmett Collins, and Commissioner Adam Worsley  
Commissioners Absent: Chairman Bryan Threadgill  
Staff Present: Interim County Administrator Theron Gay, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Directors Bill Gregory and John Gorton, and County Attorney Nathan Lee  
Staff Absent: Assistant County Administrator Blue Cole

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairman Gene King called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**II. INVOCATION**

The Invocation was given by Bill Gregory, Finance Director.

**III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

All

**IV. ADOPT AGENDA**

Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to adopt the Agenda with the following change under New Business: remove 10. Open Records Management System.

All were in favor.

**V. PRESENTATIONS**

None

**VI. FINANCE REPORT**

Finance Director, Bill Gregory, reported the General Fund was \$703,359.06. The County is expecting to receive a State of Georgia Insurance Check on Friday. The \$1.2M in SPLOST will decrease due to the SPLOST portion of the LMIG for current road work.

**VII. DEPARTMENT HEADS**

Cassandra Sharpe, Building, Zoning, and Community Development Director stated her office had issued 60 building permits last month and 22 permits were for new homes.

**VIII. CITIZEN COMMENT**

Vice Chairman Gene King read from the Agenda the criteria for Citizen Comments. Robbie Moore, 271 Crawford Road, addressed the Board about road and public safety concerns. Mr. Moore thanked the Board for the invocation and for recognizing Israel during this time of war. Mr. Moore thanked Clerk Thomas for her help and thanked Commissioner Worsley for returning his telephone calls on two different occasions and for having Interim County Administrator Theron Gay call him. Bill Cawthorne has been out to the property. Mr. Moore

stated all that is nice but nothing has been accomplished. In February Mr. Moore called the Road Department and spoke with Barry Lucas who was unable to help him. Mr. Moore stated they have owned the property for over 20 years and water goes to the middle of the road. Mr. Cawthorne had Public Works install a pipe but it still drains to the middle of the road. Mr. Cawthorne asked Mr. Moore to paint on the road where the problem is and Mr. Moore did so. Public Works cut the Right-of-Way and he was told they would get it fixed 3-4 months ago. Mr. Moore stated there is a Fire Department that has been built and he receives a tax bill for that. There is no service at the Fire Department. Growth is coming, and Mr. Moore stated we want good quality growth and representation. Mr. Moore stated when we clear the road and do not put in any check dams silt fills up the creek and that is a State violation. The County did not seed or straw. Mr. Moore stated he would like to know when someone would come out and fix his road. Vice Chairman King thanked Mr. Moore for his time.

#### **IX. MINUTES**

1. Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to approve the Minutes from the September 26, 2023, 5:00 p.m. Special Called Meeting. All were in favor.
2. Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to approve the Minutes from the September 26, 2023, 6:00 Regular Meeting. All were in favor.
3. Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to approve the Minutes of the October 4, 2023, Special Called Meeting with a change to correct the header to read 4:00 p.m. Voting in favor were Commissioner Plant, Commissioner Collins, and Vice Chairman King. Commissioner Worsley abstained.

#### **X. PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Motion was made by Commissioner Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Collins to continue the 2023-2043 Joint Meriwether County and Cities Comprehensive Plan Update until the Board of Commissioners meeting on October 24, 2023. All were in favor.

#### **XI. APPOINTMENTS**

1. Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to table the appointment to CAFI to fill an unexpired term. All were in favor.
2. Motion was made by Commissioner Collins and seconded by Commissioner Plant to appoint Douglas Pyles to the Airport Authority, District 3. All were in favor. This will fill an unexpired term that will end on October 31, 2024.
3. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Gene King and seconded by Commissioner Plant to reappoint Mike Watson to the Airport Authority, District 1. All were in favor. This is a five-year term that will expire on October 31, 2028.
4. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Elections, motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to appoint Mark A. Spradlin to the Board of Elections and to allow the Board to sign the affidavit. All were in favor. This is to fill an unexpired term that will end on December 31, 2025.

#### **XII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

### **XIII. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to amend the FY 2023 General Fund Budget for the receipt of a donation to the Animal Shelter from the Estate of Henry and Regina Barnes dated 03-06-2023 in the amount of \$26,685.97. All were in favor.
2. Motion was made by Commissioner Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Collins to amend the FY 2023 General Fund Budget for the receipt of Animal Shelter Donations from a National Foundation in the amount of \$27,500. All were in favor.
3. Motion was made by Commissioner Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Collins to amend the FY 2023 General Fund Budget for the receipt of 2022 and 2023 GEMA Grants in the amount of \$16,085.56. All were in favor.
4. Motion was made by Commissioner Collins and seconded by Commissioner Plant to amend the FY 2023 General Fund Budget for the receipt of 2023 Court Clerk Tech Grants in the amount of \$21,868.08. All were in favor.
5. Motion was made by Commissioner Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Collins to amend the FY 2023 General Fund Budget for receipt of the GA-DOT aviation AWOS Grant in the amount of \$35,337.75. All were in favor.
6. Interim Administrator, Theron Gay, stated we had received a request for the Board of Commissioners to consider abandonment of a short section of Weaver Road starting at the intersection with Beaver Lake Road and running approximately 1050 LF to an abandoned railroad crossing. The road has not been maintained in the past and was essentially closed. When a large culvert washed out on the western section several years ago, we graded the trees that had grown in the road to create a passageway in the hope of providing access to property owners to the west. As it turned out, the railroad had removed the crossing and would not agree to reopen it even on a temporary basis. The road goes nowhere and would have been a forest by now if we had not cleared it out. Staff wanted to see if the Board of Commissioners wanted to consider this closure. The property owners will need to come in and complete the application before any final action can be taken. The Board will need to determine if the road serves a purpose and if it does not continue to serve a public purpose, then it could be abandoned. If it is abandoned the property goes back to the adjoining property owners. The applicant would have to get all the land owners on the road to sign off on this. Staff recommended to tentatively set the Public Hearing for the last Board of Commissioners Meeting in November for abandonment. Vice Chairman King stated he was familiar with the road and it was in his district. The County closed the road several years back but never officially abandoned the road. Motion was made by Vice Chairman King to move forward with the process to close the road and set the Public Hearing. There was not a second to the motion. Commissioner Worsley stated it reads to allow homeowners to complete the application and asked if we could set a Public Hearing without an application. Interim Administrator Gay stated it would be good to get the application first. Many calls have come in regarding this and Administrator Gay wanted to make sure the Board had an interest in closing the road before a lot of time is put into this. Interim Administrator Gay will get the application to the owners and will bring this back, hopefully, at the next meeting to set a Public Hearing.
7. Interim Administrator Theron Gay stated bids were opened a week ago on County Line Road and Ellis Road projects. County Line Road is a project we are working on with the IDA

and a property owner that the IDA is working with. The bid exceeded our estimated cost but there are ways we feel we can get the estimate down. It has a guardrail and a high bank and if we do the grading and take the guardrail down we would come close in price with the IDA and property owner as well.

Ellis Road is a dirt road and there had been conversations on improvements of dirt roads. The bid for Ellis Road called for restoring typical section, crown, ditch line, replacing cross-drains, tail ditches, driveway pipe as needed, cleaning the remaining cross-drain pipes and tail ditches, compact the road surface and add graded aggregate base to the road structure. This will turn into a very heavily graded road. This is about a 3-mile section of roadway. The lowest bid was from Piedmont Paving in the amount of \$555,576. We received another bid with a \$14K difference. Interim Administrator Gay stated this was brought back before the Board to see if the Board wanted to move forward. Funding for this project would be through T-SPLOST. We have another major project coming with T-SPLOST which will be Beulah Evans Road. The bids are out for that project and it will be a paving project. Beulah Evans Road project will be about 1.5 miles and will be an expensive project. The vast majority of the T-SPLOST will be used between these two roads. We have paved roads and purchased equipment with T-SPLOST funds. Interim Administrator Gay stated we are ready to move forward following the Board's decision. Commissioner Plant asked if we would be limited due to the time of year or would we be better served waiting until the Spring. There were comments and discussion from Interim Administrator Gay and Bill Cawthorne. We are nearing a point where they do not need to do the work after mid-November. Commissioner Plant asked if we awarded the project, would we try to complete it now. Mr. Cawthorne stated no, it would have to go into the Spring/early Summer. Interim Administrator Gay stated we were looking at the bids for Beulah Evans Road and knowing for example that it would be in November and we did not want a lot of work during November and December, so we extended that time for completion to June. Interim Administrator Gay suggested if we move forward with Ellis Road we do the same thing with the extension of the time period. Vice Chairman King asked if the companies who bid on these projects understood that it may be next year before the project could start, especially due to the cost of goods. Mr. Cawthorne stated we can communicate with them and thought we could dictate when they can work. Interim Administrator Gay stated we can include that in the contract and with them being a contractor they know that working on the road in the wintertime is not good. There may be good days during the winter when they can do things. There are items that can be done in winter to prepare. They may be able to replace small sections of the pipes on Ellis Road if the weather permits. Mr. Cawthorne stated he does not see them grading the entire road. Commissioner Worsley stated he was not in favor of approving a project that we will not do for six months because there are plenty of projects we can spend this money on right now before the weather gets bad. Commissioner Collins stated he was not in favor of spending \$550K on three miles of dirt road. Mr. Cawthorne stated there are 36+ homes on this road and it was one of the five that we had talked about trying to do a major improvement. There is a lot of traffic and school buses out there. Complaints about Ellis Road have been received by Vice Chairman King and Commissioner Plant. Vice Chairman King stated it had been mentioned before about getting these roads on a priority list. The Board needs to decide if we hold off on this road, will we have the funds next year. Commissioner Plant stated this is her District and if you delay a project like this you don't know what the cost will be next year. We know there is work that can be done in the winter months in preparation for the project. There are 36 homes on this small section and this would be a good preparation for in the future if the road should ever be paved.

Commissioner Plant gave the example of LaGrange Hwy. and how GDOT had started to prepare for that bridge replacement project with signage etc. That project will not begin until the early part of the new year. There is a lot of preparation work that goes in to road work and Commissioner Plant felt the County needed to move forward especially with the issues we have on County Line Road and Ellis Road. County Line Road has been an issue for some time and it connects with Coweta and Troup Counties and to an Industrial Park. There is a private owner who is willing to invest if the County is willing to put their portion back in to this to help bring the cost down. The IDA is committed to this. Commissioner Plant recommended we move forward with Ellis Road and County Line Road. The funds are there and we know we are working to get the bids in on Beulah Evans Road and if we need to make adjustments we can. Commissioner Plant thought this would be a great test run on Ellis Road to address the road issue for the number of houses that it serves. Interim Administrator Gay stated we had made changes to our Ordinance regarding the density of homes on dirt roads. Commissioner Worsley confirmed we did not to do work on the road in November and Mr. Cawthorne stated he meant like grading on Ellis Road or Beulah Evans Road. Commissioner Worsley asked if the Ellis Road could be completed by mid-November and if not why would we spend money on that. Mr. Cawthorne was not sure of the contractor's schedule. Commissioner Plant stated there is a lot of preparation work that can be done such as pipes, trees, and undergrowth before the road work begins and this can be done during winter months. Commissioner Worsley asked how much of this work do we need to do and then have to redo when the winter season starts that would cost us more money. Vice Chairman King stated the contractor would do the work. Mr. Cawthorne stated we could check with the contractor regarding Ellis Road. Ellis Road is a larger project than County Line Road which can be completed in two days. Commissioner Worsley was concerned of committing \$500K to start with part of the work then let it sit during the winter and starting again next year and maybe having to redo the work unless there is an imminent safety issue. Interim Administrator Gay stated if work started and the Contractor had to go back and rework it, the cost would be on them. We wanted to look at this project and get a good feel for what it cost. Our roads are in bad shape due to neglect for a long time. This is a way to restore the road and the way all of them needs to be done. The County would set an end date for completion. Commissioner Worsley stated earlier this year the roads were ranked based on the issues and the number of people who live there, then he asked what was the ranking for Ellis Road in that priority. Interim Administrator Gay stated when we looked at dirt roads there were 4 or 5 that we hope to do like this. It was believed that Ellis Road was ranked number 1 with the most homes and traffic. Some of the other roads that were rated were Panther Creek, Bishop Road, and Derrico Road. Motion was made by Rosla Plant to accept the Ellis Road project as presented and to use T-SPLOST funds. Vice Chairman King seconded the motion. Voting in favor were Commissioner Plant and Vice Chairman King. Commissioner Worsley and Commissioner Collins were opposed. The motion failed. Motion was made by Commissioner Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Collins to accept the bid for County Line Road in the amount of \$200,623 from Piedmont Paving and to work with the IDA and Public Works on this project. Voting in favor were Commissioner Worsley, Commissioner Collins, and Vice Chairman King. Commissioner Plant abstained. The motion passed.

8. Interim Administrator Gay stated it is critical and Public Works is in need of a Diagnostic System for the fleet vehicle maintenance and repair. Staff has received three proposals. The lowest priced proposal is from Snap-On at a cost of \$6,315. With the computerization in today's vehicles, this is a necessity and it will pay for itself with a few repairs. SPLOST funds can be

used. Commissioner Collins looked online last night and found one like the one priced from NAPA, Autel Maxis Directional Bluetooth MS909CV online from Locksmith Keyless for \$3,150. Commissioner Collins confirmed it was the same equipment the County had looked at. They varied in price from \$3,100 to \$6,000 online. Interim Administrator Gay stated we will go back and check this out. We had worked with bidders who we knew had this equipment in stock. Commissioner Collins asked if we need one that is that good at the shop. Interim Administrator Gay stated this is the one the mechanic said would work best for what they are doing and they do more volume. Motion was made by Commissioner Collins and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to check out the Diagnostic equipment from Locksmith Keyless in the amount of \$3,150 and if that is the right one, purchase it, and if not come back before the Board. All were in favor.

9. Interim Administrator Gay stated one of the big tasks we do is to put together the Agenda packages. We have been looking at software for a while. This new software system is in place in other locations and some of our staff went to the City of Newnan to see how it was working for them. The City of Newnan was satisfied with the system. Our Legal Team requested changes and the vendors have agreed to accept the changes. Staff recommended the purchase. Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to purchase the Agenda Management System from Civic Clerk in the amount of \$7,437 from SPLOST with a recurring annual cost of \$5,035.80 from the budget in the upcoming years. All were in favor.

#### **XIV. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Interim Administrator, Theron Gay, reported since the last meeting he had met with DFACS Representatives on a matter we have been dealing with, opened bids for Ellis Road and County Line Road, attended a teleconference with IRS regarding a property owner in Meriwether County, met with an Industry prospect, sent out the bids for Beulah Evans Road, worked on the Short Term Work Program update, worked with the Clerk on several Open Records Requests, set up a meeting with Attorney Michael Hill to discuss changes in the Code of Ordinances, attended a Water & Sewerage Authority Meeting and scheduled a meeting with the City of Hogansville.

#### **XV. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Emmett Collins: thanked County Staff, County Employees, and all of the Commissioners. Commissioner Collins stated we need to look at having someone clean the restrooms at Lake Meriwether.

Commissioner Rosla Plant: stated she had previously mentioned the road work and bridge replacement on LaGrange Street that is scheduled for early next year.

Commissioner Adam Worsley: thanked everyone for the work they are doing and stated we need to find a way to get it done faster. Some people are frustrated about their roads and we are short staffed and have obstacles. We are getting to the time of year when we can't do as much on the roads. This Board and this office has got to find a way to come together, move forward, and get this addressed. There are many positives and people sending their thanks. There are many areas that need action, big projects we have not started, and we need to get the wheels moving.

Commissioner Worsley thanked everyone for what they are doing.

Interim Administrator Gay stated we need a meeting after the first of the year to discuss what we need to work on and what needs to be accomplished. We have let months go by this year before

we got around to focusing on specifics of getting some things done. Commissioner Worsley stated it has been a troubling and trying new year with the majority of the Board being new, with transitioning of the County Administrator leaving, and being shorthanded. We have made progress but need to have a one-, two-, or a five-year plan. Interim Administrator Theron Gay stated depending on who is here, we will set up a time to start this at the beginning of the year. There was additional conversation regarding starting projects early including the preparation.

Vice Chairman Gene King: stated he agreed with everything Commissioner Worsley said. Vice Chairman King reported the Cotton Fair had the largest turnout ever and many have called to extend thanks to the County for helping to get the roads looking good which represents Meriwether County. Vice Chairman King thanked the staff for all they are doing. Vice Chairman King wants the Department Heads to start watching employees closer and if they have a problem with not getting things done they should go to Human Resources, the Administrator, or the Board.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: Absent

**XVI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY**

There was no report from County Attorney, Nathan Lee. Interim Administrator Gay stated there was need for Executive Session to discuss, Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate, and Tax Matters.

**XVII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to go into Executive Session at 9:57 a.m. for Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate, and Tax Matters. All were in favor. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Adam Worsley to go out of Executive Session at 10:39 a.m. All were in favor. Commissioner Plant did not return to the meeting. Motion was made by Emmett Collins and seconded by Adam Worsley to go back into Regular Session at 10:41 a.m. All were in favor. There was no action taken in Executive Session.

**XVIII. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES**

Vice Chairman Gene King announced future Meetings and Notices prior to Executive Session.

**XIX. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, motion was made by Adam Worsley and seconded by Emmett Collins to adjourn at 10:42 a.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Beverly Thomas, County Clerk

Date: October 24, 2023