

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
October 27, 2020

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred 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 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 Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Mary Bray to approve the Agenda. All were in favor.

III MINUTES
A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2020 Regular Meeting. All were in favor.

IV. MUNICIPAL COMMENTS
None

V. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS COMMENTS
None

VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS
None

Chairman Threadgill stated we would move New Business 1. District Attorney – update Board on Operations before the Public Hearing.

District Attorney, Herb Cranford, provided a brief update on what is going on in the District Attorney's Office. Due to COVID-19 the Grand Jury has not been able to meet since March. They have done a good job working out cases with 80 being ready in Meriwether County. A part-time Assistant D.A. was brought in and Judge Rasnick is happy with the Court process. Mr. Cranford stated they are moving forward on cases they can prove without reasonable doubt. Other ways to seek justice were shared. D.A. Cranford hopes that jury trials will start in January. Commissioner Hines wanted D.A. Cranford to come back at another time to explain how his office is working with a group of individuals regarding relationships and diversity in Carroll County. D.A. Cranford stated there was a small group of Black Pastors and the Police Chief who got together with six people at lunch to discuss bettering the community. That group has now grown to approximately 50 people. They have presenters come, have lunch and there is no secret agenda. They look at what good things they can do for the County.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING
Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Mary Bray to go into a Public Hearing to review and adopt the updated Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance. All were in favor.
Administrator Gay stated the Public Hearing was properly advertised. A letter was received from Georgia EPD regarding the local issuing authorities. We must amend the Ordinance to be in compliance with the State. Administrator Gay stated he now feels we have already done this, and they may have received the

wrong copy and not the new codified version. Administrator Gay took the current Ordinance and only made insignificant changes. Administrator Gay stated he wanted to make sure we have it approved and that this was adopted to maintain our local issuing authority. The Ordinance deals with sedimentation and runoff, streams, buffers, engineering requirements for big projects etc. It references lakes that are not in our County and coastal regions, but we must follow State law.

Commissioner Hines stated this was only received on October 22, 2020 and it is just to make revisions to our Ordinance that went into effect when we approved the Codification. After Administrator Gay reviewed this yesterday, it was determined there were no substantive changes needed since the State was reviewing the old Ordinance.

Administrator Gay recommended that the Board add the Code Referenced that was consistent with the Coding.

Kennard Rawlinson, Mt. Carmel Road, stated he had placed an Open Records Request for a draft copy of the change and has not received the request. Mr. Rawlinson stated he sees the County is getting ready to vote on something the citizens have not seen and does not know what the Board is deciding.

Administrator Gay stated he worked on this late last night and was trying to make sure the County was in compliance with State Law. Vice Chairman McCoy stated in most of the State regulations you make it specific to regulations for the County. Mr. Rawlinson stated he wanted to see how we are updating the Ordinance. Commissioner Hines stated she understood both viewpoints and wants to make sure there is transparency.

Motion was made by Beth Neely Hadley and seconded by Shirley Hines to go out of the Public Hearing. All were in favor. Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to table this until the next meeting. All were in favor.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Administrator Gay gave a brief synopsis of the RFP for the Lone Oak Ballfield. All proposals were reviewed at the last meeting. There were questions following the meeting and Administrator Gay sent out a list of questions to the three groups who submitted a bid. Those groups were Mack Reynolds Reality, the Town of Lone Oak, and the Meriwether County Industrial Development Authority. Answers were received back from Mack Reynolds and the IDA. The Town of Lone Oak stated after reviewing the list of questions, they did not have the financials needed but would like to speak. Administrator Gay stated if we allow one to speak, we will need to allow each of the three time to speak.

Administrator Gay stated Mack Reynolds proposal included the purchase of the entire piece of property for \$220K. This property would go back on the digest. As defined in their letter they would market to a user in the community. Mr. Reynolds is a friend and supporter of Meriwether County.

The Town of Lone Oak had a proposal to pay \$10K or lease the property at \$1 per year for 50 years. They wanted the 18 +/- tract. They would look at grants for funding and a donation of the ballfield to Lone Oak. The proposed use was for sports, continuing education, office space, concessions, and a multi-cultural center.

The IDA is willing to purchase the entire property for \$253,130 and would plan to lease the ballfield for 1-year. After funds are built back up, they would develop a plan to market the property to create jobs for Meriwether County and the property would then be added back to the tax base.

Administrator Gay stated the property had access to water, sewer, gas, and internet. The ballfield has not been utilized for County recreation and Administrator Gay feels the area will see more growth with Industry.

Commissioner Hines asked if there was a request for a lease from Mack Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds stated no.

Mack Reynolds, Jr. with Mack Reynolds Reality stated this would be a long-term investment for his firm. They will be able to find a bonified investor. They own property close to this. They would like to do a 30-day due diligence and 30-day close. They would talk with the existing tenants to discuss allowing them to stay and have a conversation for the short run.

Commissioner Hines asked Mr. Reynolds if he knew the value of the building at the ballpark dug out field house. We have to look at the lease terms which Commissioner Hines heard was \$1,450 per month and the replacement value and new cost of a recreation facility. We would lean on a joint venture or a tenant to help. Also, look at the depreciation and what it would take to bring up the facility. Mr. Reynolds gave the top 2 analysis to give value.

Commissioner Bray asked if Mr. Reynolds considers this as prime property for Meriwether County. Mr. Reynolds stated sure, it has good access and proximity to the interstate. Commissioner Bray asked if that included the value of the land based on the current facility.

Chairman Threadgill stated the focus now is on money. When we sent out the RFP it was for the best possible use. Mr. Reynolds stated they would speak with the existing tenants now and in the long run and look at a long-term venture. Commissioner Hines asked Mr. Reynolds, in seeing growth, what did he feel is a good fit. Mr. Reynolds replied growth is coming this way with population, business and commercial industrial etc. We need to make a plan to capture and not limit to one zone.

Jane Fryer, IDA Director stated the IDA is responsible for jobs, investment, and tax revenue. The industrial growth is next to the ballfield. Last year the IDA looked at the best area for Industrial growth and decided on the property next to the Industrial Park. This area has water, sewer, gas, internet, etc. They looked at all roads and returned to this area. The ballfield property would be a natural continuation of the Industrial Park and there is infrastructure there. Ms. Fryer stated she knows there will be more growth in the next five-years. Ms. Fryer stated the IDA will pay \$10K per acre for the 18 acres. An additional offer was added for the 25-50 additional acres without an official survey. Because of the difference in the property they will pay \$1,500 per acre and use the land for Industry. They will continue the leases as month to month with a 90-day notice to vacate. The IDA is prepared to close immediately with the proper paperwork. Tax revenue received from the Industrial Park in 2013 was \$12K and now it is \$365K. There has been a difference and jobs have been created.

Commissioner Hines stated we want the best use of the property for everyone. Commissioner Hines stated the IDA wants 18 acres and Ms. Fryer confirmed the IDA also wants the remaining 50-70 acres, Commissioner Hines stated there were empty lots and a business that recently left. Ms. Fryer stated the IDA showed the property to 4 people in the last month. The IDA plans to make the area look like an extension of the Industrial Park with signage and cleaning up the area. Commissioner Hines stated the County gives \$290K to the IDA and was concerned if another opportunity comes up how would the IDA promote that opportunity. Ms. Fryer stated they still have funds to promote the property but would like to do some grading, etc. Funds would also be gained from selling off other land on Sewell Road that will not be used for industry. Ms. Fryer stated she feel they can make it look like an Industrial Park within a one-year time frame. The property has been on the DCA web base and many people see it as a ballfield and do not want to take it away from the County. Commissioner Bray stated if the IDA keeps the property it would still be off the Tax Digest. Ms. Fryer stated once they sell the property it would go back on the digest. Ms. Fryer stated the IDA would be giving back money the County invested in them. Ms. Fryer stated the property has not been on the digest for some time and it may be possible for some of the money that would come back to the County to be used on Recreation. The most logical place for Industrial Development is there at the Interstate. Administrator Gay stated while it has not been on the Tax Digest, the land has increased in value over the last ten years.

Lone Oak Mayor Phillip Dow expressed the wishes of the City Council and citizens regarding the Ballfields on Hwy. 54. With the comments just heard and the prospects at the Industrial Park he does not want to displace the youth due to the ballfields. Mayor Dow asked why the prospects do not go across the street to buy. Mayor Dow stated the ballfield and property were donated to the County over ten years ago for recreation. While it has been available to the residents it has not been available to the Meriwether County residents. Most of the growth is in the north end of the County. Mayor Dow feels the best use of the property is for recreation and feels that Lone Oak has showed a history of working with the County. The example given was the donation of land for a Fire Station. Mayor Dow asked if the property is not donated to the Town of Lone Oak to develop, then not to sell or transfer it to the IDA, but keep it as

recreation and charge and fund the Meriwether Recreation Authority to develop this site into a start of the art recreation area.

Cat Jenkins, Lone Oak Attorney, stated the ballfield is important to Lone Oak. The ballfield was under a lease that was just terminated. The potential use is there and Lone Oak is small but will grow and the use of the ballfield should not cause a burden. There are 60-70 acres behind the ballfield to use. Attorney Jenkins asked that the ballfield remain and allowed to be used by Greenville High School. Where the ballfield is located it is less than ½ mile from Lone Oak and is important for the Town. Chairman Threadgill asked if there were any other sports played there. Attorney Jenkins stated only baseball.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated a while back we talked about the fields and what to do.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley was curious why no one else submitted an RFP including the people who were initially interested. Attorney Jenkins stated that is why she wanted to lengthen the timeline on the RFP to get more interest.

Chairman Threadgill asked specifically what Lone Oak was offering. Mayor Dow stated the Town wants it to stay recreation. It became apparent that the Town did not have the resources except through grants. They want to be a partner to keep it as recreation.

Kody Forbus, Lone Oak Council Member stated there is a different mindset of residential growth with a ballfield. With industry coming that way, there is a change in mindset on where Industry is best and where the best place is for new residents and families to come. The Interstate is best for the people to get back and forth and the biggest detraction of people coming here is the schools.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated we had no discussion of changing from recreation until Lone Oak spoke about them taking control. They want to keep recreation and we want to keep it. Commissioner Bray stated when the ballfield lease was over someone was interested but they did not put in a proposal. They wanted to rent. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated that was part of the RFP, to buy or lease. We were fine leaving it as recreation. Commissioner Bray stated an outsider was interested in leasing.

Marquese Grissom was interested but it was not brought to the Board when we had an RFP.

Administrator Gay explained the RFP. The Board of Commissioners left open to what we would accept.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated if it is the desire to leave it as it is then lease it to someone to play ball and if the Industry wants it, we re-negotiate. Commissioner Bray stated we were not looking to make a profit but to get the best use to lease the ballfield. Commissioner Bray asked why Meriwether County does not invest in this and lease the ballfield. Commissioner Neely-Haley stated if we sold the property, we could put that money in to a matched grant for recreation that would be located in the center of the County in Greenville.

Tom Hagen, citizen of Lone Oak, stated the Commissioners has to have a clear vision of what to do. This is already in place. You have the infrastructure and land, and you can make this a destination place for people to come and spend money. There needs to be a master plan for Meriwether County. Lone Oak wants to take this forward to benefit the young people of Meriwether County.

Commissioner Hines stated she looked at the proposals and Lone Oak did a great job and projected 5-10 years out. Commissioner Hines feels it would be a good to have a partnership between Lone Oak and the County. Commissioner Hines discussed an event she attended in LaGrange where they spoke about a master plan and the quality of life and the importance of recreation. They spoke about buying land, expanding with a fairground, arena, baseball, walking trail etc. Coweta County is bringing in a minor league baseball team and a state-of-the-art facility. Commissioner Hines stated she sees that we can be a part of this. The infrastructure is already there, and we can expand or work with what we have. If we sell the property, the money needs to go toward centralized recreation. Commissioner Hines lives in that area of the County. The best use is to provide Recreation to give a quality of life. Marques Grissom showed interest more than a year ago and saw potential. He reached out with information when the proposal came but due to COVID they did not have enough time and they were only interested in leasing the property. Commissioner Hines stated we need to focus on the quality of life and recreation.

Chairman Threadgill asked if it would be better for the County to keep the property.

Gary Iverster, Council Member from Lone Oak asked how the County got the property. Administrator Gay stated it was donated to the County. Mr. Iverster stated the County did not sell the property, we gave

it away, it came back to us and we gave it away again. Commissioner Hines stated Ken Gordon built it and donated it to the County. It was sold to Greenville and the County got it back. It was given to the County for the purpose of promoting recreation.

Vice Chairman McCoy stated from a business standpoint this will someday be industrial property and it includes the property that sets on the State Route ¼ mile from I-85. This property has the infrastructure to attract industry. It is located next to the greater populated area, Troup County. Vice Chairman McCoy stated he knows the County thrives with recreation, but we also have to have jobs. Vice Chairman McCoy wished we could move the ballfield to Greenville. Every community wants their own recreation but there are not enough children in each to make a team at this time. We need to centralize recreation and if we do sell the property, we need to reinvest in a facility here. We can add a ball field to the recreation center. If you cannot put money on the table, there is no place to stay there or eat. Here it would be in Meriwether County. At some point in time that area will be Commercial Industrial and at some point, we need to move toward centralizing including each City. Vice Chairman McCoy did not see this as use of a ball field or have the County lease this for money. Vice Chairman McCoy stated if the Board were to do away with the property today, we need to address this with the IDA and allow the field to be used until we can reinvest the money into a recreation facility in Greenville.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley asked Commissioner Bray what her preference would be if she had a choice to sell and move recreation or hold on for someone to have for a ball field at the current location.

Commissioner Bray stated if we keep the ball field in Lone Oak, we could use part of SPLOST to enhance. We would have to have money go into recreation.

Commissioner Hines stated the DNR grant is very competitive and if we do not make it in this cycle, we will still have to take money and invest in a central location. There is an existing ball field, and we can invest in that infrastructure. This must be done in phases and wants all the money to go toward recreation. In 2002 there was a proposal to build a state-of-the-art recreation center in Greenville. Commissioner Hines feels the ballpark can be used un a different way.

Vice Chairman McCoy stated this property will ultimately become Industrial and keeping a ballfield is costly. A central location would serve all of the County and Vice Chairman felt we should move on.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley told Commissioner Bray the Board would go with whatever she wanted to do. If Greenville is already using the fields, we could start Recreation here. If we sell the Lone Oak property, the funds would go back toward recreation for a central area. Commissioner Hines asked why was there a sense of urgency for this. Chairman Threadgill stated it was not urgent and he could speak with each Commissioner. Commissioner Bray stated she did not want to be the one person to make the decision. The DNR grant must be in at the end of the week, if not the next cycle is in one year.

Willis Briggs of Lone Oak stated he was familiar with Coweta, Meriwether and Fulton County and has seen developments. Mr. Briggs stated his background leads to planned use, and the ballfield is set up for future use. Mr. Briggs asked where we would expand and did we want to go into Lone Oak. The Industrial Park has not been used up and there is property on the other side. We are not using the ballpark so why not have a joint venture. Mr. Briggs asked what the urgency was.

Commissioner Hines stated the Chairman wanted to reach out and talk with each Board member.

Commissioner Hines wanted to wait since this will affect many areas. Administrator Gay stated none of the school officials are involved. The Board has done a great job and Administrator Gay encouraged the Board to not look back but look forward.

Sue Ann Reid, Mt. Pilgrim Rd., stated changes are going to come and many are not ready. We cannot hold on to something and we need to let it loose. We have to accept change and cannot stop it.

Motion was made by Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Shirley Hines to table the decision on the Lone Oak property. All were in favor.

2. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Shirley Hines to approve the purchase of one thermal scanner for the Department of Health in Meriwether County. All were in favor.

3. Administrator Gay discussed the grant for the Greenville Recreation Project. We will have to determine where the financial commitment will come from before we move forward with the submittal. There are approximately 18.59 acres which were pointed out on the map. Following grading there would

be approximately 5 acres of cleared area. Administrator Gay reviewed the map and tract of property and pointed out where the parking would be so the children would not have to cross where there is traffic. The field would be approximately 140 yards X 60 Yards. There would be a large playground on each end but due to financial constraints we may have to have one playground in the middle of the field. There would be a walking area around the playground and benches, a pavilion, unisex restrooms, and trash receptacles. The overall cost would be around \$215,000. The land donation would be \$110,000, \$15K for clearing, \$30K for the pavilion, \$50K playground equipment, ten loads of gravel, and the prefabricated restrooms are \$35K-\$40K. We would also connect to water and sewer and will have to survey to look at where the lines would be located. Administrator Gay showed a picture of quad ballfields that could be included in Phase II. Commissioner Hines left the meeting. There was additional discussion of what would be to come with Phase II. Commissioner Hines returns. Chairman Threadgill would like to see a doggy park there too. Administrator Gay showed an area on the map where a doggy park could be located. The property would start on McLaughlin Road and continue to Roosevelt Hwy. in future phases. Friday is the deadline to submit the grant and it is a 50/50 match. It is a \$500,00 grant and we designated \$250K toward Recreation in SPLOST. They will not announce the recipients of the grants until Spring 2021 and Administrator Gay feels we have a good chance at getting the grant. Commissioner Hines stated they would not make the announcement until May 2021. There was additional discussion of adding \$200K from the county. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Shirley Hines to commit \$200K in matching funds toward the grant for the Recreation project. All were in favor.

4. Administrator Gay, Public Works Consultant Bill Cawthorne, Commissioner Hines, and Chris Edmondson from Clough Harbour met to discuss the County Line Road project, including the bridge and right of way on October 15, 2020. There is a creek and a wetlands mitigation bank. Administrator Gay and Public Works Consultant Bill Cawthorne were on a conference call on October 22, 2020 and they spoke about their concern of the mitigation bank and feels engineering needs to be done in phases and let the Corp of Engineers approve before moving to a final decision. The proposal will be on the next meeting. This will be the 1st Phase of engineering and Administrator Gay is concerned if we complete the engineering as one phase, the Corp may not approve, and we would have additional engineering cost. It is an expensive project with an estimated cost of \$1.2M.

Angela Turner approached the podium and stated at the last meeting she participated by Zoom and the Board spoke about the Landfill including an article from the Harold Co. News. Ms. Turner stated she wanted to make sure the Board received a copy of the article in order to talk about what we will do about Coal Ash at the next meeting.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. District Attorney, Herb Cranford, provided an update on the District Attorney's office before the Public Hearing.
2. Motion was made by Mary Bray and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to reappoint Bobby Gordon to the Airport Authority. All were in favor. This term will expire on 10-31-2025.
3. Administrator Gay stated in the recently adopted County Zoning Ordinance, any new residential lots on a dirt or unpaved road are required to be a minimum of 5-acres. This provision applies not only to subdivisions but to individuals as well. All existing lots smaller than 5-acres are grandfathered but cannot be re-subdivided. There has been a call regarding this and Administrator Gay recommended scheduling a Public Hearing to discuss lot sizes on unpaved roads. Motion was made by Beth Neely Hadley and seconded by Mary Bray to set a Public Hearing on December 9, 2020 to re-address lot sizes on dirt/gravel roads. All were in favor.
4. Motion was made by Mary Bray and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to confirm and allow the Chairman to sign the Narcotics Task Force MOU. All were in favor.
5. Motion was made by Shirley Hines and seconded by Mary Bray to table the appointment to the DFACS Board, District 1. All were in favor.

X. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR

Finance Director Bill Gregory stated the general fund received the Insurance Premium tax check which was over \$1M this year. Mr. Gregory opened an account in the Government Asset Pool to get the best possible interest rate. The pledging limits were at the maximum at Southcrest Bank. The 2014 SPLOST account with Regions Bank was closed.

XI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

County Administrator Gay spoke with DNR about closing the grant at Lake Meriwether, worked on County Line Road project information, worked on the Lone Oak ballfield proposal, met about Industry projects, met about wetlands, worked on the E&S Ordinance information. Administrator Gay talked with the people regarding property for the Primrose Fire Station and they do not want to sell. Administrator Gay asked the Board's consideration about relocating the proposed Greenville Fire Station. The Lanier Plant may not work due to mitigation issues that the County will assume if we take over the building. The other location area would be a tract of land on Tech Drive. It would be 1-mile, as the crow flies, from the other proposed location but will save money in the long run. There are two State routes that intersect at the other location and A-cell and D-cell lanes may be required. The grading, water and sewer system access would be simpler at the Tech Drive location. Vice Chairman McCoy stated if the land is ever mediated, they could come back on the County. Administrator Gay wanted to meet with Commissioner Hines to look at locations for Primrose. Commissioner Hines stated the work started for a Fire Station at Primrose 5-years ago. Commissioner Hines stated she would reach out to the community since they had made it clear to her they wanted a Fire Station in Primrose. Administrator Gay explained the gap in coverage if it were to be in the area suggested in Primrose. Commissioner Bray felt that was fine and feels it provides great access to the County. Administrator Gay stated we will eventually look at Rocky Mount and St. Marks. Commissioner Hines stated those would be substations. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Mary Bray: asked to have monitors with speakers added in the front entry.

Commissioner Shirley Hines: nothing at this time

Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley: nothing at this time

Vice Chairman McCoy: reported the weather was not the best on Saturday at the program to honor Public Safety workers at Lake Meriwether. They planned for 100 dinners and there were a few left over.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: reported work had started on Cove Road last week.

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Michael Hill stated there was no need for an Executive Session.

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cat Jenkins stated with recreation, ballfields, and the park she suggested the County partner with the school. Baseball could bring in money to supplement the park. Ms. Jenkins is trying to push for a recreation master plan and find someone who does this for a living. They would have the ability and time to develop a plan. Ms. Jenkins has spoken with someone about this but does not have a cost yet. Ms. Jenkins will have them speak with the Recreation Advisory Board.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES

Chairman Threadgill read future meetings and notices.

They were as follows:

November 11, 2020 Regular Meeting 9:00 a.m.

November 24, 2020 Regular Meeting 6:00 p.m.

November 26-27, 2020 Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Mary Bray to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. All were in favor.

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

Attest: *Beverly A. Thomas, County Clerk*

Date: *November 11, 2020*