

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, January 6, 2015
7:00 o'clock p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Terry R. Clark.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The invocation was given and the pledge of allegiance led by Commissioner Winfred Giddens.

PRESENT: Those present were Commissioners Winfred Giddens, Marc DeMott, Donna Herndon, Paul Nagy, Johnny Hardin, and Chairman Terry R. Clark. Also present were County Administrator Chas Cannon, County Attorney Lester Castellow and County Clerk Melissa Lawson.

ABSENT: Commissioner Luke P. Strong, Jr.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON DECEMBER 2 & 11: Commissioner Hardin made a motion to approve the minutes as presented for meetings held on December 2 & 11, 2014. Commissioner Giddens made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

CITIZENS HAVING BUSINESS WITH THE COUNTY: Mr. David Cass stated that two months prior he had addressed the board concerning raising income thresholds for solid waste exemptions. Mr. Cass stated that although income thresholds were increased, he was currently requesting a 30% increase in solid waste income thresholds. Mr. Cass also requested that all veterans be granted a discount on their monthly solid waste bill. In closing, Mr. Cass thanked the board for the opportunity to speak and for any consideration they might give his request.

APPROVAL OF LIST OF UNPAID INVOICES: Commissioner Giddens made a motion to approve payment of the list of unpaid invoices. Commissioner Herndon made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF TAX RELIEFS AND ADDITIONS: Commissioner Hardin made a motion to approve the list of tax reliefs and additions. Commissioner Herndon made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

County Administrator Chas Cannon presented the following agenda items:

PRESENTATION OF CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS: Mr. Cannon presented a list of Chairman Clark's annual committee appointments. Commissioner DeMott made the motion to approve the appointments. Commissioner Giddens made a second. The motion carried unanimously. (The appointments are hereby made a portion of the minutes by reference thereto.)

ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: Commissioner Giddens made the motion to appoint Lester Castellow as County Attorney and Dr.

Woodwin Weeks as County Physician/Medical Review Officer. Commissioner Herndon made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cannon noted that county audit services would be re-bid as requested by Wayne Putnal, Finance Director.

APPOINTMENT TO SOUTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

BOARD: Commissioner Giddens made the motion to appoint Commissioner Paul Nagy to the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Board. Commissioner Hardin made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS TO SOUTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION BOARD:

Commissioner Hardin made the motion to appoint Mr. Henry Crumley and Ms. Dollie Crumly to the Southwest Regional Commission Board as non-public appointees. Commissioner Giddens made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

APPOINTMENT TO JOINT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

Commissioner Giddens made the motion to appoint Commissioner DeMott to the Joint Development Authority Board of Directors. Commissioner Hardin made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CHAIRMAN TO USE FACSIMILE SIGNATURE:

Commissioner Hardin made the motion to approve the resolution authorizing the Chairman and/or Clerk to affix facsimile signature of the Chairman to negotiable instruments. Commissioner DeMott made a second. The motion carried unanimously. (Resolution 2015-R-1 is hereby made a portion of the minutes by reference thereto).

APPROVAL OF 2015 WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE

PREMIUM: Commissioner Herndon made the motion to approve payment of the 2015 workers compensation premium invoice. Commissioner Nagy made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

RENEWAL OF E911 CAD/GIS SOFTWARE SUPPORT MAINTENANCE

CONTRACT: Commissioner Hardin made the motion to renew the contract with InterAct regarding the provision of software support and maintenance for dispatch services at the E911 center. Commissioner Herndon made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

ANNUAL BID FOR CONCRETE PIPE:

Commissioner DeMott made the motion to approve the low bid from Deep South Draining regarding the provision of concrete pipe for the Roads and Bridges department. Commissioner Hardin made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

BID FOR TWO FOUR DOOR CREW CAB TRUCKS – SHERIFF’S

DEPARTMENT: Mr. Cannon stated that four bids were received regarding two four door crew cab trucks to be utilized by the drug enforcement division of the Sheriff’s department. He further stated that Edwards Motors was the recommended bid due to a 1% difference when compared to the lowest bid and their presence as a local vendor.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if the funds for the purchase were included in the current budget. Captain Julius Cox replied that funds for this purchase were included and budgeted for by combining the budgeted amount with another budgeted line item amount intended for an SUV that will not be purchased at this time. Captain Cox also stated that two vehicles within the department were involved in incidents within the last thirty days, putting constraint on the department’s fleet.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if the vehicles involved in those incidents were used for investigative purposes.

APPROVAL OF BID FOR TWO FOUR DOOR CREW CAB TRUCKS –

SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT: Commissioner Herndon made the motion to approve the bid from Edwards Motors regarding the provision of two four door crew cab trucks. Commissioner DeMott made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

PROCLAMATION IN HONOR OF 2014 COLQUITT COUNTY PACKERS:

At this time, Mr. Cannon stated that the board thought it prudent to recognize the 2014 Colquitt County Packer football team in honor of their exemplary, undefeated season and subsequent state championship win. Mr. Cannon further stated it was appropriate for him to present the proclamation due to the fact that he was a member of the last state championship football team to finish a season undefeated. Mr. Cannon read the proclamation aloud and presented it to Packer Head Football Coach Rush Propst.

Coach Rush Propst thanked the commission and citizens of Colquitt County and stated that as someone that has lived in many areas of the southeast, Colquitt County was one of the finest places in which one could reside. Coach Propst stated that the attendance at the state championship game was a great testimony of the quality and support of the citizens of Colquitt County. In closing, Coach Propst stated he was thankful for a wonderful season and hoped for many great seasons to come.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: At this point in the meeting, Mr. Cannon addressed key issues received after the agenda deadline.

AMENDMENTS TO SOLID WASTE ORDINANCE:

Mr. Castellow stated that the first amendment to the solid waste ordinance would clarify the definition of “residential unit” and was necessary due to concerns raised by citizens regarding migrant farm mobile homes units that were not currently utilizing mandatory residential solid waste service.

Mr. Castellow further stated that the second amendment to the solid waste ordinance would increase the reduced solid waste exemption rate of \$8.50 to \$10.00 to correspond with the recently increased solid waste exemption rate income thresholds.

APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO SOLID WASTE ORDINANCE:

Commissioner Hardin made the motion to approve the amendments as discussed to the solid waste ordinance. Commissioner Giddens made a second. The motion carried unanimously. (Ordinance 2015-1 is hereby made a portion of the minutes be reference thereto.)

APPROVAL TO ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL SOLID WASTE CHECKING

ACCOUNT: Commissioner Hardin made the motion to approve the establishment of an additional, interest-bearing solid waste checking account. Commissioner Herndon made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

AUTHORIZATION TO UPDATE SIGNERS ON FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS:

Commissioner Giddens made the motion to update signers on all financial accounts to include Chairman Terry R. Clark, Vice-Chairman Luke P. Strong, and County Administrator Charles H. Cannon. Commissioner DeMott made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

COUNTY ATTORNEY – LESTER CASTELLOW: At this time, Mr. Castellow stated he had no issues to bring before the board.

OTHER COUNTY BUSINESS DEEMED NECESSARY: At this time, representatives of the Sabal Trail Natural Gas Pipeline began their presentation.

SABAL TRAIL UPDATE: Brian Farenthold introduced himself and other representatives of the Sabal Trail team. Mr. Farenthold presented an updated project location map consisting of approximately 500 miles of new pipeline, five compressor stations, and six meter stations, broken down into three project phases. Mr. Farenthold presented an overview of the Georgia portion of the Sabal Trail project, including the twenty-six miles to transition through Colquitt County. He explained the pipeline would parallel an existing pipeline, per Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requirements, and explained this was the main reason for choosing that particular route in Colquitt County. Mr. Farenthold discussed the proposed pipeline path in detail, citing all major roads, intersections, and water crossings.

Ed Gonzalez, Project Director, thanked the commission for the opportunity to speak and reviewed an upcoming schedule consisting of deliverables and target dates. Mr. Gonzalez noted that a formal application had been filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and stated that work would soon commence on a draft environmental impact statement, to be followed by a final environmental impact statement. He explained that during this time FERC would distribute a draft for interested parties to provide thoughts and comments. Mr. Gonzalez stated that he anticipated approval in November 2015, which would be followed by a notice to proceed. He further stated that he anticipated construction to begin in 2016, followed by authorization to commence service in 2017.

Mr. Gonzalez addressed the agricultural areas of the pipeline. He stated that Sabal Trail was committed to a depth of four feet in actively tilled agricultural land. He stated that this did not necessarily mean that the depth wouldn't increase, but that each property would be assessed for depth based on crop types, tilling depths, and irrigation systems. Mr. Gonzalez

stressed that Sabal Trail did not wish to affect the current utilization of any property located along the projected route.

At this time, Lester Castellow, County Attorney, declared that five feet was an absolute minimum when transiting through agricultural land. He stated that part of the concern was that existing pipeline in Colquitt County was now exposed, and it was thought when it was installed that the pipe was buried at an appropriate depth. Mr. Castellow reminded the Sabal Trail representatives of their guarantee, approximately one year earlier, to report back to the commission regarding the cost difference pertaining to a depth of three feet versus a depth of five feet. Mr. Castellow stated that in light of the lack of response, he would like to stress the need for this information.

Mr. Castellow further stated that the commission had already communicated its concerns regarding top cover by filing a resolution with FERC urging a minimum of five feet top cover. Mr. Castellow stated the concern of the board was that four feet as not adequate coverage.

Mr. Gonzalez stated that he was aware of the resolution and as a result of their experience with the construction of many pipelines, they have learned that each area is different. He stated this was the basis of the four feet minimum and further stated that requirements in agricultural fields would be studied and each tenant farmer would be worked with individually.

Commissioner Giddens questioned how many property owners would be affected by the pipeline route. Mr. Gonzalez replied that approximately 125 homeowners would be affected based on the 26 mile route currently proposed.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if trail representatives had spoken with these individuals. Mr. Gonzalez replied in the affirmative, stating this had been accomplished through both verbal and written correspondence. Commissioner Giddens asked if any of these individuals were in favor of the pipeline.

Mr. Gonzalez stressed that safety was top priority and stated that his company met or exceeded all United States Department of Transportation requirements. He further stressed that underground transmission pipelines were the safest mode of natural gas transportation, informing all in attendance that incident rates were low when compared to peer companies.

Commissioner Herndon voiced her concerns regarding the safety of the pipeline and stressed that she wanted to communicate how very concerned the commission was regarding the proposed pipeline.

Mr. Gonzalez addressed the particular measures taken to ensure safety and explained potential benefits to the construction of the pipeline, including tax revenue and job creation.

Commissioner DeMott stated when the existing pipeline was constructed in the 1950's, changes in tillage and crop methods could not be anticipated and to this day, any future changes still could not be anticipated.

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From a safety standpoint, Commissioner Giddens questioned the proximity of the pipeline to Colquitt Regional Medical Center and Sunset Elementary school.

Again, Mr. Gonzalez declared that FERC was the head agency who would ultimately determine if the pipeline would be constructed.

At this time, Fraley Turnipseed, participant in the High Potential Leader class, stated that the pipeline would transition through her family's property. Ms. Turnipseed questioned if she would be compensated for her property that was covered under the Federal Conservation Use program. Mr. Gonzalez stated that her family would indeed be compensated.

Mr. David Cass voiced his concerns from an engineering standpoint.

HIGH POTENTIAL LEADER Q&A SESSION: Greg Coop, Chair of the High Potential Leadership Group, thanked the board for the opportunity to participate in the upcoming question and answer session. Mr. Coop stated that the future development of potential leaders was a top priority of the Archway Executive Committee, of which he was a member. Mr. Coop proceeded to give a brief overview of the HPL program and introduced participants and mentors in the class. At this time, Mr. Coop opened the floor for questions from the HPL group.

Fraley Turnipseed asked the commission what authority they possessed, if any, in opposing the Sabal Trail Natural Gas pipeline. Mr. Castellow responded by stating that in the Federal system of government, there is a basic concept called preemption, meaning that state and local governments would have very little power in regards to opposition of the pipeline if it were approved by the Federal government. However, Mr. Castellow stated the authority possessed by local and state government was in the form of facilitating forums in which individuals could express their opinions and concerns.

Discussion ensued regarding service contract bids involving the pipeline.

Carrie Viohl stated her belief that perhaps the public feared a breakdown of the pipeline system that could potentially result in catastrophic damage. Ms. Viohl requested that Sabal Trail representatives explain their safety program and the rate of incidents.

Mr. Farenthold took this opportunity to discuss safety records, the amount spent on safety programs, and incident occurrences.

Commissioner Giddens expressed his fear of major catastrophe.

Roy Reeves asked new Commissioners DeMott and Nagy what prompted them to desire to serve in the capacity of county commissioners.

Commissioner DeMott stated that he was completing his service on other boards and desired to continue to serve his county.

Commissioner Nagy stated that he has always served in some capacity, whether it was his country or his county. He further stated he felt he was led to serve and looked forward to the challenges ahead.

Commissioner Giddens stated he felt his thirty-one years of experience at Colquitt EMC were an asset and helped to prepare him for his role as a county commissioner.

Dan Jeter requested clarification regarding the percentage of the county budget that was spent on law enforcement and prisoner detention. Mr. Cannon stated that approximately 46% of the budget was spent on public safety, with an additional 17% allocated to the court system. Mr. Jeter stated that perhaps the duty of the commission was to focus on job creation and opportunities in order to engage citizens in honest work, thus making them less likely to commit crimes.

Tommie Beth Willis thanked the commission for the opportunity to observe and inquired as to the proper procedure for addressing the commission. Mr. Cannon stated that it could be accomplished via two separate sections of the agenda and urged anyone in attendance to contact him regarding placement on the agenda.

Commissioner Herndon stated that there were state mandates to consider when budgeting for public safety.

Mr. Cannon gave an overview of the cost of housing prisoners when compared to reimbursement for that housing from the state of Georgia.

Mr. Cannon also discussed in detail tax exemptions that significantly affect tax revenue collection, in the form of conservation use agreements and Georgia Agricultural Tax Exemption (GATE) cards.

Carrie Viohl stated that as a local business owner, she understood that higher tax burdens stunted growth and limited the ability of a small business to hire employees.

Brooks Sheldon inquired as to the current status of SPLOST collections. Mr. Cannon replied that according to the most recent assessment, collections were approximately \$6,000,000.00 less than anticipated.

Commissioner Hardin stated that approximately \$14,000,000.00 was collected through property taxes and revenues were constantly decreasing. Mr. Cannon agreed, stating that 68% of the county's revenue was in the form of property taxes, with the county faced with other decreasing revenue sources, specifically the motor vehicle tax.

Commissioner Nagy referred to an Archway presentation in which details of what demographical information a prospective employer studies before settling in a certain community.

Commissioner Hardin stated that the county possessed good employees, but due to limited fiscal resources, had been unable to grant raises.

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Mr. Cannon agreed, stating this was a challenge, and the county often lost veteran, competent employees to the private sector.

Ms. Turnipseed questioned how involved the commission was in regards to economic development. Mr. Cannon stated that the county funded approximately \$75,000.00 annually to the Development Authority and also maintained their SPLOST collections. In addition, Mr. Cannon stated that collaborative work was ongoing regarding the possibility of having a national chain grocery tenant locate in Colquitt County.

In closing, Mr. Coop thanked the board for the information given and the opportunity to observe.

Commissioner Giddens stated he wanted to commend the Sheriff's Department on a job well done.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry R. Clark
Chairman

Melissa Lawson
County Clerk

Approved: _____