

# MINUTES

## WORK SESSION OF THE COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, May 5, 2015

5:30 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Vice – Chairman Donna Herndon. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss upcoming agenda items and any other county business deemed necessary. The meeting was duly called and advertised.

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Chief Compliance Officer Justin Cox, Road Superintendent Stan Kirksey, Warden Billy Howell, EMS Director Amy Williams, Compliance Officer Russell Moody, and Finance Director Wayne Putnal.

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Luke Strong.

**BOARD PREVIEW:** County Administrator Chas Cannon presented an overview of upcoming agenda items to be previewed before the regular meeting of the board at 7:00 p.m.

- Renewal of Contract with Archway Partnership – Mr. Cannon stated that renewal of the contract would be for the term of July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016, and explained that the partnership consisted of not only Colquitt County, but also the City of Moultrie, Colquitt Regional Medical Center, and the Board of Education. Mr. Cannon further explained that the funding level would remain the same at approximately \$10,000.00 for each entity involved. Mr. Cannon stated that Whitney D. Costin, Archway Public Health Professional, would be in attendance to answer any questions regarding the contract renewal.
- Renewal of Rental Contract – Child Support Services – Mr. Cannon stated that the rental space referenced in the contract facilitated the office of the Child Support Services Division at the Department of Human Services located at 449 North Main Street. He further stated that terms of renewal were July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016. Mr. Cannon informed the board that the resulting rental income as a result of this contract was approximately \$98,226.81 annually.
- Renewal of Contract with Georgia Department of Corrections – Mr. Cannon reviewed the contract between Colquitt County and the Georgia Department of Corrections regarding the housing of state inmates at the county prison for the term of July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016.

Mr. Cannon discussed a recent meeting between himself, Warden Howell, and the Department of Corrections (DOC) Commissioner concerning an increase in the reimbursement rate for the housing of state prisoners. Mr. Cannon stated that the DOC Commissioner indicated his willingness to consider an increase if the amount

to compensate for the increase was added to his annual budget. Mr. Cannon further stated it was possible that the increase might be facilitated incrementally.

At this time, Mr. Cannon declared his belief that the State Properties Commission could possibly declare the Correctional Institute as excess, and if so, the facility would become property of the county. Mr. Cannon stated that he would save money in lease payments and declared that he would like to see the prison utilized as an asset.

Warden Howell stated that a substantial amount of money was already invested in the County Prison.

Mr. Cannon stated that local Moultrie businessman Bill Acuff was a member of the Board of Corrections and, along with state legislators, could possibly assist with communications and/or negotiations concerning this issue.

Commissioner Nagy asked if State Representative Jay Powell was also assisting with this issue. Mr. Cannon stated that currently Mr. Powell was assisting the county with the requested increase in the state prisoner reimbursement rate, but stated that he could possibly assist with the issues involving the State Properties Commission.

(Chairman Clark entered the meeting at 5:42 p.m.)

Warden Howell stated that it would be beneficial to get the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia, and the Sheriff's Association, on board in order to spread the message that county prisons are a valuable asset to all counties in the state of Georgia. Warden Howell stated that most prisons were located in South Georgia, and declared that it was essential to prove their benefit to state legislators.

Commissioner Nagy questioned if this was an issue that could be worked upon prior to the next legislative session. Warden Howell replied that it was, stating that the idea was to create an organized effort, and keep the issue fresh and reiterated in order to gain as much attention and support as possible.

Warden Howell stated that the DOC Commissioner recently announced the possibility of re-opening previously closed regional DOC offices around the state. Warden Howell stated that this, and other indicators, could be a sign of a progressive turn of events regarding county prisons.

Mr. Cannon suggested scheduling a joint social event with Commissioners from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, and Department of Corrections to coincide with the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition in the fall, when these individuals would already be within the county.

Commissioner Giddens questioned what transpired in instances where inmates refused to work. Warden Howell stated that these individuals are locked down and moved as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Giddens stated his belief that everyone that supervised a detail should ask the inmates if they truly desired to work. Warden Howell argued against this, stating that it was a privilege to be assigned to a county work camp.

Warden Howell stated that the City of Moultrie had positive success with their inmate work details, and further stated that when considering the work performance of inmates, careful selection was essential.

In regards to the contract with the DOC, Warden Howell suggested that the county remain at the current capacity level of 190 inmates, stating that this provides depth and flexibility to the prison operation. As a result, Warden Howell stated that if an inmate refused to work, sufficient inmates would be available to compensate.

Commissioner Giddens stated that he had often observed prisoners returning from work details with their clothing in pristine condition, suggesting that they might not have been working.

Warden Howell stated that not all inmates were assigned to details in which their task would constitute stained or dirtied work clothing.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the total number of employees that worked under Warden Howell at the county prison.

Warden Howell stated he had a total of 22 employees, with only 15 of these individuals eligible to work 12 hour shifts. Currently, the Warden explained, he had two shift supervisor openings, and had received two resignations that very week.

Commissioner Nagy suggested enlisting the assistance of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission to assist with the state inmate reimbursement issue.

Warden Howell also suggested enlisting the assistance of the city of Moultrie in this effort.

- Approval of Bid for Inmate Phone Services – Jail and Prison – Mr. Cannon stated that seven bids were received regarding the provision of inmate telecommunication services at the jail and prison. Mr. Cannon further stated that it was the consensus of Warden Howell and Sheriff Al Whittington to recommend Pay Tel Communications, Inc. for the provision of this service.

Warden Howell stated that the current provider of inmate phone services, Securus Technologies, had undergone several organizational changes and as a result, was experiencing support issues. Due to this, Warden Howell explained that the service was re-bid and stated that Pay Tel was a very reputable company, with the capability to handle an account the size of the prison and jail.

Commissioner DeMott stated that he had no problem with the recommended vendor, but questioned why a state of Georgia vendor was not considered in the absence of a local vendor.

Warden Howell stated that some companies did not possess the technical support necessary to handle an account the size of Colquitt County.

Commissioner DeMott stated that he supported the recommendation, but also declared his desire to do business locally and in state whenever possible.

- Approval of Purchase of Chest Compression System – EMS – Mr. Cannon presented a quote from Physio – Control, Inc, concerning a LUCAS 2, 2.2 Chest Compression System to be utilized by EMS. Mr. Cannon stated that the cost was \$15,177.35, and stated that the purpose of the system was to electronically provide chest compressions for patients in cardiac arrest.

Ms. Williams discussed the purchase with the commission, stating that other vendors offered the compression system, but stated that purchasing it direct from the vendor would save money.

- Approval of 2016 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Project Recommendations – Mr. Cannon stated that the list of project recommendations necessitated approval by June 3, 2015, and stated that all but one district was represented in the recommendations.

Mr. Cannon presented statistical road information specific to Colquitt County, stating that the LMIG projects presented constituted only 2.34% of the total 580.06 of paved miles in the county that the Roads and Bridges department was responsible for maintaining. Mr. Cannon stated that at that same rate, it would take approximately 33 years to resurface all current roads in the county. Without state funding, Mr. Cannon stated it would take 66 years to accomplish this task.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if pipes were installed on John Vickers Road so that resurfacing efforts could begin. Stan Kirksey, Road Superintendent, stated that pipe installation was complete, and further stated that John Vickers Road would be on next year's Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant project recommendation list.

Mr. Cannon presented a list of the previous year's LMIG recommendations.

- Approval of Resolution to Adopt Updated Hazard Mitigation Plan– Mr. Cannon explained that county personnel had worked diligently to update the Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan. He further explained that through updating the plan, Federal requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 were fulfilled, ensuring that the county remains eligible for Federal emergency assistance funds in the event of a disaster.

Mr. Cannon informed the board that the Local Emergency Operations Plan would be updated in the near future.

- Request for Budget Amendment – Mr. Cannon called upon Wayne Putnal, Finance Director, to discuss the proposed amendment to the current fiscal budget.

Mr. Putnal explained that the budget amendment was inclusive of several funds, including the General Fund, Special Service District, E-911 Fund, Employee Health Insurance Fund, and Solid Waste Fund.

At this time, Mr. Putnal explained requested amounts for specific budgeted line items in the General Fund, some of which included Professional Services, Contract Labor, and Overtime.

Mr. Putnal stated that amendments were necessary in the E-911 due to extra money spent on unforeseen repairs, and contributed amendment to the Special Service District budget due to excessive phone and advertising costs.

Solid Waste Fund amendments were discussed, which Mr. Putnal contributed to an extra position at the landfill, as well as the use of contracted temporary labor.

Mr. Putnal addressed several large hospital claims and dental claims within the Employee Health Insurance Fund, stating that an increase in stop loss reimbursement funding would compensate for the shortfall in these areas.

Mr. Putnal stated that reserves were being utilized to fund some of the shortages in budgeted line items.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if this was the first use of reserves in the current budget. Mr. Putnal replied that it was, and the amount included in the budget amendment would fund shortages through the end of the current fiscal year.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the amount needed to fund hospital claims. Mr. Putnal explained that this was necessary to pay actual hospital claims incurred by employees on the county health insurance plan, and further stated it was difficult to project these expenditures. To explain, Mr. Putnal addressed that much more was budgeted this year to fund doctor claims, with the actual claims coming in much less than the budgeted amount.

Mr. Putnal stated that the county possessed an aging work force, so issues involving health concerns would have to be addressed. Despite this, Mr. Putnal stated that he remained very much in support of a self funded insurance plan when compared to a fully funded insurance plan.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the exact amount being allocated from reserves. Mr. Putnal stated the amount was approximately \$198,000.00.

Chairman Clark questioned the possibility of exploring other healthcare options in order to decrease costs. Mr. Cannon stated that those avenues were currently being explored, and projected savings could exceed \$500,000.00.

Mr. Cannon also stated that negotiations were underway with the hospital to provide medical services at the county jail and prison.

Commissioner DeMott asked if line items had been analyzed that possessed a large gap between projected and actual expenditures.

Mr. Putnal stated that there are certain expenses that never decrease.

Warden Howell questioned if the amendment for food services at the county prison was inclusive of the jail as well. Mr. Putnal replied that it was only for prison food services.

Warden Howell stated increases in the provision of food services were also being realized by the private industry.

Mr. Putnal declared that it was important to remember that a budget was a spending guide, which is often altered by unforeseen events and expenditures that often cannot be predicted.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she was always reluctant to spend reserves.

Mr. Putnal agreed, stating that healthy reserve funds were essential.

- Approval of County Attorney Invoice – Mr. Cannon presented an invoice reflecting legal services provided by county attorney Lester M. Castellow for the month of April 2015.
- Public Hearings – Mr. Cannon stated that two public hearings would be required at the board meeting, and further stated the public hearings would be conducted by county attorney Lester Castellow.

Mr. Cannon stated that the first public hearing topic would be in regards the abandonment of a portion of Beaty Road. Mr. Cannon reminded the board that Commissioner Hardin requested the commencement of road closure procedures for Beaty Road, on behalf of William Suber, landowner. As a result, Mr. Cannon stated that all affected property owners were notified and four advertisements of the public hearing ran in the legal organ in the two weeks prior to the public hearing. Mr. Cannon presented a map of the proposed closure.

Mr. Cannon presented a request for Variance from James Smith, 969 Dona Turner Road, requesting a variance to reduce setback requirements for the construction of a stack house. Mr. Cannon stated that the Moultrie – Colquitt County Planning

Commission unanimously approved the application and proceeded to present a map of the proposed stack house site.

At this time, Justin Cox, Chief Compliance Officer, addressed the application, stating that initially the stack house was in the opposite corner. Due to the potential impact on a wet area, Mr. Cox stated it was proposed that the location of the stack house be moved to a new location.

Commissioner Nagy stated that he personally visited the property and was in favor of the variance. Chairman Clark agreed.

Mr. Cannon agreed as well, mentioning the recent amendment to the zoning ordinance to mandate stack houses for new poultry house constructions.

**BUDGET PREVIEW:** Mr. Cannon presented historical facts and information regarding past budget preparations and deliberations, consisting of comments and suggestions of previous administration and commissioners.

Mr. Cannon stated that an excess of \$2,000,000.00 was used to balance the budget in 2009 and in 2010, the majority of capital outlay requests were deferred.

In 2011, Mr. Cannon stated that spending reductions were accomplished through personnel reductions and limits on capital spending. Mr. Cannon referenced Commissioner Hardin's previous remark that sooner or later, capital outlay purchases would have to be made in order to continue operations.

Mr. Cannon stated that in 2014, very little capital expenditures were budgeted. If those purchases were factored into the budget at that time, Mr. Cannon stated that approximately \$729,000.00 in reserve funds would have been needed in order to balance the budget.

Mr. Cannon also noted that reserves were utilized in 2015 in order to balance the budget.

Through these previous comments, remarks, and suggestions, Mr. Cannon declared that two prevailing trends emerged: the county's over-reliance on using reserves to balance expenditures, and little to no capital purchases.

Mr. Cannon stated that continued reliance on reserve funds left the county vulnerable to instances or events that would require liquid cash flow.

Mr. Cannon noted that between 2010 and 2015, over \$4,000,000.00 in reserve funds were budgeted. He also noted that, during this time, there were no employee raises or Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) raises.

Mr. Cannon presented a series of statistical information, stating that 67% of employees that worked for the county in 2009 were no longer employed. Mr. Cannon explained that the majority of these individuals were employed at the Sheriff's Department, E-911, Roads and Bridges, and the County Prison.

Mr. Cannon stated that the high level of employee turnover was the result of several factors: pay and benefits, morale, work environment, and department leadership. He noted that it was imperative that the county focus on improving these factors.

Also, during the period mentioned above, Mr. Cannon noted the discontinuity in administration, minimal capital expenditures, and little to no focus on economic growth.

Mr. Cannon informed the board that the E-911 center averaged 196 service calls per day for the month of April 2015, and the Roads and Bridges department issued 53 specific work orders in addition to normally issued work orders.

Mr. Cannon stated that the upcoming budget was very heavy on capital purchases, and was inclusive of a 3% COLA increase for employees. In addition, a recommendation to increase the millage rate by .2% in the Incorporated areas was included, as well as a 1.7% increase in the Unincorporated areas. Mr. Cannon explained the latter increase was necessary in order to correct the millage rate discrepancy as a result of instruction from the Department of Revenue.

Mr. Cannon stated that he would recommend at least \$750,000.00 in proceeds from the anticipated sale of county property to go towards the purchase of capital equipment.

Mr. Cannon stressed areas of improvement, which included educating the public about the budgetary struggles that county governments face. In addition, Mr. Cannon recommended the elimination of continued reliance on reserve funds, heavier focus on important issues such as healthcare, streamlining operations and eliminating inefficiencies, and the continued research of new ways to generate revenue.

Discussion ensued regarding revenue sources, including expanding solid waste operations and the impact of local option sales tax (LOST) revenue.

Mr. Cannon stated that Colquitt County was one in only ten counties in the state of Georgia that did not get local option sales tax (LOST) revenues. This, combined with agricultural exemptions in a predominantly agricultural county, presented huge fiscal disadvantages.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the likelihood of local option sales tax negotiations.

Commissioner Herndon agreed with the importance of educating the public about the fiscal disadvantages that the county faces.



Mr. Cannon stated that other entities received funding from several different sources that the county did not, to include funding at the state and federal levels.

Discussion ensued regarding the impact of LOST and agricultural exemptions on the county budget.

Mr. Cannon stated that LOST proceeds would make a significant impact on the county budget.

Mr. Cannon reviewed options in which to correct the millage rate discrepancy with the Department of Revenue, and suggested informing the public of these issues as quickly as possible.

Chairman Clark questioned the monetary value of one mill. Mr. Cannon replied that it was approximately \$800,000.00.

In closing, Mr. Cannon stated that past reductions of the millage rate, combined with a significant work load and money it takes to provide services, along with other significant costs such as healthcare, presented major fiscal obstacles for the county.

The board recessed for a five minute break.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Commissioner DeMott made a motion at 6:42 p.m. to go into Executive Session to discuss the disposition of real estate and potential litigation. Commissioner Nagy made a second. The motion carried unanimously. (An affidavit, as required by Georgia Law, was executed by all Board members present stating under oath that the subject matter of the closed meeting was devoted to the matters within the exception provided by law and identified the specific relevant exception as provided by law. The affidavit is hereby made a portion of the minutes by reference thereto.)

**REGULAR SESSION:** Commissioner DeMott made a motion at 6:52 p.m. to reconvene into regular session. Commissioner Hardin made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

**ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:** Mr. Cannon stated that the county was currently advertising for the position of Chief Appraiser within the Tax Assessors office.

Mr. Cannon provided the board with a brief update concerning commercial solid waste service. Mr. Cannon stated that a draft letter would be generated to all commercial businesses on file in the Compliance Office, informing them of the availability of this service.

Mr. Cannon stated that the proposed start date of the service was July 1, 2015. He further stated that no start up costs would be incurred by the county, declaring that new commercial customers would easily be absorbed into existing residential solid waste routes.

May 5, 2015  
Page 10

Mr. Cannon noted that he would be meeting with County Attorney Lester Castellow in the near future to discuss any necessary amendments to the Solid Waste ordinance regarding commercial solid waste pickup. Mr. Cannon stated that he would keep the board abreast of any developments.

**KEY DATES:** Mr. Cannon reviewed several upcoming, key dates with the board:

- Thursday, May 7 Retirement Ceremony – Roger King, City of Moultrie Utilities Complex
- Friday, May 8 FY 15-16 Budget Books distributed to Board
- Tuesday, May 12 First Budget Meeting
- Wednesday, May 13 Second Budget Meeting

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Terry R. Clark  
Chairman

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Melissa Lawson  
County Clerk

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

# AFFIDAVIT

This is to certify that the Colquitt County Board of Commissioners held an Executive Session Meeting (closed meeting) on May 5, 2015, at 6:48 o'clock a.m./p.m. The majority of the quorum present voted in the open meeting to go into Executive Session (closed meeting). The subject matter discussed was applicable under the following code section(s):

- O.C.G.A. 50-14-2(1) - Consultation with an attorney regarding pending or potential legal action.
- O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(4) - Discussion of future <sup>disposition</sup> acquisition of real estate. (Notice was given as required and minutes taken.)
- O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(6) - Discussion of personnel matters.

I further certify that the subject matter of the Executive Session (closed meeting) was devoted to matters within the exception provided by law and the above checked identifies the specific relevant exception.

This 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

Terry Clark  
Terry Clark, Chairman

Winfred Giddens  
Winfred Giddens, Commissioner

Donna Herndon  
Donna Herndon, Commissioner

Johnny Hardin  
Johnny Hardin, Commissioner

(Absent)  
Luke Strong, Commissioner

Marc DeMott  
Marc DeMott, Commissioner

Paul Nagy  
Paul Nagy, Commissioner

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

Melissa Lawrence  
County Clerk or Notary Public  
My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

