

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 25, 2024
6:00 PM

Commissioners Present: Chairman Gene King, Vice Chairman Adam Worsley, Commissioner Rosla Plant, Commissioner Emmett Collins, and Commissioner Bryan Threadgill

Commissioners Absent: none

Staff Present: County Administrator Jarrod McCarthy, Assistant County Administrator Blue Cole, County Clerk Allyson Stephens, Finance Director John Gorton, and County Attorney Michael Hill

Staff Absent: none

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman King called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. INVOCATION

The Invocation was given by former Commissioner Alfred "Buster" McCoy.

III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

All.

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman Worsley to accept the Agenda with the following amendments: *Remove Item #3 under New Business - Request from the City of Greenville for assistance with repairs - South Depot Street Bridge, making #4 under New Business - #3 - Discussion of Courthouse Roof Proposals.* All were in favor.

V. PRESENTATIONS

1. William Harris, Meriwether County Tax Assessor's Office, stated he appreciated the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Assessment Department of Meriwether County as the Chief Appraiser. Mr. Harris went over three major topics. These include the Homestead freeze, what to do if you have concerns or questions, and why the assessments went up. Mr. Harris explained that proper valuation practices lead to upgraded roads, improved public transportation, and enhanced utilities, which have facilitated smoother operations for residents and businesses alike. These improvements are crucial for sustaining growth and maintaining the quality of life. Mr. Harris stated that in Meriwether County the Homestead Exemption comes with a built-in increase in exemption amount if the value of the house is increased due to market activity. Mr. Harris provided an example of Property "A" that has a value of \$250,000 with an estimated tax bill of \$2,000. Mr. Harris stated that if that property has an active homestead in place, when the value increases to \$310,000, with no modifications made by the homeowner, the homestead freeze will kick into effect, keeping the tax liability around \$2,000, as it was previously. Mr. Harris stated that if there are any questions or concerns, their office welcomes all taxpayers to stop by their office or simply give them a call. Mr. Harris stated that he does allow taxpayers to schedule appointments with him directly if they want to discuss their values. Mr. Harris stated the office is located at 124 North Court Square, Greenville, GA, across from the Courthouse. Mr. Harris provided the office phone number 706-672-4222 and stated they are open from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and happy to serve the public. Mr. Harris stated the assessment department is charged with placing fair values on the properties within Meriwether County. The definition of fair market value is the amount a knowledgeable buyer would pay for the property and a willing seller would accept the property at an arm's length, bona fide sale per the Georgia Department of Revenue. Mr. Harris explained that this meant that fair market value should be closer to the sales price. Mr. Harris stated this is not the case for Meriwether County. Mr. Harris provided three examples of undervaluing properties and their new corrective values. Mr. Harris stated he would only present the values to insure all taxpayers' right to privacy. Mr. Harris stated a property in Greenville, sold in October 2021 for \$530,000, with a value for 2021 being \$336,000, which is 63% below its sales price. Mr. Harris stated a property in Luthersville:

sold January 2022 for \$300,000, with a value in 2022 of \$146,000, which is 49% of its sales price. Mr. Harris stated a property in the County sold in February 2023 for \$220,770, and its value for 2023 was \$51,479, which Mr. Harris stated is 23% of the sales price and 77% below value. Mr. Harris stated that assessments are meant to be a fair way of dividing up the tax burden for the citizens. If someone is paying on an incorrect value, the rest of us have to pay the difference. Mr. Harris stated that looking ahead, his office aims to continue the focus on sustainable values, but first needs to get to the starting line. Mr. Harris stated the vision is to create a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive Meriwether County that meets the needs of all its residents. Mr. Harris stated that in conclusion, Meriwether County Board of Tax Assessor's has made notable progress and are committed to building on this foundation. Mr. Harris stated he appreciated the continued support of the Board of Commissioners and the citizens of Meriwether County and looked forward to working together to achieve our shared goals.

VI. FINANCE REPORT

Finance Director Gorton provided the bank balances as of 3:30 p.m. June 25, 2024. Director Gorton stated that all the bank balances are holding steady and pointed out the new Lease Investment Pool of \$2.5 million dollars, Special Projects with the initial deposit made. Director Gorton stated that \$1 million dollars is still sitting in First People's Bank, and he will be moving that over to the Investment Pool to gain interest today or tomorrow. Finance Director Gorton stated the General Fund is at \$2.6 million, which is lower on the Ledger, due to checks in the mail. Director Gorton stated the LOST, SPLOST, and TSPLOST allocations will come in on Thursday, June 27, 2024, and they will be roughly the same amounts. SPLOST and TSPLOST balances were provided with the SPLOST balance at \$174,028.32 and the TSPLOST balance at -\$345,764.13. Finance Director Gorton stated that with the allocations coming this week, that will increase SPLOST to \$335,000, and TSPLOST will be at around -\$200,000, and will be back in the positive in around 2 months. Chairman King asked about a landfill audit. Finance Director Gorton stated that he is working on setting up an audit of the landfill and will be scheduling that in the next month or so.

VII. DEPARTMENT HEADS

County Administrator Jarrod McCarthy:

Human Resources - Open Enrollment, 24 employees spoke with a retirement consultant. Human Resources Director Valerie Chambers has been working on entering new enrollees and contribution changes for the 457B plan. 22 employees spoke with Aflac and 11 either enrolled or made changes to Aflac benefits. Director Chambers had a meeting with EHG Wellness and will begin taking steps to promote the program, as well as completing all the paperwork for Symetra. Director Chambers had hiring, terminations, applications, recruiting, and retention. Administrator McCarthy stated that Director Chambers participated in an unemployment appeal hearing last week for a Constitutional office and also attended a Leadership Meriwether session.

Animal Control - Administrator McCarthy stated the shelter is still over capacity and that George did have a few adoptions over the weekend at PetSmart. Administrator McCarthy encouraged adoption.

I.T. - Administrator McCarthy stated that I.T. Director Brown had been working on getting internet to the Public Defender's office, as well as working on large server updates.

Tax Assessors - Administrator McCarthy stated that Chief Appraiser Harris and his office closed out three weeks of the mailing of notices of assessments, with less than 1% of value changes appealed. Administrator McCarthy stated the office is there to help.

Fire/Rescue - Administrator McCarthy stated that Chief Stephens, who reported for the Meriwether County Fire/Rescue, would like to thank the staff as well as volunteers from Upson County EMA and Pike County EMA for their hard work in making the concert a successful event. The agencies assisted with heat exhaustion as well as transporting disabled attendees to the parking lot. They handed out water and cold towels and the EMS units were used as rehab units with air conditioners. Multiple patients were treated and released on patient refusals and 1 patient was transported to a nearby hospital. Upson County brought their

mobile command unit, which was used for the instant command post. This was a great opportunity to utilize multiple agencies for a large-scale event. Administrator McCarthy stated that they actually have to do a required EMA exercise and used the event to double as that. Administrator McCarthy stated this event was used as a GEMA exercise. Administrator McCarthy stated that Fire Chief Stephens stated they would have an action review in the coming weeks to brainstorm on things that were good as well as things that could get a little bit better. Total Units: Upson EMA brought six members; UTV, EMA command post, and a rescue truck. Pike County EMA brought 3 members and UTV. Meriwether Fire/Rescue brought 8 members, with three spare EMS units, one Fire unit, and two UTVs. The ability to utilize additional agencies helped to keep the staff that were assigned to their shift in service able to respond to normal everyday calls.

VIII. CITIZEN COMMENT

Chairman King read the procedures for Citizen Comment.

Dustin Owens of 21158 Roosevelt Highway, Greenville stated that he has been a resident in Meriwether County since 2006. Mr. Owens thanked the Board for allowing him the opportunity to come and speak. Mr. Owens stated that he understands the job of Commissioners is not an easy one and appreciated the time of the Board to listen to his concerns and comments. Mr. Owens stated that during the season of tax raising and tax assessments, it encouraged him to come and ask exactly what we're getting for our money and specifically as it pertains to the Fire District tax dollars and the Fire District tax. Mr. Owens stated that he was a full-time employee for the Meriwether County Fire Department during 2016 when the Fire District tax plan was presented and came to fruition. Mr. Owens stated he believed heavily in the Fire District tax and still believes heavily in it. Mr. Owens stated he knew this was going to be a benefit to the department and a benefit to him and his family as citizens. Mr. Owens stated he was an adamant supporter and campaigned vigorously to make sure that it passed. However, Mr. Owens stated the implementation, management, and roll out of this fire district plan has been less than ideal. Mr. Owens stated that he understands that with this being such a massive undertaking as this District tax plan was, there are many variables that go into its success or failure and understands that sometimes it takes extra time. Mr. Owens stated here we are, more than seven years into the plan, and the plan as it was presented and sold to us, still has not been completed. Mr. Owens stated he knows specifically in his area, the Allie Road and Primrose area of Roosevelt Highway, was to receive a fire station that has still yet to be built. Mr. Owens stated that in Alvaton the station was to be renovated and that has still not happened. Mr. Owens stated that he submitted a request for more information on the District plan and was met with a little bit of surprise over the cost of receiving those Open Records, which we're going to work through. Mr. Owens stated that he doesn't have any specific data with him tonight but hopes to receive the information in the future and have some more factual points to talk about. Mr. Owens stated that he would like to bring up the overall administration of this Fire District tax and the fact that taxes are necessary, and he understands inflation and knows things will go up. Mr. Owens stated he doesn't mind paying his taxes. However, when presented with a tax specific to the Fire District tax plan, he believes it is necessary that he receive what he was sold on. Mr. Owens stated that he doesn't ask for anything more, but certainly doesn't expect anything less either. Mr. Owens stated that, based on the District plan as delivered to him, with a certain number of stations built, certain number of apparatus to be purchased, and the number of personnel that was guaranteed to be paid per shift, that the tax dollars were going to fund, we have not received that and have not been receiving that for some time. Mr. Owens stated he has known for a while now the Fire/Rescue department has been sitting somewhere around 30-40 percent staffing, and that on Saturday, for a major event in the County, there were supposed to be seven manned fire engines in the County. There was only 1.

John Knight of 104 Pepper Tree Drive, Newnan, Ga, 30265 --- stated he would like to request that Meriwether County amend their curb and gutter Ordinance to make the acreage minimum from 5 acres to 2 acres for the lot minimum. Mr. Knight stated that curb and gutter make sense when high density zoning is available. For instance, 2 to 8 houses per acre. Mr. Knight stated that Meriwether County does not offer the utility services that they would require to seek such a high-density zoning. Mr. Knight stated that given the costs associated with curb and gutter and land, it is not fair to put this burden on the developer, when these

high-density options are not available. Mr. Knight stated that while counties such as Coweta, Fayette, and Fulton were establishing their populations, these sorts of ordinances were not in place, and it was not until they had built their population, that they had the tax dollars to improve their schools and their water and sewer availability. Mr. Knight stated that once high-density zoning became available, these sorts of ordinances came into effect. Consequently, several less established counties adopted these requirements, not considering the long-term consequences. Mr. Knight stated that in regard to water runoff, he has discussed it with several experts, and they all say, on lots of 1+ acres, the drainage is better serviced by open ditch than curb and gutter. Mr. Knight stated that he is seeking a 2-acre minimum, adhering to the 2-acre requirement when on a paved road, and zoned LDR. Mr. Knight stated that at 2 acres, he is asking for twice the lot size, where experts say open ditch is better than curb and gutter for drainage. Mr. Knight stated that using the open- ditch and large lots to service the drainage, they would forgo the need to build retention ponds, which can often be an eyesore and create maintenance issues for Meriwether County. Mr. Knight stated that with inflation, specifically seen in today's building material costs, it makes it cost prohibitive for them to develop in Meriwether County, under its current ordinances. Mr. Knight stated that when you require curb and gutter, you are not only asking for curb and gutter, but all the additional infrastructure that it entails. Mr. Knight stated that curb and gutter require storm drains and concrete inlets and pipe to be run underneath the street, and the need to build a pond to retain the runoff. Mr. Knight stated that curb and gutter add hundreds of thousands of dollars in development and right now they cannot justify that expense. Mr. Knight stated that, additionally, these streets will all become public streets and the pipe, ponds, and curb and gutter, will have to be maintained by Meriwether County. Mr. Knight stated that changing the ordinance from a 5 to 2-acre minimum would benefit Meriwether County in several ways. Mr. Knight stated it would increase land values and opportunities, increase the population with high quality taxpayers, as they sell a lot of homes to young professionals, or first-time home buyers. Mr. Knight stated that increasing the population will stimulate the local economy and more restaurants and businesses will move towards the area. Mr. Knight stated that, finally, this will allow them to add more beautiful neighborhoods and homes to Meriwether County, all the while sticking true to the rural charm of Meriwether, with the large two-acre lots. Mr. Knight showed a display of a development that his company developed off of Hwy 85 in Gay, Ga. Mr. Brandon Larry was the next speaker signed up to speak and yielded his time to Mr. Knight. Mr. Knight presented a 30-acre track they purchased in Gay, Ga. Mr. Knight stated that this was a plat they had received preliminary approval on and explained that they are cutting it up and using easements to access the lots, which are all 2-acre lots. Mr. Knight stated that while they were doing this, they felt there was a better way, not increasing the amount of lot yield, but just creating one road that goes through the entire parcel and services the whole lot. Mr. Knight stated that this is a design that they created that shows the idea. Mr. Knight explained that in the example he is presenting, they were going to access one off of Highway 85 and, with this example, there is not a need for that as you can go to Ike Williams and access the one cul-de-sac. Mr. Knight stated that they can make it economically feasible as long as they cut the curb and gutter requirement from 5 acres to 2 acre lots. Mr. Knight stated that about 90% of the homes are already built on roads that are not curb and gutter and showed a display of a neighborhood their company built off of Primrose Road. Mr. Knight stated this is called Primrose Park and has large lots, looks really nice, and there is no curb and gutter, serviced by an open ditch, with a pipe that runs through it. Mr. Knight stated all the drainage is able to drain onto the large lots. Mr. Knight showed the Board a picture of one of the homes that they built in Primrose Park and on Gold Mine Road, which is popular. Mr. Knight stated that the home is approximately 1,700 sq. feet, and they are selling it for approximately \$350,000 dollars. Mr. Knight stated the property values have started going up in Meriwether County, and before, they were able to sell 2,500 square feet homes for \$250,000 dollars. Mr. Knight stated the market is changing and this is the kind of help they need. Mr. Knight explained that right now they are facing a housing crisis where people can't afford them, and they are in tremendous need. Mr. Knight stated that if they were able to do something as they proposed, they would be able to put more money into an entrance, and it would be more of an actual neighborhood. Mr. Knight presented another design called Hernon Hills and thanked the Board for their time in hearing his request.

IX. MINUTES

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Threadgill to accept the Minutes of the June 12, 2024, Regular Meeting at 9:00 a.m. All were in favor.

X. PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Case #24-006** - Request from Herbert Crawford to rezone parcel 073A-028 - 15.08 acres from RR to NHC and parcel 073-011-002 - 2.25 acres from RR to NHC for the proposed use of a lay down yard and storage for grading company. District 2. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Threadgill to go into the Public Hearing at 6:26 p.m. All were in favor. Planning and Zoning Director Cassandra Sharpe stated that Mr. Scott was not able to be at the meeting and was stuck in Atlanta traffic and requested to continue the Public Hearing. A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman Worsley to continue the Public Hearing to the July 10, 2024, Regular Meeting at 9:00 a.m. All were in favor.

XI. APPOINTMENTS

None

XII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. **Discussion and Consideration of Implementing a Policy on Meeting Decorum** County Administrator McCarthy stated that the Board has a current copy of Roberts Rule of Order, and he had emailed an additional section to all Board members and texted everyone to let them know. County Administrator McCarthy stated that is what we are under now, but if the Board wanted something more robust, there is the ACCG recommended decorum policy for consideration. Chairman King asked if that is what has officially been adopted. County Administrator McCarthy stated that the Roberts Rule of Order is something the Board has been under. Chairman King asked if County Attorney Lee asked him the question, "is it something that was adopted by a previous Board or is it something the Board has just went by." Chairman King stated that Attorney Lee pointed out that if it has already been approved in years past to go by that, then that is all the Board would need and would generate that. Chairman King stated that if it has never been actually adopted, then the Board would need to adopt it and move on. Commissioner Threadgill stated there is an Ordinance that states we adopted the Roberts Rule of Order, and if it changes at any given point, that new Roberts Rule of Order goes into place under that Ordinance. Chairman King stated that if it has been adopted, then we can move on.

2. Confirm TSPLOST Called Meetings with Cities for July 2, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

Theron Gay with Special Projects stated that letters went out to the cities, and it has been planned to meet on July 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Gay stated the purpose of the meeting with the Cities would be to discuss a broad aspect of what TSPLOST does, what it can and can't do, a discussion of a general project list, not specific projects, come up with a distribution of the funds, which has been historically done by the Population Percentages. Mr. Gay stated he had already calculated it that way, but still needed to add Pine Mountain, which has a small population. Mr. Gay stated that the Board would need to call another meeting at that meeting, for either July 31st, or August 1st, to approve a Referendum that needed to go back to the Board of Elections. Mr. Gay stated that the Board of Elections has to have it by the 9th, and the County has to have it done by the 1st, so it can be advertised in the paper, because it cannot be any less than August 1st. Mr. Gay stated that the County Attorney had reviewed sections of the law and appreciated them doing so. Mr. Gay stated that the laws had changed a little bit and explained that there must be an IGA in place now, and the IGA has to be with a city with 50% of the municipal population. Mr. Gay stated that if a city doesn't sign the IGA, then you go back and project their revenue based upon a formula set out in state law. Mr. Gay explained that most of the time the city will be better off with its population than it would with taking the new formula. Mr. Gay stated that another important change with TSPLOST is that it can now go 6 years if all the cities sign the Intergovernmental Agreement, which gives another year of funding and, instead of an estimated \$10 million dollars, could bring in up to \$12 million dollars for use on the roads and

transportation projects. Mr. Gay explained that he needs to get the meeting for July 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. confirmed, and we will remind all the cities and have the room set up for everyone to come to order and have the meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Threadgill to set the meeting with the cities and municipalities for July 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. All were in favor.

3. Recommended Adoption of Employee Pay Scale/FLSA - New Ruling

Finance Director Gorton gave the Board a background of the new FLSA ruling. Director Gorton stated that as of July 1, 2024, the minimum salary for an administrator or professional employee is \$43,888 dollars annually. Director Gorton stated there are currently no employees that are under that threshold. Director Gorton stated that as of January 1, 2025, the amount will increase to \$58,656 from \$43,888. Director Gorton stated there are currently 7 employees that are under the threshold and Finance will be working with the Department Heads on these individuals, under the Budget, to determine if overtime will be warranted, or to increase the individuals to the new threshold. Finance Director Gorton stated that the County Attorney had reviewed this as well and based on calculations, it may be better to keep someone on overtime, if they only work a little, but if they have excessive overtime, they could be moved up to the new federal standard. County Attorney Hill stated that this is the exemption threshold, and doesn't mean that you can't have an administrative employee under that threshold, it just means that the County would have to pay them overtime if they work beyond 40 hours in a given week. Attorney Hill stated that is calculated by their weekly salary, divided by the number of hours they work in any given week. Attorney Hill stated this would have to be calculated every week. Finance Director Gorton stated that by standards, the amount will change every three years going forward. Finance Director Gorton presented the Board with the proposed pay scale, with names redacted. Director Gorton stated this includes the current salaries and projected rate. Director Gorton stated that he has worked with all the Department Heads and Elected Officials for the past two months, had sent confirmations back out to all Department Heads and Elected Officials, and they all feel this is a fair and equitable wage for the employees that work under them. Director Gorton explained that if the Board adopts this policy, it will go into effect on July 1, 2024. Director Gorton explained this date is also the beginning of a new pay period. Director Gorton stated that no step increases would go into effect until October 1, 2025, because staff still has to come up with the uniform guidelines on what constitutes a step increase. Director Gorton stated that every department and elected officials' office is different. Some have a 6-month probationary period, some have a year, and some have 90 days. Finance Director Gorton stated that staff recommendations would be that the only way a step increase would go into effect, if this was adopted, would be if an employee receives an associate's, bachelors, or master's degree in a related field or a job-related certificate. Director Gorton stated that would automatically move them up a step, prior to October, which would keep them in line according to pay in other counties. Director Gorton stated that staff recommends leaving the 2.5% merit in place for January 1st, 2025, and the performance evaluations will be completed by December 15, 2024. Director Gorton stated that what he has presented is just the employees and does not include Elected Officials or Department Heads. Director Gorton stated that the total right now is \$146,560.18. Director Gorton stated there is approximately another \$2 million dollars for Department Heads, Elected Officials, and other salaries that are not included on the presented pay scale. Director Gorton stated that he also provided the budget amount. Director Gorton stated that staff budgeted approximately \$9.4 million dollars, and if the increase goes into effect, the projected budget would be at \$8.9 million, coming in at \$400,000 to \$500,000 under budget. Director Gorton stated that ideally, we should be at 27% and are 34% on the budget. Director Gorton stated there are seven pay periods left and the estimated cost for those pay periods will be around \$50,000 dollars more. Director Gorton stated that currently we have surpassed the budget amount of revenue collected for taxes by \$430,000 dollars, thanks to the hard work of Tax Commissioner Cruse and her staff. Director Gorton stated he believes she is at a 99% collection rate for this year and above 95% to 97% over last year and has done a tremendous job. Director Gorton stated that based off of projections, just looking at the tax digest and what is coming in, we are looking at possibly another \$500,000 to \$600,000 dollars minimum of revenue coming in next year, which is mainly due to the growth in the northern part of the County. Director Gorton stated the Investment Account has roughly \$254,000 dollars' worth of income for this year alone, and with four months left, he projects another \$80,000 to \$100,000 dollars to come in on investments, based on the Fund balance sitting in the

account, and the feds have determined the freeze rates. Director Gorton stated that to consumers this is a bad thing, but for the local government, we are getting a good investment in those funds sitting there. Director Gorton stated that \$50,000 of the investment fund would pay for the remaining seven pay periods, and there would still be \$200,000 dollars remaining. Director Gorton stated that Department Heads were in attendance if there were any questions regarding the raises, projections, and duties. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that Director Gorton is recommending a 2.5% merit increase for January 2025, and asked Director Gorton if he was asking to commit to that number in the pay scale. Director Gorton stated that no, that number would be, after running the estimate, about \$170,000. Director Gorton stated that last year it was \$160,877 dollars with the 2.5% merit increase. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if this was being done as a comparative. Director Gorton stated yes. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he didn't want to lock in on that as they could possibly do more. Director Gorton stated it would be the pleasure of the Board if they wanted to do more than a 2.5% merit or a COLA increase later in the year. Director Gorton stated that he had reconfirmed with all Department Heads and Elected Officials, with the scale was fair and adequate. Commissioner Threadgill stated that he spoke with the Sheriff, and he was 100% on board with what Finance Director Gorton had presented. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he feels this is one of the most, if not the most, positive advancements in Meriwether County in a long time and took a lot of hard work from staff to get to this, and he is excited about it and glad to hear that everyone is on board. Planning and Zoning Director, Cassandra Sharpe stated that Finance Director Gorton had done a great job in getting with all the Department Heads as a group and individually, to see where their needs are and where they expect their needs to be in the future. Director Sharpe stated that the pay scale seems to be the fairest way for all of them to be able to keep their employees, and that they are training so hard. Director Sharpe stated that Director Gorton had done a great job with the pay scale. Chairman King thanked everyone involved with the pay scale, including the Department Heads that had reached out. Chairman King stated that their number one goal, since day one, has been the employees and getting them up to scale and be able to survive with their families. Commissioner Threadgill thanked Tax Commissioner Cruse for her work in ensuring the money to pay for it. A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman Worsley to adopt the 3% Step Pay Scale as presented. All were in favor.

4. Discussion and Direction of space allocation for County Buildings

County Administrator McCarthy provided the Board with a history of prior events and stated that back on August 22, 2023, there was a motion to allocate the space in the old Pathway's main building to the Sheriff's Office and Elections Office, pending any funding needed would need to come back before the Board. Administrator McCarthy stated that the Sheriff later stated he was not interested in that building. Administrator McCarthy stated that on February 14, 2024, there was some discussion about how elections could possibly move to the DFACS building instead. Administrator McCarthy stated when it got down to the motion, Chairman King stated that he understood the need for approval to get bids on the Courthouse roof, Jail and to get something going with the Elections building. Administrator McCarthy stated that the motion was made to move forward with getting prices and quotes for the Courthouse roof and Jail only at that time. Administrator McCarthy stated that he would recommend a motion to allocate the Pathways building solely to elections and that this be bid out to get actual costs. Administrator McCarthy stated that they also set a targeted timeline, but it is just targeted and doesn't mean that we will absolutely do it but is our goal. Administrator McCarthy stated that he feels there is an obvious need for a better place for elections as well as grow in space a bit for the Sheriff's Office to come out of the jail. Administrator McCarthy stated that there needs to be some square footage picked up somewhere and Mr. Theron has some skills that most in local government do not. Administrator McCarthy stated that in the meantime, there is rent being paid on another building for elections. Administrator McCarthy recommended a Work Session to talk about and figure out how to move other offices around. Administrator McCarthy stated that there is \$3,527,159.15 in the General Fund Special Projects account, which would require a budget amendment to use. Administrator McCarthy stated there is an estimated \$337,732.32 that will be unallocated and available in SPLOST by June 27th. Administrator McCarthy stated that the Fund Balance is also available to pay for this but would also require a budget amendment. Commissioner Threadgill stated that there is more than one building and

feels that this needs to be broken down into buildings A, B, C. Administrator McCarthy agreed. Mr. Theron Gay of Special Projects stated that this would be for the western half, or the right side, of the building that they are suggesting for elections. Mr. Gay suggested adjusting the timeline to shoot for next year prior to March and redrafting a bid proposal, bringing in some people to look at it in the meantime and continuing utilizing staff on rainy days, to reduce some of the costs. Mr. Gay stated that we would bring in the contractors for a pre-bid meeting, where they all come in and take a look at what needs to be done to have a true project estimate and cost. Mr. Gay stated that staff needs direction on this and that it is a priority, and also explained that SPLOST would be coming back up and could be a component of this as well as space and moving various buildings. Mr. Gay stated what is really needed is a building plan and priority of where the projects are, which gives staff something to work towards. Mr. Gay explained that there are several aspects that have to be considered. Vice Chairman Worsley asked what the motion needed to be. County Administrator McCarthy stated that the main building should be designated for elections and bid out the work to know the expenses and set a tentative timeline. Commissioner Threadgill stated that there are separate sections of the building, and the motion needs to be specific to designate that address, but be specific in designating either Building A, B, or C. Mr. Gay stated that if there are other projects that the Board would like to do, to let the staff know because he is willing to help but needs direction. Commissioner Plant asked if it would be better, time wise, to get more bids for the other offices that need to be moved as well. Discussion ensued about future planning and how to bid out projects. Chairman King stated that it would be better to get a price as a whole, saving taxpayers' money. Commissioner Threadgill stated it was important to make sure the buildings are allocated specifically to each department, because every single department will require different I.T., power, electrical, and other different needs. Commissioner Threadgill stated it makes sense to bid it out at once, but we have to have in place who will be in the buildings. Mr. Gay stated that there would need to be a meeting to talk about space and priorities to lay a clear path. Mr. Gay stated that while we have funding to do this, we won't have enough to do everything without the next SPLOST. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that is his main concern now, because all that can be said is that Elections will go in this section of the building. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that then we have to wait on quotes to determine if it is affordable, and in the meantime determine who's going where else and what those costs and layouts will be. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he doesn't feel we are accomplishing much, other than saying one place is going here. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he has a concern using County employees to reduce the contract cost, and what that is doing to the rest of the County and other buildings and maintenance that those employees should be doing. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if we were deferring that cost now, because we are going to neglect every other building in the County, while they are focusing their time on one. Mr. Gay stated that we he spoke with maintenance about this, he explained to them that they would not be able to focus all their time on only this project, that summer was coming, and they were going to get other calls, with maintenance on HVAC and other things. Mr. Gay stated that he explained that they would only be able to do things up to a certain point because there are other obligations. Chairman King asked about having a Work Session to develop a plan for the future. Commissioner Threadgill stated that there needs to be input from Department Heads and Constitutional Officers on the inner workings of their office and what is needed and required by state and federal laws. Chairman King stated that during a Work Session, plans can be made to address other buildings that are falling apart with mold and mildew. Chairman King stated it is time to have it laid out. Mr. Gay stated that this helps staff with priority. Mr. Gay would like to get the bid process started. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that this needed to be done right. Commissioner Threadgill asked about the process of getting the building specified. A motion was made to designate 756 Woodbury Road, Suite B, western side, as the future location for Elections, and allow staff to go out for an RFP for the work that needs to be done, by Vice Chairman Worsley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Threadgill. All were in favor. A motion was then made by Vice Chairman Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Threadgill to set a Work Session for July 22, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. to discuss the allocation of county buildings. All were in favor.

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Airport Entrance Road

Finance Director Gorton stated that Mr. Buster McCoy was in attendance to speak for the Airport as they are requesting a local match for a federal grant for the airport in the amount of \$68,031.95. Airport Authority member Buster McCoy thanked the Board and stated that in attendance of the Airport Authority were Mr. Bob Gordon and Douglas Pyles, as well as local pilot, Greg Arnett. Mr. McCoy gave a brief history of the Airport Authority and how they had been working for some time to get to where they are. Mr. McCoy stated that the Airport Authority runs the Airport and looks after the maintenance, helps with planning, and has an engineering staff. Mr. McCoy stated that the Airport Authority is a conduit that helps bring in dollars, from the FAA through the local DOT and back to the County. Mr. McCoy stated that what the Airport Authority is asking only covers 10 to 12 percent. Mr. McCoy stated that there is a master plan and one of the things that is deeply needed is a taxiway. Mr. McCoy stated that the Airport Authority is getting ready to put in an entrance road that will be paved, surfaced, and everything will be on grade. Mr. McCoy stated the project is a \$575,000 dollar project, with the federal share being \$487,834.95. Mr. McCoy stated that GDOT is providing \$19,133.60, leaving the Airport Authority at \$68,031.95. Mr. McCoy stated that there has been Federal funding during fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023. Mr. McCoy stated that the contractor had honored the project price, and they would like to get this started in August. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if McCoy grading was the contractor. Mr. McCoy stated that they were the contractor that won the bid. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that the total cost quoted was \$516,855, but the total cost was \$575,000, with the only difference being Lead Edge's cost, and the cost for utilities. However, he doesn't see any cost for utility work. Mr. McCoy stated that Lead Edge had removed basically all of their design costs, and he is not really sure what he is calling the construction phase. Mr. McCoy stated he is sure there are a lot of things they will have to go down to and supervise and look after the project, which is normally the way that it works. Mr. McCoy stated that the Airport Authority doesn't go down and watch the contractors that Lead Edge does that, as it is their job. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that in the last project done by the Airport Authority, the County had to come in and pay a significant amount of money due to increased costs. Mr. McCoy stated that the project was a different type of project that Meriwether County was doing, which was the hangars. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that the basis of the increased cost was inflation because of how long it took to get materials. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if the quote was good for a certain period of time and is there a timeline for the agreement? Vice Chairman Worsley asked that there be something showing that the quote is good for this many days and a timeline of completion. Finance Director Gorton stated that the project must be completed by September 2025. Chairman King asked if all the hangars were rented out in full. Mr. McCoy stated that they were. Chairman King stated that the project before they came on Board required another \$300,000 and a few months another \$58,000 for a project. Chairman King asked if the County was still subsidizing the airport. Finance Director Gorton stated that they were. Chairman King stated that at this point the Airport Authority can't even cover their own bills. Mr. McCoy stated that if you look at it from the standpoint of the \$68,000 dollars going in, Chairman King was right, but they do have a pretty good mortgage. Chairman King asked if there is that much traffic going in and out, and the mention of a new building. Chairman King stated that he is not sure of the need for a new building and why that would be discussed. Mr. McCoy stated that the airport is right on the cusp of a lot of things starting to take place. Mr. McCoy stated that one of the things that makes the airport so desirable is anyone flying out of Coweta or Falcon Field, comes to do acrobatics due to the ceiling being unlimited. Chairman King asked if there was a lot of traffic using the airport road. Mr. McCoy stated that there is and there will be more if there was to be a fixed-based operator, which could be coming in the very near future. Commissioner Threadgill asked Mr. McCoy if GDOT was mandating the entrance road, due to them giving the money. Mr. McCoy stated they had not put a mandate on it, but that they have made it clear, if not done, future funding will be slim. Commissioner Plant asked if this was part of many projects that are being built for the future. Commissioner Plant stated to her, there is a historical factor, but also the potential for a huge amount of growth, relative to what it can serve on the southern end of the end of the County as well as the northern end. Mr. McCoy stated that it was. Vice Chairman Worsley voiced concerns about the wording in the contract to ensure that there are no more exorbitant costs, similar to the last time. Commissioner Threadgill agreed but stated that ultimately the airport is county property and if it

were to go bottom-up, the County is responsible. Mr. Gay with special projects suggested setting a do not exceed amount for the allocation. Commissioner Threadgill left the room at 7:32 p.m. Chairman King asked what Lead Edge was being paid. Mr. McCoy stated that there is no charge from Lead Edge on the paperwork, other than going out and looking at the contractor. Chairman King asked who Lead Edge Design was. Mr. McCoy stated it is Phil and Whitney Eberly who are both engineers and do the designs, as well as adhering and making sure the Airport is in compliance with the FAA, EPA and other agencies. Commissioner Threadgill came back to the Meeting at 7:33 p.m. Chairman King asked what Lead Edge was charging for the design cost. Mr. McCoy stated they are not charging anything. Finance Director Gorton stated that he has been in contact with Phil Eberly to make sure the only match was the \$68,031.95 and he assured he confirmed multiple times that this was the local match, and they were being paid through the DBE process to go out and inspect and he has waived his design fees. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant to approve the local match of \$68,031.95 to the Airport Authority, for the Airport Entrance Road, not to exceed that amount. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Threadgill. All were in favor.

2. Public Works Surplus of Equipment and Vehicles

Assistant Administrator Cole stated that Public Works is in the process of cleaning up and updating the shop and the shop yard. Asst. Administrator Cole stated that staff would like to ask the Board to surplus the 10 vehicles listed for them. Vice Chairman Worsley asked which 10 of the 14 listed was he asking for. Asst. Administrator Cole stated it is 14, and staff would like to put it out for sealed bid to the highest bidder. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if any parts could be salvaged on the vehicles. Asst. Administrator Cole stated that the parts are mostly from 1989 to 2006 and could not be salvaged. Vice Chairman Worsley asked what would be done if they were not bid on. Asst. Administrator Cole stated then Public Works would have to crush them and haul them off. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he would like to see some money be made off of them, and if they are not bid on, then sell them for the recycled material. A motion was made by Vice Chairman Worsley to allow Public Works to put out for bid the 14 unused vehicles, and if not obtained, to salvage the vehicles at whatever cost they can achieve. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

3. Discussion of the Courthouse Roof Proposals

Mr. Gay with Special Projects stated that staff had sent out bids for the courthouse roof for repairs and replacement. Mr. Gay stated a lot of people attended the pre-bid meeting. However, only 2 proposals were received. Mr. Gay stated he had looked at both proposals and both were two different methodologies, all stating they would accomplish the same thing. Mr. Gay stated the proposals are within \$11,500 dollars of each other. Mr. Gay stated the reality of this is both of the proposals stated the same thing but go about it differently. Mr. Gay stated he is not well-versed enough on roofing to determine which of the proposals is the best long-term for the County. Mr. Gay stated both have a 20-year warranty, one says you can up the warranty for an additional 10 years, one says it needs no maintenance, and the other says it does. One states it will replace flashing, and one is going to pull material over the flashing. Mr. Gay asked to Board to authorize him to get someone who is not affiliated with the bid, to look at the proposals. Mr. Gay stated that he would try to get it at no charge, but it could cost a small amount. Mr. Gay stated he would like to get another opinion, from an engineer, as he is not an expert on roofing materials. A motion was made by Vice Chairman Worsley to allow staff to seek outside council on the bid review for the Courthouse roof. This was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

XIV. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

County Administrator McCarthy stated the Road Patch by the ton is out for bid as well as the Ambulance Remount, and advertising has gone out for the position of Deputy County Clerk. Administrator McCarthy stated the regular Agenda meeting was held, and he has been dealing with HR matters. Administrator McCarthy gave a fireworks event update and stated the permit had been obtained, and Commissioner Collins had obtained a lot of sponsorship and has been working really hard for the event, as well as the committee. The jail roof is complete, and the plumbing and locks are still underway, with the shower and toilets to be arriving soon. Administrator McCarthy stated timber ordinances and what is already in place

had been discussed. Administrator McCarthy noted the need in the Department Head meeting to identify backups if anyone was out, as well as who the immediate point of contact would be. Administrator McCarthy briefed the Board on the Water and Sewer Authority meeting. Administrator McCarthy stated that he attended a pre-budget planning meeting, budget spending for the remaining FY24 meeting, and discussed pay scale and FLSA impacts. Administrator McCarthy stated he met with a large local employer regarding location needs for their business, discussed several dog issues with animal control, and talked about tax values. Administrator McCarthy stated that the labor statistics he provided to Commissioners are helpful when speaking about economic development, whether pitching the strengths of the County to people interested in the area and discussing the weaker points among ourselves. Administrator McCarthy stated he toured the Pathways facilities and had a pay scale meeting and provided email updates to the Commissioners. Administrator McCarthy stated he would like to suggest at some point a Work Session to speak with the representative about the Fleet replacement program as it is something that sounds very promising.

Assistant Administrator Cole stated that year to date, Public Works has over 1200 tickets with the top 5 being gravel, grass cutting, trees, patching and pipes. Assistant Administrator Cole stated that the engine that the Board approved for Public Works not to exceed \$9,500 was purchased for \$7,270. Assistant Administrator Cole stated he will be working with the Library in Greenville to get some new signage.

XV. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Emmett Collins: Commissioner Collins thanked all the staff for the work they were doing and the committee for the Fireworks Event, who had been working really hard.

Commissioner Collins hoped everyone would come out and join them on July 6, 2024. Commissioner Collins stated there would be a great band and hoped to have a great fireworks show. Commissioner Collins stated there were a lot of sponsors.

Commissioner Rosla Plant: Commissioner Plant stated that Leadership Meriwether had their Economic Development session on the previous Friday and gave special thanks to Dr. Julie Post, President of West Georgia Technical College, who gave a great background of the college, and Tamara Brock from Georgia Power Economic Development was in attendance. Commissioner Plant thanked Ms. Jane Fryer for all her hard work in getting everything ready for this event. Commissioner Plant thanked Public Works and employees Barry, Sue and Cody for all assisting with the bus. Commissioner Plant thanked Assistant Administrator Cole for helping with the tours of the facilities and appreciated his help. Commissioner Plant hoped it was a learning experience for all those who participated. Commissioner Plant recognized MSS for being in attendance and stated the impact MSS was having in Meriwether County was eye-opening. Commissioner Plant thanked Daniel for all his participation and for attending the meeting.

Vice Chairman Adam Worsley: Vice Chairman Worsley thanked everyone in the County for the work they are doing and stated there was a lot of activity. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he is receiving continued good feedback from citizens. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he is appreciative of the work and response times. Vice Chairman Worsley noted that staff had reached out to GDOT regarding Highway 194 in Durand, multiple times about the dip in the road, that in his opinion, is extremely unsafe. Vice Chairman Worsley stated they did convince GDOT to put a sign up but cautioned everyone if traveling towards Durand on Highway 194, to use caution. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that a weekly follow up was needed. Vice Chairman Worsley stated the event at Longleaf with Alabama and other country artists was exceptional and good to see Meriwether County well represented. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that Chief Stephens and his team did a very good job, were set up very well, and represented the County very well. Vice Chairman Worsley stated it was a good look and they did a good job.

Commissioner Bryan Threadgill: Commissioner Threadgill stated that the County roads that are being cleared and cut every year, are only being cut at a certain level, and the trees above that level are continuing

to grow over that level. Commissioner Threadgill stated that when there are storms, limbs pop onto the roads and suggested looking into getting someone with a boom saw to come in and cut some of those limbs. Commissioner Threadgill stated that Manchester will be hosting their fireworks on July 3rd, and it is open to the entire County. Commissioner Threadgill encouraged citizens to take advantage of both events. Manchester on the 3rd and Lake Meriwether on the 6th.

Chairman Gene King: Chairman King stated he would like to add to Commissioner Threadgill's comment regarding the boom saw. Chairman King stated that we have been waiting several months for the deck to be rebuilt and it should be coming in either today or tomorrow. Chairman King stated there are motor homes that are getting scratched because of the overhang. Chairman King stated soon as Public Works got the deck in, they assured him they would start getting that cut, but does agree with Commissioner Threadgill. Chairman King stated that Randy Carter just texted him and let him know that the 8 and under boys that are playing in the state championship, beat Banks Co. 16-7 and will play tomorrow against Dodge County for the state championship. Chairman King stated the 10 and under boys just won 16-3 and will be playing tomorrow at 12. Chairman King stated both teams will be playing tomorrow at 12 and 2, and both teams have represented Meriwether County well. Chairman King stated he also attended the Country Music Festival at Longleaf and saw a lot of County employees at the event. Chairman King stated that the volunteers and staff represented the County well, and he didn't hear of any arrests or fights breaking out. Chairman King stated it was a good event. Chairman King thanked everyone for what they are doing.

XVI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Michael Hill stated he had no report but did understand there was a need for Executive Session for Real Estate, Personnel, and Litigation.

XVII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman Worsley at 7:56 p.m. to go into Executive Session for discussion of Real Estate, Litigation, and Personnel. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Threadgill to close the Executive Session at 8:59 p.m. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Collins to go back into Regular Session at 9:01 p.m. All were in favor.

Chairman King stated there are a couple of things to act on from the Executive Session.

A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill to provide the County Clerk with a 7.5% increase in her current salary, due to the completion of her Public Manager certification. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

Commissioner Plant returned to the Meeting at 9:03 p.m.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Worsley that the County put out for sealed bid parcel W0 14 011, 326 Bray Street, Woodbury, with the condition that the property must be cleaned up within 30 days of closing/selling. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Threadgill. All were in favor.

XVIII. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Threadgill to Adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m.

All were in favor.

Approved by:

Attest:

Date:

Majority Vote of the Board of Commissioners
Kristy Gallaspy, administrative assistant
July 10, 2024