

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
JULY 2, 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

The Cities of Greenville, Gay, Lone Oak, Luthersville, Manchester, and Woodbury all had representatives from their Councils in attendance. There was a quorum present for the Cities of Greenville, Gay, Luthersville, Lone Oak, and Woodbury. Manchester was represented but had no quorum present.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Meeting was called to order by Chairman King at 6:00 p.m.

II. INVOCATION

The Invocation was given by Assistant County Administrator Blue Cole

III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

All

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill to amend the Agenda to add #3 *Under New Business - Consider Holiday as a one-time observance for Friday, July 5th, 2024*. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Presentation of TSPLOST and Discussion of Distribution of Funds and Proposed Projects

County Administrator Jarrod McCarthy thanked all the City representatives for coming and was encouraged to work together on something that would be beneficial to everyone.

Administrator McCarthy explained that TSPLOST is a 1% sales tax, dedicated to transportation. Administrator McCarthy explained that this is not a new tax, but a continuation of a tax that has been in place. Administrator McCarthy stated the renewal goes before the voters on November 5, 2024, and is a 6-year collection period, that will start April 2025, if all cities sign off on it, giving a 6-year collection period, instead of 5 years. Administrator McCarthy stated that projections are roughly \$12 million dollars in collections and the distributions are based on the 2020 Census populations, where about \$8 million would go to the County and \$4 million to be split among the Cities. Administrator McCarthy explained that an advantage of this is essentially being able to collect money from out-of-towners, whether it be commuters, people traveling through the area, people coming to visit, we are able to fund ourselves with a little bit of their money. Administrator McCarthy stated that a few of the eligible uses for TSPLOST funds are patching, resurfacing, grading, drainage, graveling, paving, bridge and culvert repairs and replacement, transportation signage, sidewalks, and equipment for road maintenance. Administrator McCarthy stated that the last item is

particularly important because a lot of people think that it works on a road here or there, but it can go towards equipment that can work on all roads. Administrator McCarthy states that this is especially important to the County, because whatever money the County puts towards equipment, the Service Delivery Strategy states that we assist the Cities with equipment and manpower. Administrator McCarthy stated this is something that benefits all. Administrator McCarthy mentioned that the County will be doing programs to help educate the public. Administrator McCarthy stated that staff cannot out right tell people how to vote or campaign, but he has already spoken to Lion's Club and he and Assistant Administrator Cole will be going to the Rotary Club as well to help spread the word and help educate the public.

Mr. Theron Gay, Special Projects welcomed the Cities in attendance and appreciated everyone coming together during the holiday week. Mr. Gay stated that TSPLOST is something that can only be used for transportation related projects. SPLOST can be used for practically any type of capital project, but TSPLOST is strictly related to transportation issues. Mr. Gay gave a brief history on TSPLOST, explaining that the legislators of the State of Georgia were initially hesitant to do anything about the fact that there were insufficient dollars in hand to be able to fund transportation needs. Mr. Gay stated that GDOT's dollars were dropping. Mr. Gay stated that in 2010 the legislature came up with a program to put that off on someone else, and they ended up with a win-win scenario for them that did not turn out exactly as they had planned. Mr. Gay stated the legislators decided rather than bite the bullet and move forward with trying to create more funding, they would give counties and regions the opportunity to vote for what they called TSPLOST. Mr. Gay stated that this came forward in 2010, with the idea behind it being to put it out in all the regions, with Meriwether County being lumped in with Coweta and Fulton, with 12 regions being established across the state. Mr. Gay stated the legislators, having spoken with several of them, were in a position that they could not be blamed for whatever the outcome. If it passed and people complained about taxes going up, they could say, well you voted for it. If it failed, and people voted it down and complained about their roads, they could say they gave them an opportunity. Mr. Gay explained that in reality, it didn't do much of anything for the State of Georgia, with only 3 out of 12 regions in the state approving TSPLOST. Mr. Gay stated that most of those approving TSPLOST were in rural areas, and it was a monumental failure. Mr. Gay explained that once this was realized, the legislators had to do something and, in 2015, they passed a law to establish a single-county TSPLOST, that could then be on the ballot beginning in 2017, which is what is being discussed today. Mr. Gay stated that in 2019, Meriwether County Board of Commissioners made the decision, along with the Cities, to place TSPLOST on the ballot for consideration of the voters. Mr. Gay stated that it passed overwhelmingly with 75-76 percent approval of the voters. Mr. Gay stated that a lot of programs were done to show what would be done with the dollars, and he feels that we will be able to show that we were able to follow through. Mr. Gay stated that the program was projected to produce about \$10 million dollars' worth of sales tax over the 5-year period, which comes from anyone who comes to the County to stop and shop. Mr. Gay stated that he had not done a survey in Meriwether County but did do one in a neighboring county years ago and their estimates were that 40% of the revenue came from outside the County. Mr. Gay stated that they have a lot of retail granted, but he would say that if you count the car tags, there is a significant number of people from outside Meriwether as well. Mr. Gay stated they come into the County, buy things, and leave their sales tax dollars, then go back home, which works out well for Meriwether. Mr. Gay stated that the projections were \$10 million, over 5 years, and based upon Finance Director Gorton, we are projected to be at \$11 million dollars for the current TSPLOST term. Mr. Gay stated that this can only be used for transportation projects that include roads, bridges, public transit, rail, air, buses, sidewalks, drainage and culverts, which is a big issue, and equipment can

also be included as well, that is related strictly to roads. Mr. Gay stated that the LMIG is the Local Maintenance Improvement Grant from GDOT, that, at the present time, requires a 30% percentage match for the County and Cities' participation. Mr. Gay stated that when TSPLOST originally came about in 2010, the state came out and said as an incentive they would only require a 10% match, instead of the 30% required match for LMIG. Mr. Gay stated that this didn't matter a lot in reality, because when you get into a program, you want to do as much as you can, with a program, and the difference in the 10% and the 30% is not that big of a deal. Mr. Gay stated that Meriwether County typically spends 50% of local funds for every dollar received from LMIG. Mr. Gay stated that under a single-county TSPLOST, the match remains 30%, and that a 30% match could come from TSPLOST for LMIG if chosen to do so. Mr. Gay stated that the question is why are we all here today? Mr. Gay stated that when TSPLOST was approved in 2019, it was for a 5-year period, and they have changed some of the laws and it you can now go to a 6-year period. Mr. Gay stated the current TSPLOST is set to expire in March 2025, meaning that the County and Cities will receive their last proceeds in March of next year. Mr. Gay stated we are here to discuss the renewal of TSPLOST that will begin in April 2025. Mr. Gay stated that going ahead and getting on the ballot for a vote in November, will assure that when the last proceeds are received in March 2025 under the current TSPLOST, the first proceeds will be received in April 2025 for the newly renewed TSPLOST, and the funding will continue on through. Mr. Gay stated that there actually has to be a SPLOST in place before you can have a TSPLOST, as the state won't let you go out and do a TSPLOST, unless you have a SPLOST in place. Mr. Gay stated that we have a SPLOST in place that will expire after TSPLOST is approved, but hopefully we can get that done again next year as well.

2. Discussion and Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement between Meriwether County and County Municipalities - TSPLOST

Mr. Gay stated that one of the things needed is an Intergovernmental Agreement. Mr. Gay stated that TSPLOST could be extended if all the Cities joined in with the County and signed an Intergovernmental Agreement, from 5 years to 6 years. Mr. Gay stated that meant about \$2 million dollars more in sales tax coming into our community to be used on roads, bridges, and transportation. Mr. Gay stated that tonight, we will walk through the IGA, which requires a list of qualified projects that we are going to do. Mr. Gay stated that we have an estimated dollar amount for those projects and have procedures for distributing the proceeds to the qualified cities, and we have to have a schedule of distribution of the proceeds. Mr. Gay stated that proceeds will need to be maintained in a separate account with separate record keeping, which will all be covered in the IGA. Mr. Gay explained that the law states that you have to expend any remaining TSPLOST funds within 5 years after the last receipt. Mr. Gay explained that when the last distribution in March 2025 comes in from the current TSPLOST, it will need to be spent first and within 5 years. Mr. Gay explained that since the last discussion about TSPLOST, there were some sections of the law that had changed and previously an IGA was not required, and back then there were some different formulas that would allow you to collect at a lesser amount. Mr. Gay stated that we now have to have an IGA in place, but only have to have that IGA with enough municipalities to reach 50% of the municipal population. Mr. Gay stated that we don't want that and want everyone on board and to share in this. Mr. Gay stated that if a City doesn't sign the IGA and doesn't want to participate, then the distribution to the City will be based on a formula set out in state law that is based on center line road miles and population ratio against the other Cities. Mr. Gay stated that he went back and looked at some of these calculations, and small towns in particular, are probably better off with the distribution being discussed, that is based on population, rather than going back to the center line miles and population ratio. Mr. Gay stated this is because some of the towns and cities do not have a lot

of center line miles, and state routes do not count. Mr. Gay stated that if all the Cities agree to the IGA, then the TSPLOST can be extended to a 6-year program that will generate about \$2 million more dollars to the process and road programs. Mr. Gay explained that if collections go over the \$10 million dollar projections under the current TSPLOST, then those dollars are distributed out, just as the first dollar was distributed. Mr. Gay stated that if it goes over the projected amount, the County and every City will benefit from the extra revenue that will be calculated under the current distribution formula. Mr. Gay stated that he would like to discuss important dates and times, as we ended up on a really tight schedule. Mr. Gay stated that we had to notify all the cities 10 days prior to tonight's meeting at a minimum. Mr. Gay stated that after tonight's meeting, all the Cities that have a quorum and so desire to, can go ahead and execute the IGA. Mr. Gay stated that if a City doesn't have a quorum present, then he encouraged them to get back to the Mayor and Council and meet as soon as possible, to execute the IGA and get it back to the County. Mr. Gay explained that all Cities would be given a set of 8-10 signature sheets, and ask each City and Council, when this is passed, to sign each of those signature sheets and the County would package those up and send everyone an IGA with an original signature. Mr. Gay stated that all the approved IGA's need to be back by July 19th, 2024. Mr. Gay stated that if any of the Cities do not agree to sign the IGA, then they will drop into the formula, and will also require us to go back and rework the numbers, because all of those numbers are based on a 6-year collection period. This will cause the projections to drop from \$12 million to \$10 million, and those percentages would change. Mr. Gay stated that on July 31, 2024, the Board of Commissioners will call a Special Called Meeting to execute a Resolution asking the Board of Elections to add the TSPLOST question to the ballot on November 5, 2024. Mr. Gay stated that if we miss that date, then TSPLOST will not happen this year, and we will not receive dollars in April 2025. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if we were unable to get it on the ballot, if we had to wait 12 months. Mr. Gay explained that if it goes on the ballot and fails, then you have to wait 12 months. County Attorney Michael Hill stated that if we failed to get this on the ballot in November, then it would be May 2025, before it could be requested again. Chairman King stated that something to keep in mind is if this doesn't go on the ballot, then there would be costs for a special election at around \$30,000. Mr. Gay explained that in the IGA it states that everyone will share in the pro rata cost of the election. However, as Chairman King pointed out, this year we already have an election, so there will be no extra cost to the County. Mr. Gay stated that with this being under a federal election, it does put us on a tighter timeline, requiring it to be there 90 days prior. Mr. Gay stated each City should have a copy of the IGA. Mr. Gay stated that he would like to cover the project list for each entity, and we try to keep those broad, so it is not designated as a certain street, which allows more flexibility. Mr. Gay explained that what may be a priority today may not be tomorrow. Mr. Gay stated that on page 2 of the Intergovernmental Agreement it shows how the County and the Municipalities divide TSPLOST, based upon the population and census. Mr. Gay stated 66.83% would go to the County and 33.17% would be distributed to the Municipalities, based upon the population of each city. Mr. Gay gave the break-down in percentages for the County and each Municipality, based on 6-year collection and 5-year collection.

The County, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$8 million dollars. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected collections would be \$6.7 million dollars.
The City of Greenville, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$462,000. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected collections would be \$383,000.

The City of Gay, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$64,200. If down to a 5-year collection, projected collections would be \$50,000 dollars.

The Town of Lone Oak, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$66,500. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected collections would be \$50,000.

The City of Luthersville, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$451,800. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected collections would be \$375,000.

The City of Manchester, with a 6-year projection, would collect a little over \$2 million dollars. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected collections would be \$1.7 million dollars.

The City of Warm Springs, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$270,600. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected collections would be \$257,000.

The City of Woodbury, with a 6-year projection, would collect approximately \$528,000. If down to a 5-year collection period, projected dollars would be \$435,000.

The Town of Pine Mountain, with a 6-year collection period, would collect approximately \$50,500.

Mr. Gay discussed the projects and asked the Cities for feedback if they wanted to add something as well. The projects listed were patching, leveling, milling, resurfacing, grading, drainage, graveling, and paving of gravel roads, bridge and culvert repairs and replacement, stormwater drainage improvements associated with transportation, transportation signage and safety improvements, equipment dedicated to road and transportation maintenance and improvements, as well as sidewalk improvements and expansion. Mr. Gay asked if that was a reasonable project list, or if there was anything else they would like to add that was transportation related. Mayor Sewell of Luthersville asked Mr. Gay if the numbers for Greenville and Luthersville were swapped. Mr. Gay stated that the population showed Greenville at 794, per the Census, and Luthersville at 776, per the 2020 Census. Council Member, Mary Bray from the City of Greenville asked if a bus within the City limits of Greenville would qualify. Mr. Gay stated that it says in the law that buses, if used for transportation, qualify. Mayor Stargell of the City of Greenville stated that the City of Greenville would like to add buses. Mr. Gay stated that he would add buses to all the project lists for the Municipalities and the County. Mayor Sewell of Luthersville asked if the buses needed to go out of the County, if they would be allowed. Mr. Gay stated that they would be the City's buses, paid for by the City's tax dollars. Commissioner Threadgill and Mr. Gay explained the Three Rivers transit buses are owned by the state and service citizens all over the County.

Mr. Gay covered the addresses of all the Cities and the County, per page 10 of the IGA. The City of Gay had corrections to their address. The City of Woodbury updated their physical address. The City of Lone Oak no longer uses the P.O. Box and updated its physical address.

Mr. Gay stated that if everyone is agreeable to signing, then the IGA would extend TSPLOST for 6 years. Mr. Gay stated that if a Municipality doesn't sign, then collections are based upon a provision in the law that allows it to be calculated on road miles and population ratio. Mr. Gay stated that at the end of the meeting, if any of the Cities with a quorum present would like to approve and execute the IGA, there are multiple pages to be signed, which will allow each Municipality to receive an original document. Mr. Gay stated that if there is not a quorum present, the IGA can be approved by that Municipality, but would need to be done as soon as possible. Mr. Gay stated that he or part of the staff would come to Council meetings for any

Municipality that had questions.

Mr. Gay stated that once the IGA is approved, the Board of Commissioners will have a called meeting on July 31, 2024, to approve the Resolution asking for the Board of Elections to place the TSPLOST question on the ballot for November 5, 2024. Mr. Gay stated that it is important to get those IGA's prior to that date, because if, for instance, a City doesn't sign, or something else comes up, and we can't do the 6-years, then recalculations will have to be done and the IGA updated for the 5-year collection period. Mr. Gay stated that, hopefully, we won't have to do that, but asked that everyone address this as quickly as they can, by July 19, 2024. Mr. Gay stated that the County and the Cities have worked well together in the past, working together on the Fire District, TSPLOST, and SPLOST, and have been very successful.

Mr. Gay discussed promotion rules as they pertain to TSPLOST. Mr. Gay stated that the County and Cities cannot spend funds on promoting TSPLOST through ads asking the public to vote for it. Mr. Gay stated that no governmental money can be spent on promoting it. Mr. Gay stated that Elected Officials can discuss their position, but staff of the Cities and the County cannot do that. Mr. Gay stated that what can be done is informal presentations, showing people what we have done in the past with TSPLOST, to show the improvements. Mr. Gay stated that we would like to do informal presentations that can be done for civic groups, church groups, town hall meetings, senior citizens groups, and any others that the Cities may know of. Mr. Gay also encouraged the Cities to participate with the County through these programs. Mr. Gay stated that one of the things the County has done has been to put up signs that state "TSPLOST Dollars at Work" on projects that the County is working on. Mr. Gay asked if any of the Cities had questions. Council member Susan Pritchett, from the Town of Gay, asked if the worst case scenario occurred and the citizens of the County, voted down TSPLOST, what is our plan. Mr. Gay stated that we will continue to try to do the best we can. If voted down, Mr. Gay stated the County would lose \$8 million dollars and the Municipalities would lose \$4 million dollars' worth of revenue. Mr. Gay stated that hopefully we won't, but if we do, we will have to go back and rely on the 30% match out of SPLOST for LMIG. Mr. Gay stated the result of that would be that roads would not be paved for a long period of time. Mr. Gay stated that it is important to show the people what the program has done, and encouraged everyone that has done work on their roads, using TSPLOST dollars, to send in pictures to be included in the program. Mr. Gay stated that when equipment is purchased, it is used on all the roads. Council member Pritchett asked if there was another end around. Mr. Gay stated that there is no end around with the state, but the state will work with the County and Municipalities and gave examples. Mr. Gay explained that GDOT is not going to give you everything, they want the County or City to have skin in the game as well. Council member Pritchett was concerned about the percentage being 40% of out of town tax dollars and that we are not Coweta. Commissioner Threadgill stated that the town hall meetings are what brought in the 75% vote, because TSPLOST originally failed when it was in a group of counties. Commissioner Threadgill stated that having the meetings and saying that these are the things that TSPLOST dollars can do, as well as free up the additional tax money to do more. Commissioner Threadgill stated that it can also be said that 40% of the revenue is coming from outside people coming in and purchasing in Meriwether County, and it is really a win-win. Council Member Pritchett stated that the number is from Coweta County and not Meriwether, as we cannot compete, Mr. Gay stated that when the presentations are done in the past, it is stated that a survey has not been done in Meriwether County, but based on surveys done in other

places, not guaranteed, but that number could be 40%. Council member Morgan Lamb of the Town of Lone Oak stated that the original TSPLOST was for five years and after the last check comes, there are five years to spend those funds. Council member Lamb asked about the new TSPLOST, being over a 6-year period, and if those funds still have to be expended within 5 years, or if there will be additional time given. Mr. Gay stated that he would have to check the law on that but feels that you should be given a year for each year of collection. Mr. Gay stated that you can spend it as it comes in, but didn't recommend pooling it and not spending it, because they want you to spend it and put it back into the projects. Mr. Gay stated at the same time that the County got 76% of the vote in favor of TSPLOST, it failed in Coweta and failed in Spalding.

Mayor Chris Walker of the Town of Gay asked if this is not done in time to get on the ballot, and there has to be a special election, would the current IGA still be in control. Mr. Gay stated that we could get an IGA executed that would go on this ballot. If the IGA is not executed, and it goes to a special election, then another IGA will have to be executed. Mayor Ron Garrett of the City of Woodbury asked if there were any other expenses for TSPLOST. Mr. Gay stated that there are typically no other expenses, other than if they need to use a small portion for administrative fees, but the County never has.

County Attorney Michael Hill stated that there have been several amendments to the IGA, and with the Cities ready to vote, he feels it would be cleaner, with each of the motions that are passing, are making the motion, with the amendment that all the Cities add buses to their City projects, that there will be an amendment to the Notice for the City of Gay, Woodbury, and Lone Oak as previously indicated, allowing their Chair or Mayor to sign and their Clerk to attest and seal. Mayor Walker of Gay stated that he would like to amend the expense section of the IGA. Mr. Gay stated that it is part of state law. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that if amended to say by July 19, 2024, there would be no cost. Council member Pritchett of the Town of Gay stated that they do not want to be responsible if other Cities do not get their IGA signed by July 19th. Mr. Gay stated that if this goes on the ballot on November 5, 2024, there is no cost, but if it has to be held during a special election, then there would be a \$30,000 to \$35,000 dollar cost. County Attorney Michael Hill stated that he didn't feel the current IGA would require an amendment, because a per capita split of zero is still zero.

City Manager Mark Pulliam from the City of Manchester stated that the City of Manchester has enough projects without needing a bus and would like to remove that from their City projects. County Attorney Hill confirmed that the City of Manchester is asking that the IGA be amended to add buses to all the City projects, except Manchester.

After discussion, the amendments by County Attorney Michael Hill were as follows: to add buses to all City projects, except the City of Manchester, to amend the City of Gay's notice location as indicated by the City of Gay, to amend the City of Woodbury's notice location as indicated by the City of Woodbury, to amend the Town of Lone Oak's notice location as indicated by the Town of Lone Oak, to allow the Chair or Mayor to sign, and to allow the Clerk to attest and seal.

The City of Greenville, with a quorum present, approved the IGA with the amendments suggested by the County Attorney.

The City of Luthersville, with a quorum present, approved the IGA with the amendments suggested by the County Attorney.

The City of Woodbury, with a quorum present, approved the IGA with the amendments

suggested by the County Attorney.

The City of Gay, with a quorum present, approved the IGA with the amendments suggested by the County Attorney.

Mr. Gay asked if the Cities that were present without a quorum, could take this back to their Council for approval.

A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill to approve the IGA with the amendments suggested by the County Attorney. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Worsley. All were in favor.

3. Consider Holiday as a one-time observance for Friday, July 5th, 2024.

Commissioner Threadgill stated that it came to him this afternoon to possibly allow an additional holiday observance for this Friday, July 5th, since July 4th is on a Thursday. Commissioner Threadgill made a motion as a one-time observance to have Friday, July 5th, 2024, off for a continued County holiday. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if this was a paid holiday. Commissioner Threadgill stated that any County holiday is paid.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

County Attorney Michael Hill stated that every city in attendance that had a quorum needed to close and adjourn their meeting, prior to the County.

The City of Greenville, with a quorum present, adjourned their meeting.

The City of Gay, with a quorum present, adjourned their meeting.

The City of Luthersville, with a quorum present, adjourned their meeting.

The City of Woodbury, with a quorum present, adjourned their meeting.

Before the County adjourned their meeting, Council member Mary Bray, of the City of Greenville, asked if anyway, there could be a meeting similar to this one in the future to discuss countywide recreation. Chairman King appreciated the question and hoped to have that in the very near future.

With no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Plant to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. All were in favor.

Approved by:

Attest:

Date:

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