

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON MARCH 4, 2014 AT 6:30 PM IN THE
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Philip C. Jay III	Chairman
Scott Downing	Commissioner
Daniel Cowan	Commissioner
Bennie Calloway	Commissioner
Frank Feild	County Manager
Donna Prather	County Clerk
Toni Sawyer	County Attorney

Vice-Chairman OD Netter was absent.

Chairman Philip Jay III called the meeting to order.

Chairman Jay announced this meeting was posted 24-hours in advance in compliance with Georgia Law. All Commissioners were telephonically notified. An announcement and agenda were posted on the Commissioners I-Pads, distributed by e-mail, posted on the county website, and posted on the door to the Commissioner's Meeting Room. The Herald-Leader was notified by E-mail.

Commissioner Bennie Calloway gave the invocation.

Everyone gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Amendments To The Rules Of Order

Commissioner Scott Downing made a motion to relax the rules on addressing the Chairman, Commissioners, and the public. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes

Commissioner Scott Downing made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Public Comments: NONE

Acceptance of Prior Minutes

Commissioner Scott Downing made a motion to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes held on February 5, 2014. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Scott Downing made a motion to approve the Special Called Meeting Minutes held on February 26, 2014. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Constitutional Officer: NONE

Department Head Reports:

EMS Director Mark Shealey reported a situation regarding transporting patients to other hospital. He stated the EMS supports the hospital and have transported 324 patients to Dorminy Medical Center between January and March 4th.

County 4-H Agent Geri Gelliland reported the Poultry Judging Team placed 2nd at State. She stated she is excited about the number of students participating. She also mentioned Production meetings are going on now. She said attendance and sponsorship is good.

Executive Director Christi Schirack, of the Chamber of Commerce, reported on all the activity the Chamber of Commerce has been a part of. She stated they are trying to come up with creative ideas to stand on their own. She stated they are very encouraged about where they are going. She also stated they have added 25 members in the last 12 months.

The new Chamber of Commerce Chairman Stephen Pair stated he is delighted to be a part of the Chamber. He also stated he see the potential Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County has. He expressed community unity is the biggest thing.

County Board Reports: NONE

County Manager's Report:

County Manager Frank Feild reported the following:

Payroll Audit

A 100% audit of employees receiving paychecks was completed on February 13th during the employees files update.

Social Media Policies

Michael Santee has received copies of social media policies from two counties. We are studying them and will include their best practices in the policy we are drafting.

Rail Road Crossing at Anderson Memorial Church Road

DOT has issued CSX Railroad a Notice to proceed with engineering planning for the signalized crossing at Anderson Memorial Church Road. There is \$225,000 set-aside for the project. When the planning is completed and DOT has approved it, CSX will begin construction. We believe this will take about 6 months to complete.

The County completed leveling and resurfacing the road on both sides of the crossing yesterday. DOT and CSX met at the crossing today to begin the site survey.

DOT Study

DOT has studied our request to build overpasses on the east and west sides of Fitzgerald. They concluded that there was no justification to proceed at this time. The Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Development Authority is discussing contracting with a private firm for an Access Management Study; which will look at all our transportation networks and make recommendations for future infrastructure development.

Perry House Road Bridge

We are told an announcement will be made in April by the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Board on the grants. We are anxiously awaiting a decision on the \$900,000 we have requested for the Perry House Road Bridge Project.

Communications Towers

We are working with a local contractor on a joint venture to build two new communications towers. One is proposed for the Solid Waste Treatment site at the intersection of Braham Rd. and Joshlyn Rd. on County-owned property. This will include an agreement to install and maintain City and County emergency communications antennas on it. The second is being proposed as a Joint Ben Hill-Turner County tower at a location to be identified in the Rebecca area. This will include an agreement to install and maintain Ben Hill and Turner County Emergency communications on it. Details of the locations, responsibilities, and costs are being worked out. We anticipate presenting proposed agreements for the Commission to consider by the end of the month.

Queensland

We completed the purchase of the small parcel next to the solid waste collection site, cleared it, and prepared the site. The area will be fenced by the end of the week. The next step is constructing a building to house the water tanker and well pumps.

We are working with Commissioner Netter and Jasper Stewart on the details of drilling wells for the residents that are currently being served by the community water system. The Water Well Trust has collected \$90,000 to support this project and is very anxious to proceed.

Sheriff's Vehicles

The Sheriff's cars are at the Dodge dealer, and we are working through the details to get the funding released from BB&T Bank. We expect the truck to arrive shortly.

Annexation

We received notification from the City of an application to annex and rezone. Putting aside the merits of this application, this map graphically illustrates the patchwork quilt of City-County jurisdictional lines. It also underscores the confusion that the law enforcement, fire and public works have in responding. This problem should be addressed by a Joint City-County-Fitzgerald Utilities Task Force; both from the standpoint of public education and eliminating confusion.

Annexation Request: NONE

Rezoning Application: NONE

Alcohol Application: NONE

Old Business:

Elections Department Budget

Elections supervisor Cindi Dunlap reported the Board of Elections has approved the increase she is requesting to her budget. She ask for this agenda item to be postponed because she is still working on the numbers.

Commissioner Scott Downing made a motion to postpone this agenda item. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Hospital Authority Board Appointment

Commissioner Scott Downing nominated Marissa Paulk. Commissioner Bennie Calloway nominated Donald During.

The Commissioners voted by secret ballot and gave the ballots to the County Clerk Donna Prather to tally the votes. Steven Tombley, Marissa Paulk, and Eric Stone had the most votes.

Commissioner Scott Downing made a motion to submit Steven Tombley, Marissa Paulk, and Eric Stone names to the Hospital Authority. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Land Bank

County Manager Frank Feild stated he is recommending the County initiate the action to establish a joint Land Bank with the City of Fitzgerald. He stated a Land Bank will give us a special purpose entity to return stranded properties to the tax rolls. The County has well over 1,000 tax deeds that need to be put back on the tax rolls.

Mr. Feild stated a Land Bank is created under local government law by an intergovernmental agreement that specifies its structure and powers. It is a public entity; subject to all the rules of transparency, accountability, open records & meetings, conflicts of interest & ethics as any other public entity.

In the Draft Intergovernmental Agreement, we have included a 5-member board with 3-year staggered terms. Two members will be appointed by the City; two by the County; and one will be jointly selected by the City and County from a not-for-profit, business or an individual citizen. The School Board will also appoint an ex-officio advisor to the board. We have also included the 75% tax allocation that is provided in the law for 5 years in order to help fund the Land Bank.

Mr. Feild said we believe establishing our own Land Bank will be less costly than contracting to have this work done. It allows us more control, and it puts us in a position where other counties and cities can contract for our services in the future. He mentioned this is a First Reading of the Draft Intergovernmental Agreement. It will be put on the agenda for the next City Council Meeting and we plan to make a series of presentations to interested community organizations and the School Board.

2014 CDBG Grant

County Manager Frank Field reported we received 3 Statements of Qualifications from engineering firms, and 2 from administration firms asking to be considered for our 2014 CDBG application. Carter and Sloope Engineering from Macon (JohnStover) and Associates in Local Government Assistance from Alma (Sara Davis) were selected after evaluation. We plan to submit a competitive application for road paving; which will probably include paving dirt roads and resurfacing some deteriorated paved roads where there are large concentrations of Low-to-Moderate income residents.

New Business:

Antioch Baptist Church/Resolution

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to adopt the Antioch Baptist Church Resolution and authorize the Chairman to sign the document. Commissioner Scott Downing seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Scott Downing, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

RBEG Grant Application

County Manager Frank Field stated we are preparing a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant Application to provide public outreach, counseling and technical assistance to small businesses and start-ups located in USDA-designated Strike Force Counties in Southern Georgia to encourage them to pursue agricultural production opportunities in emerging markets. This grant request will be for \$99,000 and involves the Development Authority of Ben Hill County, Georgia Appleseed's Heir Property Project, and McIntosh County Sustainable and Economic Development. This pilot project is designed to validate our Strike Force concept and set the stage for future USDA funding support.

Mr. Feild recommendation to the Commission is to adopt the attached resolution and authorize the Chairman to sign all documents related to this grant.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to adopt the Resolution and authorize the Chairman to sign the document. Commissioner Scott Downing seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Scott Downing, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Military Order of the Purple Heart

The County received a letter from the Military Order of the Purple Heart concerning Ben Hill becoming a Purple Heart designated county. The Chairman has asked the Commission's approval of pursuing this and setting up a presentation at a future meeting.

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to approve the County Manager Frank Feild and Chairman Philip Jay to pursue this idea providing that someone from the Organization come and so a presentation. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Scott Downing all voting for the motion.

Agenda Changes and/or add ons: NONE

Legislative Report:

Commissioner Scott Downing stated there is a lot going on at the Capitol. Commissioner Downing stated the he has a meeting the next day and it was also crossover day; whereas the bills cross from the Senate to the House and House to the Senate. This means they are half way through this session. He stated there are some bills that have Economic Development impact that is not going anywhere and Transportation issues that are not going anywhere. Commissioner Downing stated he will talk about some of the bills that have traction at the next meeting. He suggested if any of the bills concerned us; let him know so he can discuss it on the Policy Council during conference call.

Commissioner's Remarks: NONE

Meeting adjourned

_____ Philip C. Jay III, Chairman

_____ Donna R. Prather, County Clerk