

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON JULY 7, 2015 AT 6:30 PM IN THE
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Philip C. Jay III	Chairman
OD Netter	Vice-Chairman
Bennie Calloway	Commissioner
Daniel Cowan	Commissioner
Frank Feild	County Manager
Donna Prather	County Clerk
Toni Sawyer	County Attorney

Chairman Philip Jay III called the meeting to order.

Bishop Warren Manley gave the invocation.

Everyone gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Amendments To The Rules Of Order

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

Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chairman OD Netter all voting for the motion.

Public Comments:

Bobbie Whitman spoke to the Commissioners concerning the upkeep of Westwood Cemetery. He stated he has been keeping it clean for the last four years because he has family there. He submitted a petition from other concerned citizens because he will no longer keep the entire cemetery clean because it is the responsibility of the owner. He asked the Commissioners if they can help resolve this problem.

Alfreda Ryles stated she wanted to introduce herself to the Commissioners because she is a community asset and she wanted to discuss the value of the community.

Acceptance of Prior Minutes

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve the Workshop Meeting Minutes held on June 01, 2015. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chairman OD Netter, all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes held on June 02, 2015. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chairman OD Netter, all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to approve the Workshop Meeting held on June 24, 2015. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Vice-Chairman OD Netter all voting for the motion.

Constitutional Officer: NONE

Department Head Reports:

Road Superintendent Tim Kegebein gave an update on Bethlehem Church Road. He reported it has been patched up and now he needs money to resurface.

Executive Director of Economic Development Courtney Whitman gave an update of all activity concerning RBEG, Economic Development, and Summer Nights in the Park.

She also stated August 1st we will have a school supply give away during the last Summer Night in the Park event. She is asking for donations to help support this project.

County Board Reports: NONE

County Manager's Report:

County Manager Frank Feild reported the following:

Budget Review

Mr. Feild gave a brief review of the revenues and expenditures as of May 30, 2015.

SPLOST Update

Mr. Field gave update on the 2011 SPLOST and 2005 SPLOST.

Audit Update

Pat Ashley, Meeks CPA, has requested an extension from the Department of Audits in order to complete our 2014 Audit. This is the first time we have requested an extension, and the auditors have found no major problems.

Direct Deposit

Donna Prather has been working for a long time on providing a direct deposit option for our employees. Two local banks have offered plans; and we selected the services of Wells Fargo Bank as being the best for our employees. Wells Fargo will also provide training.

Employees must agree to the direct deposit option and provide their account and bank routing numbers. Their checks will then be deposited into their account, and the County will provide them a payroll stub. If their account is not with Wells Fargo, the County will be charged 10 cents per wire transfer.

In addition to the obvious convenience of putting the employees' payroll checks directly into their accounts, it will save the County a great deal of time and expense in printing, signing and distributing checks.

Employees who don't have a checking account, or don't want a direct deposit, will still have the option of a printed and signed check.

2016 LMIG

We have submitted our request to DOT for 2016 Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant funds; which will be \$300,509. This year, we plan to resurface 6 roads; for a total of 3.865 miles. The cost will be \$458,630; and we will use \$158,121 of our 2011 SPLOST funds to provide the match. Four of these roads were completed in June; including Preston Drive, Camellia Road, Russell Road, and Bethlehem Church Road. Work on Lonnie Brown Drive and Rhine Road is scheduled to begin on August 1st.

CSX Crossing

CSX notified DOT that it will begin construction of the guarded, signalized crossing at Anderson Memorial Church Road this week. This is a \$392,992 Federally-funded project and it should be completed by the end of July.

DOT is reviewing the engineering documents on the Lilac Road crossing, and expects to issue the project construction authorization very soon. This is a \$335,779 project.

Annexation Request: NONE

Rezoning Application: NONE

Alcohol Application: NONE

Old Business:

Public Transportation Update

On June 8th, DOT notified us that the 3 new vans will not be delivered until the October time frame. We immediately pressed them for another solution. DOT agreed to allow us to put 3 of the vans we purchased from the surplus sale back on the road as transit vehicles. However, it required having them recertified by an ASE mechanic and providing a lot of documentation; which we did. RMS, our contract operator, helped us get lettering made and found several small items that are required on the vans so we could begin operating. All three of these vans have lifts for wheelchairs and scooters. We will begin offering on-demand service on Monday, July 13th; from one point to another within Ben Hill County; for a one-way fare of \$ 3.00 trips must be scheduled 24-hours in advance by calling (229) 426-RIDE.

This number has a voice mail function for calls made after-hours. After we make some adjustments, we will look at offering service outside of Ben Hill County as well.

RMS has a contract with MEDICARE; so we had the vehicles re-inspected in Albany so they can be used to support this contract. The County's goal is to operate the Ben Hill Transit System at a break-even level. Revenues from this MEDICARE contract will help offset the losses from offering public transit service for \$3.00.

RMS is looking for additional local drivers. Applicants must have a clean driving record and submit to drug screening. An announcement is posted on our website at www.benhillcounty.com, and will be published in tomorrow's Herald-Leader. We have application forms available at the County Office.

Summer Student Work Program

We hired 12 students for the summer work program and they are working all over the County. This 5-week program ends this week and has been good for the County and the students. We have been able to get a lot accomplished; while they have learned some valuable lessons about what employers will expect from them in the future.

New Business:

Weight Challenge Awards

The County employees were invited to participate in a weight loss challenge; which is part of our Wellness Program. The program ran from April 6th to June 23; with their beginning and final weights being compared.

We started with 30 employees, and ended with 3 winners. Each will receive a cash prize.

First Place goes to Michael Goodman of the Maintenance Department; who lost 28 pounds, 2nd place goes to Kent Henninger of the Jail, and 3rd place goes to Clairetha Moore of the Senior Citizens Center.

Budget Amendment

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to approve an increase in the Administration budget expense line item 1500-53.1100 and revenue line 33.4116 Administration Grants/Health & Wellness. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Comprehensive Plan

On June 11th, we held a joint City-County start-up meeting on the 5-Year Work Program Update for the Comprehensive Plan. Rather than simply do a boiler-plate update, we agreed to do a community-developed update; including a Strategic Plan for Economic Development. The Economic Development will be handled separately, but will be integrated into the drafts for public review and comment. The current plan, a workbook, and a timeline are posted on the County website at www.benhillcounty.com.

Excess Property Resolution

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve the Excess Property Resolution declaring the property excess and authorizing the County Manager to dispose of it. Vice Chairman OD seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chairman OD Netter, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

2015 Tax Digest

The Current 2015 Tax Digest and 5 Year History of Levy, the PT Form 32.1 and the schedule for getting the Tax Digest completed are shown on these slides.

We have had a \$10.5 million dollar reduction in the tax digest in the last year. According to the Tax Commissioner, this is due to reductions in Motor Vehicle, Real & Personal Property, and Timber Taxes. Since 2013, we have lost a total of \$18.3 million from the tax digest.

We do not recommend raising taxes; although our costs are continuing to spiral upwards, while our revenues are going down. As we work on the 2016 Budget, we must be prepared to make some difficult management decisions in order to better control our expenses.

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to approve the rollback millage rate of 15.095 mills and authorize the Chairman to sign the PT Form 35. Vice Chairman OD Netter seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Vice Chairman OD Netter both voting for the motion. Commissioner Daniel Cowan opposed.

Sunday Beer & Liquor Sale/Vice-Chairman Netter

Vice-Chairman OD Netter stated the convenience store owners want to sell alcohol on Sunday. His response to them is that he would bring the thought to the Commissioners.

2015 Legislative Leadership Conference Voting Delegate

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to nominate Chairman Philip Jay as the 2015 Legislative Leadership Conference Voting Delegate. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

BHC Department of Family & Children Services Appointment

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to reappoint Joyce Jenkins to the Ben Hill County Department of Family & Children Service Board. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

BHC Forestry Board Appointments

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to reappoint Tim Kegebein, Milton Hopkins, Bill Luke, and Chip Dorminy to the Ben Hill County Forestry Board. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Library Board Appointment

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to reappoint Sherry Sue Davis to the Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Library Board. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

South Georgia Community Service Board Appointment

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to reappoint Connie Graham to the South Georgia Community Service Board. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Agenda Changes and/or add ons: NONE

Legislative Report: NONE

Commissioner's Remarks:

Chairman Philip Jay welcomed newly elect Commissioner John Mooney.

Meeting adjourned

_____ Philip C. Jay III, Chairman

_____ Donna R. Prather, County Clerk