

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 8, 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
John Mooney	Commissioner
Frank Feild	County Manager
Donna Prather	County Clerk
Toni Sawyer	County Attorney

Chairman Philip Jay III called the meeting to order.

Pastor Bennie Calloway 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 John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes

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

Public Comments:

Allen Conger begin with he came to Fitzgerald in 1979 because he was inspired by the things that were going on here and the support he received. He listed the businesses that he started or improved. He continued with all his accomplishments and contributions to this community.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to extend time for Allen Conger. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner John Mooney, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Allen Conger continued with he is tired of being treated like he is nobody. He said County Manager Frank Feild called GEMA on him concerning Ben Hill Volunteer Fire Department inventory. He also complained about EMA Director Jason Miller response to him concerning him getting the Ben Hill Volunteer Fire Department a pair of jumper cables. He added that Jason purchased a pair for Turner County.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to extend time for Allen Conger. Vice-Chairman OD Netter seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Allen Conger continued with explaining how he was treated at an accident scene. He said he doesn't think he is anything; but he is concerned as to whether he should move his company somewhere else.

Steve Taylor stated we need to be a business friendly community because he thinks it is a great marketing tool and to make the business licenses and permits process easier. He stated he has never had a problem; but he has heard other stories concerning the process.

Jim Casper stated they have accumulated some good ideas from the comprehensive plan breakout session. He also stated we need to be a business friendly community. He explained he and his wife issue had while getting a permit. He stated he didn't understand why his wife couldn't get a permit for him because that was his wife and property.

Acceptance of Prior Minutes

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes held on September 04, 2015. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Vice-Chairman OD Netter all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve the Special Called Meeting Minutes held on September 07, 2015. Vice-Chairman OD Netter seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner John Mooney, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Buck Anderson interrupted the meeting by saying Ben Hill County need to take notes from Starkeville, Mississippi about how they issued business licenses and permits decades ago. He stated they were a one stop shop. He also said he had issues with the licenses and permit process himself.

Constitutional Officer: NONE

Department Head Reports:

Executive Director of Economic Development Courtney Whitman gave an update of all activity concerning the Development Authority of Ben Hill County. She also reported the success of the Summer Food Program, the progress of the potential business Agri-solar, the up and coming meeting with the Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Joint Development Authority and the Development Authority of Ben Hill County, and the progress of the Literacy program.

County Extension 4H Agent Jeri Gelliland reported the changes to the staff and she introduced the Ag Agent Holly Anderson.

Ben Hill Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Allen Conger presented the commissioners with a 2015 budget. After explain the items listed in the budget; he asked the commissioners for a \$10,000 budget increase.

County Board Reports: NONE

County Manager's Report:

County Manager Frank Feild reported the following:

Budget Review

Mr. Feild gave a brief update on the revenues and expenditures as of July 31, 2015.

Budget Amendments

Mr. Feild reported our Road Superintendent submitted the request for 2016 LMIG funds as soon as the window opened in July. By mid-August we received a check from DOT for \$300,508.67 for the 2016 LMIG road work. We immediately issued Invitations to Bid and will be opening the bids on Thursday, September 10th. In order to legally spend this money, we need to amend the Road Department's Budget.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to approve increasing the Road Department Budget (4200-54.1500) by \$300,508.67. Commissioner Daniel Cowan second the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner John Mooney all voting for the motion.

Mr. Field also reported we received a Health & Wellness Grant from ACCG for \$2,000. We need to increase the Administration Budget (Line 1500-53.1100) by \$2,000.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to approve increasing Administration Budget (1500-53.1100) by \$2,000. Commissioner Daniel Cowan second the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner John Mooney all voting for the motion.

Perry House Road Bridge

The State Transportation Board has approved adding the Perry House Road Bridge replacement to the Construction Work Program. This will be added to the STIP as a \$ 2.2 M project; scheduled for construction in 2020. We met with DOT Planning Director Jay Roberts and State Senator Tyler Harper on August 28th, and agreed it can be done cheaper and faster. We have already done the sample boring, preliminary engineering, stockpiled fill dirt for the shoulder approaches, and we don't have any major ROW issues. We will not build a temporary bypass to save money; so the road will be closed during construction. Jay Roberts wants to do the project with State money to avoid all the Federal study requirements; which will further accelerate the schedule. We optimistically believe it may be possible to bid this project within a year; which could put us into construction as early as spring of 2017.

Jay Roberts asked for information on all of our bridges that are too narrow to meet DOT specifications, and promised that DOT will look for funding to replace them. We have 4 bridges that meet the criteria, and Tim Kegebein has forwarded the information on them. Director Roberts also said the Governor wants to push-out additional LMIG money to the Cities and Counties in early spring; perhaps as early as April.

Cam Jordan briefed Director Roberts and Senator Harper on the City's One Georgia Application for funding to support the Peachtree Industrial Corridor Upgrade. The intent of this project is to provide a dedicated, non-stop route for heavy truck traffic to travel from Benjamin Hill Drive to the Jacksonville Highway via the Industrial Park.

Finally, we discussed the Development Authority of Ben Hill County's concept to create a northern bypass for the CSX railroad and develop an inland port complex in Ben Hill County. Both the Director and Senator were extremely supportive, and will set up a meeting with CSX to discuss it in detail.

Annexation Request: NONE

Rezoning Application: NONE

Alcohol Application: NONE

Old Business:

Ben Hill Transit System Update

County Manager Frank Feild reported Tim Pinson and Michael Erwin, the President and Operations Manager for Resource Management Systems has joined us this evening to provide an update on the Ben Hill Transit System.

Tim Pinson gave an update on the progress of Ben Hill Transit System. He stated it is slow starting up; but that was expected because

Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Joint Development Authority IGA

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to adopt the Resolution concerning the Grand Theater and strike all language concerning the Downtown Development Authority. Vice-Chairman OD Netter seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Hospital Vacancy Nominees

Commissioner Daniel Cowan nominated Art Anderson and Leslie Daniel. Commissioner John Mooney nominated Edgar Medellin.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to approve that the Hospital Authority immediately submits vacancies as soon as the term of a Board Member has expired. Commissioner Daniel Cowan second the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner John Mooney all voting for the motion.

New Business:

Claire Road

Vice-Chairman OD Netter skipped this agenda item because it has already been addressed.

Contract for the Sale of Property

Jason Cowart stated he wants to purchase the 4 lots for sale by Ben Hill County on Othar Lee Rodgers Road. He wants to build a house; but there is a road that gives access to the property behind what he wants to purchase that runs between lots 1 and 2 that he would like to move.

Road Superintendent Tim Kegebein stated he had walked the property with Mr. Cowart that evening and that Mr. Cowart wants to give the county an easement; but Mr. Kegebein stated the County needs a 60 foot right-of-way in order to have access to the county property behind this location.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to close the road that runs between lots 1 and 2, move 60 foot right-of-way between lots 4 and 5, and Ben Hill County will pay for the survey. Vice-Chairman OD Netter seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to authorize the Chairman to sign all documents. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chairman OD Netter all voting for the motion.

Colonial Life Insurance Benefits

County Manager Frank Feild stated the staff didn't have a chance to discuss this agenda item; therefore he was not ready to give a recommendation.

South Ga Regional Commission

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to nominate Warren Manley to South Ga Regional Commission. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner John Mooney all voting for the motion.

Excess Property Resolution

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to adopt the Resolution declaring these items excess property and authorizing the County Manager to dispose of them; with revenue being credited to the respective departments. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Vice-Chairman OD Netter, and Commissioner John Mooney all voting for the motion.

State of the Port

County Manager Frank Feild reported the State of the Port Address will be on Thursday, September 24th in Savannah. This is a major logistical meeting, hosted by the Georgia Ports Authority. Last year, Ben Hill had 9 representatives attend and we participated in a special guided tour of the port after the meeting. We made many valuable contacts for our community and believe it is well worth the investment. Courtney Whitman has arranged for another guided tour for this year on Wednesday, September 23rd; the day before the meeting.

2016 Budget Planning Guidance

County Manager Frank Feild stated we have been running the County on fumes for the last 4 years; hoping we could control our spending and that the economy would improve. However, we have seen steady decreases in the tax digest, spiraling increases in health insurance and other major expenses, plus extravagance in some departments. The Commission voted not to raise taxes; therefore, we must focus on what we can do to further reduce expenses and increase revenues in order to have a balanced budget for 2016.

The Commissioners discussed the conflict with October Regular Monthly Meeting and the ACCG Conference. The Commissioners changed the meeting date to October 5th.

Executive Session/Personnel

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss Personnel. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to close Executive Session discussing personnel. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner John Mooney, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to approve the Executive Session minutes. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner John Mooney, 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: NONE

Meeting adjourned

_____ Philip C. Jay III, Chairman

_____ Donna R. Prather, County Clerk