

**MINUTES**  
**MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**February 28, 2023**

**6:00 P.M.**

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

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Adam Worsley

Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and Attorney Michael Hill

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. INVOCATION**

The Invocation was given by Gospel Recording Artist, John Kendall, Jr.

**III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

All

**IV. ADOPT AGENDA**

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to adopt the agenda with the following additions: Add under Presentations: 1. Carolyn McKinley – Discussion of Flint River Water Trail 2. FEMA update from Catherine Anderson, FEMA Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist, and guests. Add under New Business: 6. Request from Lake Meriwether Advisory Board regarding fees. All were in favor.

**V. PRESENTATIONS**

1. Carolyn McKinley spoke about the Flint River Water Trail Project. An update was provided last fall based on the Flint River Water Trail (approx. 28 miles) that goes through Meriwether County. The Water Trail helps people to navigate the water and it promotes tourism, economic development, and environmental stewardship among the users. That project was finished before the holidays and Meriwether County was recognized by the Georgia River Network for completing that Water Trail. We were the first designated Water Trail on the Flint River. We have been working with the neighboring Counties, Spalding, Upson, Pike, and Talbot and have extended our communication of our work from Spalding County to Lake Seminole. We are making progress with other Counties throughout joining together with this project. December 2024 is the deadline to complete the project. The more people on the Water Trail equals more Tourism. Senator John Ossoff called Ms. McKinley to let her know that he was going to do a Commendation from the Senate Floor for Carolyn for the work on the Water Trail Ms. McKinley wanted the Board to know that it may have her name on it but it was for Meriwether County for this project. All the work is for the benefit of Meriwether County and the State of Georgia. None of that work would have happened without the support of the Board of Commissioners. The letter will be read from the Senate Floor and a certificate will be received.

Ms. McKinley provided the most recent economic impact numbers and Tourism continues to increase. Chairman Threadgill thanked Ms. McKinley for all she does for Meriwether County.

2. Catherine Anderson, FEMA Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist, stated her role was to work with the County Commissioners to provide any information and she had sent emails including news advisories and fact sheets. The other FEMA staff members were introduced, and they provided information including what has been happening in Meriwether County.

Bryan Miller, FEMA Individual Assistance Representative, reported 312 individuals/households were registered with FEMA in Meriwether County and they had awarded \$144,984 for the 312 individuals/households. The Disaster Center in Greenville has now closed. Individuals can call FEMA at 800-621-3362 for assistance with their case.

Vivian Santos Rodriguez – Small Business Association Representative, reported they had approved over \$300K in disaster loans. There are four centers that remain open in Georgia until March 17<sup>th</sup>. The closest center remaining open to Meriwether County is in LaGrange at the William Griggs Sports Center. Representatives can answer questions and help fill out applications.

Jack Mthenjane, Public Assistance Program Representative, stated they invest the States low cost and municipalities with the low-cost investment program. They handle the debris operations and categories A-G. Mr. Mthenjane explained the areas of Public Assistance that is offered. They conducted exploratory calls with a point of contact to assign a PNG to work with those in need and find out the damage in Meriwether County. They are working with a point of contact to find out all the damage so they can quickly respond. Mr. Mthenjane emphasized the need for documentation for the State to invest the cost that has been incurred.

Catherine Anderson reported that the Disaster Survivor Defense Team visited 1,288 homes. They have interacted with many including 278 faith based and community organizations. They have reached 6,850 individuals.

One of the members handed out flyers regarding the Civil Rights for those who had damage. Flyers were left to be handed out to others as needed.

Bonita Dallas, FEMA Disability Integration Advisor, reported she works with people who have disabilities. Twenty percent of the persons who are registered with FEMA in Meriwether County have some sort of disability with 60% hearing, 4.8% Vision, 8% Cognitive, 8% Ambulatory, 3% Self Care Disability, 6% Independent living. FEMA is involved with the applicant such as businesses or something of that sort, and they want to make sure the path of travel that is involved in moving around in the building is clear without impediments. They are also on exploratory calls as well as the recover scoping meetings and follow up meetings where they will listen and find out if a business will need a rebuild, or something that has damages, or that has been demolished to make sure they will be following the ADA rules and standards when the are rebuilt or repaired.

## **VI. FINANCE REPORT**

Bill Gregory, Finance Director, stated the general bank balance was strong with \$3.2M and \$5M in LGIP funds. The EMS fund is \$103K and is normally \$70K-\$80K at this time of the month. Several months ago, Administrator Irizarry asked Mr. Gregory to start back providing a quarterly budget analysis. What Mr. Gregory provided to the Board was a government version of the budget and our performance against the budget. The departments should be at 75% remaining as of December 31, 2022. General Government is at 69%, Election is at 61% due to the cost of the fall election, Community Services is at 37% due to paying the Three Rivers dues upfront. Mr. Gregory stated we are looking to make sure we are at least 75% and this is monitored monthly.

## **VII. CITIZEN COMMENT**

Chairman Threadgill read the statement on the Agenda under Citizen Comment that provides the procedure for speaking.

Navarus Mahone – stated he is a Director for “Help Us Reach Them”, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in Meriwether County that services the community through different programs they created. Some of the programs are the Development Program, Mentor Program, Scholarship Program, etc. Mr. Mahone stated they would like the Board of Commissioners to consider allowing some of their programs to be held in County facilities. Some of the programs such as tutoring, mentoring and development program do not have a home and they would like to use some of the County facilities such as the fields, courts, or gyms so they can build their community and provide for the youth and elders in the community.

Chairman Threadgill stated the Board would discuss this with the County Attorney and get back with him. Chairman Threadgill advised Mr. Mahone to go through Administrator Irizarry as the point of contact for the County.

## **VIII. MINUTES**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Gene King and seconded by Rosla Plant to approve the Minutes from the February 8, 2023, 9:00 a.m. meeting. All were in favor.

## **IX. PUBLIC HEARING**

None

## **X. APPOINTMENTS**

None

## **XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Administrator Irizarry stated we need to get the 2023 LMIG finalized and bid out to prevent running into weather later in the year when the projects are let. Bill Cawthorne stated we have Chairman Threadgill’s selection and spoke with Commissioner Worsley about his. We are down to the point of what we submitted to GDOT, and we have the list to make some changes in District 5. For Commissioner Collins and Vice Chairman King’s Districts, Mr. Cawthorne had on the list that was submitted to GDOT, the extension of Luthersville Road to Alvaton Road from Rocky Mount Road and that is not finalized. We are looking at one item for Commissioner Plant and we will be ready to put together the bid package and bring back to the Board for approval. If there are changes, we will need to get them before the next meeting. Commissioner Plant stated she appreciates all the work and thanked Mr. Cawthorne for the work on Mt. Pilgrim Road. With FEMA members here, she hopes we can get some reimbursement for the damage happening to the roads. Following the tornado damage, logging has affected Mt. Pilgrim Road which was newly paved. Mr. Cawthorne stated he will meet with a FEMA field inspector this week or next week.

## **XII. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Motion was made by Vice Chairman King and seconded by Chairman Threadgill to set a Public Hearing for Case #2023-006 on March 28, 2023, to hear the request to close Twin Lakes Road from Jimmy Clark Road to Rat Road. All were in favor.

2. Motion was made by Vice Chairman King and seconded by Emmett Collins to set a Public Hearing for Case #2023-007 on March 28, 2023, to hear the request to close Jimmy Clark Road from Mocking Bird Lane to Germany Road. All were in favor.
3. Motion was made by Vice Chairman King and seconded by Emmett Collins to set a Public Hearing for Case #2023-008 on March 28, 2023, to hear the request to close Pea Pod Road to Callaway Road (Hwy. 362) to Lima Lane. All were in favor.
4. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to allow Banking to remain at the current institutions and signatures cards to be signed as a matter of annual housekeeping. All were in favor.
5. Bill Cawthorne, Public Works representative, provided an issue paper in the package regarding the sealing of the clock tower and atrium at the Courthouse. It has leaks coming into the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor ceiling from the atrium. This developed at the copper around the dome down through the clock and the tower that holds all of that up. This is the second phase of the Courthouse roof repairs. A few months ago, we went back and lined all the roof leaders down to ground level where we were getting a lot of leaks on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> floors and those leads stopped. . There was conversation on the number of phases for this project. Commissioner Plant confirmed this is strictly the roof and the water issues then asked about cosmetics. Mr. Cawthorne stated we may get insurance funds for the interior, and we were working on that with ACCG. Administrator Irizarry stated the claim has been submitted and we are waiting for a reply. Administrator Irizarry stated we must fix the intrusion of the water first before remediation. Mr. Cawthorne stated the big cost is having to remove the lead base paint on the tower. Commissioner Collins asked how many bids were received. Mr. Cawthorne explained there is only one bid and Principle Construction working to provide our Construction Manager. They have bid out the subcontractors for specific work such as the ceiling. The bid was \$210K. The Board requested to see the other bids for this project by the next meeting. Motion was made by Emmett Collins and seconded by Rosla Plant to move this to the next Agenda. All were in favor.
6. Commissioner Collins stated he attended the Lake Meriwether Advisory Board Meeting where the Board recommended increasing the RV site camping fee from \$20 to \$30 and leaving the primitive camping at \$10 per day. We have added a dump station and put the new sites in. The new amount is comparable to other campgrounds. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman King to increase the RV site camping fee from \$20 to \$30 and leave the primitive camping fee at \$10. Voting in favor were, Rosla Plant, Vice Chairman King, and Chairman Threadgill. Commissioner Collins abstained.

### **XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Administrator Irizarry – reiterated the Disaster Relief Center (DRC) had closed and those who need assistance can call them on their 800 number or contact them on their website. There is a DRC open in Troup County as well as in Spalding County. Those are the two closest locations to us. The Meriwether County Wellness Program 2023 Spring Challenge will begin on March 20, 2023. The County received word from DOT today regarding the Low Impact Bridge Program (LIBP) that we applied for regarding the Bridge at Beaver Lake Road and Shoals Creek has met the required elements and is programmed for replacement.

#### **XIV. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Emmett Collins: Thanked the County for doing good work since the tornado. The Lake Meriwether Advisory Board welcomed two new members, Frank Keller, and David Williamson.

Commissioner Rosla Plant: reported Keep Meriwether Beautiful Clean-up is scheduled for April 22, 2023. There are packages available for participants and this will be added to our website. There will be a few changes in the location of dumpsters. There will not be a dumpster in Alvaton but there will be one north of Gay to service both areas. Tires will be accepted at Public Works. There is a limit of 12 tires per Meriwether County resident. Volunteers are needed to man the dumpster stations since Public Works is short staffed and volunteers are needed to help pick up liter. Clean up is held twice a year. Mr. Haney from the Primrose Community will continue to handle appliances. There will be another meeting to finalize the KMB Clean-up Day.

Vice Chairman Gene King: has been following up on Dirt Road and Potholes through Bill Cawthorne and Barry Lucas. Public Works has been getting most calls resolved in 24-48 hours and we are receiving positive feedback from the citizens. Vice Chairman King stated he has been working in construction for 41 years and always watches the weather. The other day Public Works graded a road and we had three days of rain behind that. Vice Chairman King asked them to please watch the weather and hold off when we are expecting more rain. Vice Chairman King asked if there were funds in SPLOST for more gravel. We need to spend more money on gravel for dirt roads. Some say we are sprinkling the gravel. We need to motor grade the roads and add good gravel which will help solve some of the problems and fix the bad spots. Bill Cawthorne stated there are several projects earmarked and we need to start over and redo drainage and crown the roads. Vice Chairman King received a call about an area on Chappell Crook Road and went to see the area. There were pot holes, since it is a dirt road, but there was a large area in the middle of the road that was bad and because of having to try to go around this spot in his truck, he slid off the road and had to use four-wheel drive to get out. Vice Chairman King stated he knows everyone wants a paved road but many of our roads will not be paved for a very long time due to the cost, but we need to get the dirt roads in good condition.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: reported the Department of Transportation has finished the Bridge in Manchester and it will reopen first thing in the morning. The Bridge will be dedicated in a month or so to an African American male who fought in one of the wars. Chairman Threadgill apologized for not knowing the mans name.

#### **XV. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY**

No reports but advised of the need for an Executive Session to discuss Litigation, Personnel, and Real Estate.

#### **XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to go into Executive Session at 6:39 p.m. to discuss Litigation, Personnel, and Real Estate. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Emmett Collins and seconded by Rosla Plant to go out of Executive Session at 7:38 p.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman King to go back into Regular Session at 7:39 p.m. All were in favor.

There was no action taken in Executive Session.

Motion was made by Emmett Collins and seconded by Vice Chairman King to authorize full time employee, Laura Bogolin, to attend the Firefighter Burn Foundation Camp as a regular work week at her regular pay rate. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to offer an as needed position to Skip Richmond and to complete the employee change form to reflect the changes. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman Gene King to increase the monthly stipend for Robert Lovett to \$100. Attorney Hill asked if this was by or to \$100. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman Gene King to increase the monthly stipend for Robert Lovett for an additional \$100. Voting in favor were Chairman Threadgill, Vice Chairman King, and Rosla Plant. Emmett Collins abstained.

#### **XVII. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES**

Chairman Threadgill made the announcement of Meetings and Notices prior to Executive Session.

#### **XVIII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collings to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Suevly Thomas, County Clerk

Date: March 8, 2023