

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 10, 2021

This meeting was held by Zoom due to COVID-19 for the public with Board Members and County Staff attending in Person

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy, Commissioner Shirley Hines, Commissioner Rosla Plant and Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley
Staff Present: County Administrator Theron Gay, Deputy County Clerk Allyson Stephens, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and County Attorney Nathan Lee.
Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Threadgill called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
INVOCATION – Vice Chairman McCoy
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ADOPT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Hines to adopt the agenda with the following changes: under New Business #5 change Discussion to Consideration of Vested Rights, add 8. Request assistance due to interference of operations and add 9. Covered Bridge Discussion. All were in favor.

III MINUTES

Motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to approve the Minutes of the February 23, 2021 Regular Meeting at 6:00 p.m. changing the word illegal to legal vote during comments made under #4. All were in favor.

IV. MUNICIPAL COMMENTS

None

V. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS COMMENTS

None

VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS

None

VII. PUBLIC HEARING

Case# 09-2021 – Kelly and Howard Cooke requesting a rezone from RD to RR for limited agricultural use for “Hobby Breeding” of Aussies. Property is located at 1394 Hidden Lakes Rd, Warm Springs, GA, Tax Map & Parcel #109-016-004, LD#2, LL#102. A motion was made to go into Public Hearing at 9:06 a.m. by Vice Chairman McCoy and was seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley. All were in favor. Butch Oliver of Planning and Zoning explained this was a continuation from the last meeting and stated that this would be for a special use approval on limited agricultural use for “Hobby Breeding”. Administrator Gay stated that he did research on “Hobby Breeding” and found it to be one to two litters per year. He advised the applicant would have to possess a Pet Dealer’s license from the Georgia Dept. of Agriculture. Administrator Gay stated that Hobby Breeders do not consider the sale of pets as taxable income. Administrator Gay stated our current ordinance is for one litter and those puppies can remain on the premises for up to twelve weeks and allows up to 5 dogs or cats. Administrator Gay stated zoning could be permitted to be LDR with a special use. He suggested a limit of adult dogs to five and limit the number of litters to 1-2 per year. Administrator Gay stated that the provision would expire if they ceased

operation for longer than a 12-month period. According to Administrator Gay, as the property is already zoned the owners can have 5 dogs and one litter of puppies. He suggested provisions of limiting number of dogs and puppies and allow no employees on site. Butch Oliver stated that all the sales are on the internet and there would be no traffic coming in. He stated they do have their pet dealers' license. Commissioner Hines asked Administrator Gay to explain LDR with special use again. He explained with LDR there is a special use that is only for the particular owner. In the event the property sells the special use goes away for a new owner. Craig Norris, President of the Homeowners Association on Hidden Lakes Road stated the association recently had a meeting with the entire neighborhood. The neighborhood is favorable of the LDR zoning. He stated they are also in favor of this as long as this is not a commercial business license. Commissioner Neely-Hadley asked Mr. Norris if he had a list of who he is speaking for. She stated she is getting calls from people who live there who are not in favor of LDR. Mr. Norris stated he did not have a list this time but did have one at the last meeting and stated that all he had spoken with were okay with the LDR and not permanent rezoning and no commercial business as it is a one-lane C County-maintained dirt road. He advised he did speak on behalf of the HOA. Administrator Gay provided the Board with 8 recommended conditions should the Board approve rezoning. He advised the Board they would need to determine how many adult dogs and how many litters in a 12-month period. Chairman Threadgill asked the applicant Mrs. Cooke how old the adult dogs were that she had on the premises. She advised they range in age of 15 months to 6 years. He asked her if after breeding she retired the animals and kept them as pets. She advised that she has a long list of people who want adult dogs. She advised she has a list of people that would take her breeding stock. No one else requested to speak. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to go out of Public Hearing at 9:20 a.m. All were in favor. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated she had spoken with some of the residents, but she would have to go with what was brought to the Board today. Chairman Neely-Hadley made a motion to rezone the property LDR with a special use permit for Hobby Breeding with the conditions discussed and the restrictions of 2 litters of puppies per year and 5 adult dogs. A second was made by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to appoint Chairman Threadgill to the Water and Sewerage Authority on an interim basis for the District 4 appointment. All were in favor. Chairman Threadgill abstained the vote.
2. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to table the appointment for the Recreation Advisory Board to fill an unexpired term representing the Board of Education. All were in favor.
3. Motion was made to table the appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals to fill an unexpired term that will end on January 5, 2022 by Vice Chairman McCoy. A second was made by Beth Neely-Hadley. All were in favor. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated that this Board hardly ever meets, and it is a challenge to find someone to serve. Administrator Gay stated that some of the requirements of the Board could possibly be eliminated with ordinance changes. He suggested looking at updating the ordinances. Commissioner Hines suggested providing information as to what the Board does. Administrator Gay stated the information is in the Code of Ordinances. Administrator Gay stated this Board is related to variances in zoning. Administrator Gay stated the Board had not met since he had been there. County Attorney Nathan Lee advised that the Board of Appeals is a way to streamline the process. Commissioner Neely-Hadley exited and re-entered the room at 9:31 a.m.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Request approval of Right of Entry on Mark and Peggy Mangum property off Parkman Pond Road-. Administrator Gay stated he had been down and visited with Mr. Mangum and had noticed there was a cross drain coming off the County roadway draining onto his property and causing erosion. Administrator Gay asked the Board to authorize the completed Right of Entry to authorize the County to make a one-time repair to the cross drain and address the issue with drainage from County right-of-way.

A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to authorize the acceptance of the Right of Entry for the County to make repairs. A second was made by Vice Chairman McCoy. All were in favor.

2. WellStar Occupational Medicine-Client Services Agreement- Administrator Gay recommended approval of the Client Services Agreement, allowing the Chairman to sign. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Shirley Hines. All were in favor.

3. Confirm re-appointments for the Meriwether County Hospital Authority- Administrator Gay explained that the appointments to the Hospital Authority have extended terms He advised there are four existing members on the Hospital Authority. They are meeting regularly and just need to be re-appointed Members of the Hospital Authority are Bob Patterson, Alan Moore, Alan Thompson, and Jim Mabon. Administrator Gay stated there needs to be 5 members and right now there are only four. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to confirm the reappointments of Bob Patterson, Alan Moore, Alan Thompson, and Jim Mabon to the Hospital Authority with the intent of bringing back a 5th appointment to the Board for approval. All were in favor.

4. Request Quit Claim Deed on a section of abandoned road at the Industrial Park. Administrator Gay advised this is regarding a prior Public Hearing on a small section of abandoned roadbed. He stated this is a Quit Claim deed that would quit claim any County interest in the property to Aunt Irma, LLC. Administrator Gay recommended approval of the deed allowing the Chairman to sign. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley approving the Quit Claim deed and authorizing the Chairman to sign. All were in favor.

5. Consideration of vested rights-Daisy Acres Subdivision- Administrator Gay stated there was a request from the developer of Daisy Acres Subdivision. The subdivision was platted back in 2006-2007 and is located off of Possum Trot Trail which is off of Primrose Road. Administrator Gay stated at the time the developer had obtained all permits for land clearance and also had water run to the location. After doing the work the economy tanked. The project was placed on hold and now the developer would like to continue the project. The developer was working under the ordinances of 2007-2008 yet they have agreed to pave the dirt road to the new standards and agreed to pave all the roads in the subdivision with rollback curb and gutter standards. Administrator Gay stated the only difference is the size of the lots which at the time of the approval were for 1 acre. Administrator Gay stated in order to establish vested rights the developer would have to show that they have spent substantial time, money, and effort on the project. The square footage of the homes would have to be at least 1375 square feet. Butch Oliver stated the developer had agreed to put in a cul-de-sac at the end of Possum Trot Trail for emergencies. He stated the roads were graded at the time and have grown back up some and you can tell where lots were cleared. Chairman Threadgill asked if the lots would have septic or sewage. Butch stated they would have septic with public water. He stated there is a fire hydrant a couple hundred feet from the development. Commissioner Hines stated this is in her district. She stated she is all for growth especially home growth however she has some concerns. She stated normally plats are only good for one year. She stated she is for the development but wanted to know if we are making exceptions. She is concerned there are more preliminary plats and is concerned with the precedence being set. Butch Oliver stated the roads were cut years ago. Administrator Gay stated that if a plat were the only work that had been done, it would not likely be considered vested rights. The developer actually came in and spent \$70,000 got the roads ready, lots ready, and also had water run to the location. County Attorney Lee explained that there is no black and white line for vested rights. He explained vested rights can be shown if the work done was what was intended. Butch Oliver explained that the final plat is what gets approved and reviewed and right of way is dedicated to the County's assets. Commissioner Hines stated per her investigation the property was in conservation from 2007-2017. Butch Oliver will check the conservation status with Chief Appraiser Underwood. Attorney Lee stated that the developer would be responsible for any fines if breach of covenant. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy to recognize the vested rights of Daisy Acres Subdivision. This was seconded by Rosla Plant. All were in favor.

6. Discussion of Greenville Fire Station and different construction options- Administrator Gay stated that he went back and spoke with the contractor at the request of the Board and the cost of going back with concrete block and wood grain is not an option today as it may have been in the past due to

costs. Vice Chairman McCoy felt that steel would be the cheapest option at this time. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to move forward with current plans and materials. All were in favor.

7. Approval to move forward with survey and engineering on Greenville Recreation Park. Administrator Gay stated that he would need to obtain approval from the Board to move forward with a 25-acre survey for boundary lines and topography with a 2-foot contours. He would also need approval for engineering. He explained the time frame for all information to be submitted would be April 30, 2021. Chairman Threadgill asked if this would be an additional cost on top of the match of \$200,000. Administrator Gay advised it would be an approximate cost of \$20,000 to \$25,000 to complete and this could not be part of the match. Commissioner Hines asked if this money would come out of SPLOST. Administrator Gay advised that the funds would have to come from SPLOST. A motion was made by Commissioner Hadley and seconded by Shirley Hines to allow Administrator Gay to move forward with a survey and engineering on the Greenville Recreation Project. All were in favor.

8. Discussion of Operation Interference- Administrator Gay stated that he did not like to create controversy but there were some things that happened yesterday that are just part of a series of events that have occurred. Administrator Gay stated that these events have really bothered him, and he needs the Board's help. Administrator Gay stated the issue has become a roadblock for things that we are trying to get done regarding County operations. Administrator Gay stated there is one office, which is an elected official's office, which requires us to have Law Enforcement go with us if there is anything that needs to be done in the building. Administrator Gay stated every time something needs to be done in that office or it is a fiasco. Administrator Gay stated the issues started back in December when the official began demanding Resolutions in which she stated were required by law. Administrator Gay stated they were not required by law and we were told they were mandatory, when they were not approved, the email threats started. Administrator Gay reminded the Board of the sideshow regarding the postage machine being moved "today". He stated numerous emails were received demanding the machine be moved. Administrator Gay stated the postage machine is not owned by the County and is in fact owned by Pitney Bowes. He advised the machine is a sensitive measuring instrument that measures postage weight. He stated our office ended up agreeing to move the postage machine at a cost of about \$800+. Administrator Gay said when the time came to move the machine to an office next to Butch's office, we noticed old records had been placed in the location. Administrator Gay stated we offered to help move the old records. Administrator Gay state that instead of taking our offer of help, we were met with refusal to unlock the office in order to move the records and allow placement of the postage machine in the room. Administrator Gay stated the official wanted the postage machine moved but would not give them a key to get into the room and they had to access the room by jimmying the lock open to move the records. Administrator Gay stated earlier that day we offered to have the inmate crew go down and help move the boxes of old records. When they went inside and were told no to any help. The inmate crew went outside and proceeded to take down Christmas lights on the outside of the County building. Administrator Gay said the inmate crew was met with someone coming out of the building and screaming at them, calling the police, and making an attempt to have the guard of the inmate crew arrested. Administrator Gay stated there was a big scene outside in the public. He stated in order to keep the inmate crew that Commissioner Hines worked so hard to get for Meriwether County, he had to write a letter to the Warden of Harris County that we would not allow the inmate crew to work in or around the Tax Commissioner's office in the future. Administrator Gay said to him this was a real embarrassment to Meriwether County. Administrator Gay advised there have been situations where there have been threats to the County staff who were just trying to do their job. Administrator Gay said he is seeing this regularly with different staff and saw this behavior yesterday, as well as threats to finance. Administrator Gay advised yesterday there was another incident when I.T. Director Skip Richmond scheduled a contractor to come into the County building to rewire the internet service and drop two internet cables. Administrator Gay advised that Mr. Richmond had sent out a notice and explained that access was needed to get into the closet. Administrator Gay stated received a call from Butch Oliver indicating that the guys there to run the cable were run out of the Tax Commissioner's side of the building. According to Administrator Gay, the contractors were

actually in Butch Oliver's office working and the individual went into that side of the building yelling at the contractors. In order to come to terms with the incident and try to reason with the individual, Administrator Gay stated he and Skip talked and had a representative from the Sheriff's office accompany them in going down to the office to explain the need of running cable. Administrator Gay stated the cable being run did not interfere with anything in the Tax Commissioner's office nor operation, and in fact, the cables were to be moved to allow access for I.T. because currently there is no access as I.T. has been locked out of that section of the building. Administrator Gay reported to the Board that when trying to reason with the Tax Commissioner and explain why the contractors were in the building they were met with resistance and demands were made to show her a work order and how much was being paid to the contractors. Administrator Gay explained that in other elected official offices and the courthouse there is no demand to see work orders before work is done or work is allowed to continue. Administrator Gay reported there have been numerous demands to receive a security code for the security system of the building. The security is for the entire building not just the Tax Commissioner's office. Administrator Gay stated after explaining this to the Tax Commissioner he was told she did not care and to just disconnect the system in other areas of the building. Administrator Gay stated that the other offices in the building deserved security the same as the Tax Commissioner's office. Administrator Gay explained that an offer was made to provide a smaller security system for just the Tax Commissioner's office and were told that is not an option. Administrator Gay felt that installing a smaller security system would be less expensive than the frosting on the front door of the Tax Commissioners office so no one can see in. Administrator Gay was extremely upset at the way I.T. Director Skip Richmond was treated by the Tax Commissioner. He stated there was an email from the Tax Commissioner to Mr. Richmond stating she found his behavior unacceptable and indicating that Mr. Richmond was not respecting her. Administrator Gay advised the Board that County staff does not speak to the Tax Commissioner's employees in a demeaning manner, and he does not expect County employees to be spoken to in that manner. Chairman Threadgill stated that he read the email sent to Mr. Richmond and agreed with Administrator Gay. Chairman Threadgill noted that he continuously hears from the Tax Commissioner's office that she does not work for the County and wanted the Tax Commissioner to understand that our County employees do not work for her. Chairman Threadgill wanted it on the record that any issue the Tax Commissioner has with a County employee needs to be addressed directly to Administrator Gay and not to the employee directly as the Tax Commissioner has no right to address County employees directly. Administrator Gay stated that while the Tax Commissioner found Mr. Richmond's behavior unacceptable, he finds it unacceptable that she continues to interfere with County projects as well as the tone and the manner she uses when addressing County staff. Administrator Gay reiterated Chairman Threadgill's statement that Mr. Richmond did not work for her and did not have to have her approval to complete various tasks in a County-owned building. Administrator Gay expressed his tiredness of the games that are being played by the Tax Commissioner, which are impacting taxpayers. According to Administrator Gay the actions of the Tax Commissioner are disruptive to day-to-day County operations and issues are manufactured by the Tax Commissioner which are outside her realm of responsibility. Administrator Gay asked the Board what the Tax Commissioner had to do with removing Christmas lights or moving internet cable on and in a County building. Administrator Gay made the Board aware that a lot of time has been consumed by other County offices answering calls from citizens complaining that the Tax Commissioner's office will not answer the phone. Emails and phone calls have been ongoing from citizens to County staff according to Administrator Gay which is taking time away from County staff doing their own work. Administrator Gay wants the Tax Commissioner to realize that the County building is not her building and that County staff do not work for her. Administrator Gay made the Board aware that access has been denied by the Tax Commissioner to the public hallway and no one is requesting access to the individual offices, but the public hallway access is needed and others in the building cannot use or access the public hallway as it has been locked by the Tax Commissioner. Administrator Gay explained that the locking of the door without providing the other offices in the building access could possibly be a fire hazard. Chairman Threadgill stated that he finds it astonishing that the door can be locked to the hallway to prevent access into the Tax Commissioner's side of the building however, she freely feels she can unlock it and go into

other areas of the building to say what she wants to say and then go back to her area and lock the door. Chairman Threadgill stated it was unacceptable. Administrator Gay compared the locking of the door as being locked in a jail. He advised the Board that the I.T. department cannot get into that area of the building and there is a major I.T. connectivity point located in a closet off the hallway. Administrator Gay stated that if the internet connectivity goes out or something happens County staff cannot get in to make repairs and the rest of the building would go down. Skip Richmond, I.T. Director stated that the area in the Tax Commissioner's office where internet connectivity is located controls the entire building. Mr. Richmond stated the reason for having the contractors come to the Tax Commissioner's office was to drop two (2) wires, not hook anything up but drop the wires so they could get everything ready to go. Administrator Gay advised that if there were to be an electrical issue during the weekend or overnight, we cannot get into the building to make repairs. The cleaning crew, according to Administrator Gay is told that they must call to make an appointment before entering that office. Administrator Gay expressed concern that the cleaning crew is responsible for cleaning all County offices and do not have time to make an appointment. Administrator Gay stated that all this needs to stop and the Tax Commissioner needs to do her job and stop interfering in what we are trying to do and take care of her office. Administrator Gay stated his opinion is that the Tax Commissioner's time would be better spent answering the phones and providing service to the citizens who are standing in line, instead of constantly interfering with what we are trying to do. He also felt it would be nice to receive timely distribution of funds. Administrator Gay asked the Board for permission to seek some type of court order or injunction to prevent the Tax Commissioner from denying access to a County building and trying to interfere with any County projects that go on, including the routine maintenance of the building. Administrator Gay stated he would simply like the Tax Commissioner to allow us to do our job and she do her job without interference. Administrator Gay stated he had been to the Tax Commissioners office on 2 to 3 occasions to try and reason with her and have been threatened of being thrown out of the building and also threats of court action. Chairman Threadgill stated the Board received letters from attorneys out of the Atlanta area. Chairman Threadgill stated there has to be a check list for I.T and the Fire Department to make sure that things are working as they are supposed to be, and this is not done as a means of intimidation or to try and run the office. He went on to explain this is something that is done on a daily basis in every other County office. Administrator Gay stated that due to the issue the day prior the cable contractors will be charging the County again to come back out. Commissioner Neely-Hadley advised the cable contractors were not employees of the County. Administrator Gay stated had we not been able to get the door open Pitney Bowes would have charged another \$850 to come back out to move the postage machine. Administrator Gay stated the games are ridiculous and are costing us money and interfering with County operations. Administrator Gay emphasized that the prior day the I.T. Staff, Building and Zoning Staff, and representatives of the Sheriff's office were all trying to reason with the Tax Commissioner just to move two cable wires over into a closet. Administrator Gay went on to state that it was uncalled for and he would like to have permission from the Board to seek an injunction to stop the interference in our operation. Administrator Gay stated County staff is not trying to spy on anyone or do anything wrong and that they are trying to do anything they can to help the office. He stated the success of the Tax Commissioner's office is the Board of Commissioner's success as well. Administrator Gay reinforced that the County is more than willing to help but needs the same cooperative spirit and he is upset and tired of County employees getting talked to in the manner in which the Tax Commissioner speaks to them. Administrator Gay again asked for the Board's help in the matter. Commissioner Hines thanked Administrator Gay for sharing the information and enlightening the Board of the situation. Commissioner Hines would like to know what the injunction will actually do. Administrator Gay stated it would allow the County staff access into the public building to perform maintenance and necessary things that need to be done. He advised the closet where all the internet connections are cannot currently be accessed. Administrator Gay stated said the County is trying to relocate the connection point, however there will still be internet connections in the Tax Commissioner's part of the building. He stated they are not interfering with her operations or her connections to the State. Administrator Gay stated he is met with constant threats and deadlines imposed by the Tax Commissioner. One such issue was relating to the

security code for the building, which he stated he was given to the 16th of February to provide. Administrator Gay offered to put in a security system just for the Tax Commissioner's office, but she would rather disconnect the entire building. Chairman Threadgill stated it was amazing that deadlines were being placed on staff when deadlines required by State law were not being met regarding to funds being received from the Tax Commissioners office. Administrator Gay stated no funds were received on February 28th and are again due on March 15, 2021, which is 5 days out. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated this was not the first time the funds from the Tax Commissioners office have been late. Chairman Threadgill stated records on breaking down the funds was not received until February 23, 2021. Administrator Gay stated the issues at the Tax Commissioner's office have become a sideshow. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated it was incredibly sad and the citizens are hearing what is going on and the losers are our citizens. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated we are paying our staff to do things they should not have to do. She advised that she had sat on the Board since March of 2010 and every constitutional officer position has changed at least once and there has never been a problem like this, although they have not always agreed. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated she is receiving calls from citizens who are terribly upset, and the Board's hands are tied. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated there are lines outside the tax building and the commissioners are receiving calls from people who do not live in the County because they cannot get the proper paperwork to carry on their business. Commissioner Neely-Hadley expressed support to Administrator Gay to do whatever it is he needs to do as the email to Mr. Richmond was completely out of line and Mr. Richmond does not work for the Tax Commissioner. Commissioner Neely-Hadley went on to state that she has seen emails sent to our office as the entire Board was copied on them and they are unacceptable. She advised that in other counties we are a joke because of what is going on in the tax office. Chairman Threadgill stated the emails are available and can be requested. Commissioner Neely-Hadley informed the Board that the incident that occurred at the tax office on 3-9-2021 was not just heard by employees, citizens could hear it as well. Chairman Threadgill advised there had already been video placed on Facebook by citizens who were in the office when one of these incidents occurred. Chairman Threadgill wanted it documented that the Tax Commissioner's office stays locked, and she can go out into anyone else's office and cuss them out and say whatever she wants to and then go back into her office and lock the door. He wanted it noted it is the most childish and immature thing he had ever seen. Commissioner Neely-Hadley said that it is ridiculous what we are going through and the Administrator had her permission to do whatever needed to be done to solve the problem. Commissioner Plant stated she has had several citizens contact her wanting to know the recall procedure and the measures to be taken. Commissioner Plant stated it is the of the citizens of Meriwether County if they feel that route needs to be pursued. Commissioner Plant instructed the citizens that reached out to her to contact Patty at the Elections office after 180 days and do a coordinated effort throughout the County if that is the route they wanted to take. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated she is elected by the citizens and they are the losers here when we do not get our money. Chairman Threadgill stated she continues to say, I do not work for the County, I work for the citizens. He stated each Board member is a citizen of the County and as a citizen and taxpayer a little more respect from the tax office would be nice. Administrator Gay stated he does not like controversy but needed help from the Board. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated the staff has spent so much time dealing with that office since January 1, 2021 and the postage machine fiasco was about a 2-week process. Chairman Threadgill stated he and Administrator Gay moved the boxes the day before the postage machine was moved and the Board received a copy of a threatening letter from an attorney in the Atlanta area basically stating they were intimidating her, which was not the case at all as they did not get in her face and threaten judicial interaction. Commissioner Plant wanted it pointed out that the first day of operation when she was struck by the car, Administrator Gay, Chairman Threadgill, and Butch all stepped up to help run the office. Chairman Threadgill stated he got in the back of the ambulance with the Tax Commissioner and asked her what he could do to help her office run. He stated he does not expect it because that is what we are here to do but did not receive one thank you. Commissioner Hines asked Administrator Gay what going to the Judge and getting an order would actually do. Administrator Gay advised it would prevent the Tax Commissioner from interfering with our access to the building. Chairman Threadgill stated it gives us a normal entrance to do normal

business that is done in every other office in the building. Administrator Gay stated that the cleaning staff had been told to come in the front door with the cleaning cart to enter the building through the line of citizens waiting outside. Administrator Gay stated it was just obstruction and he may have to seek an outside attorney as this needs to happen and there does not need to be a repeat of 3-9-2021. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to allow Administrator Gay to file for an injunction for the reasons stated. All were in favor. Administrator Gay apologized to Mr. Richmond again for the way he was treated. Chairman Threadgill also apologized to Mr. Richmond and stated that any constitutional officer that has an issue with County staff should follow the chain of command and come through Administrator Gay as they would not like the Board to reprimand any of their employees.

9. Covered Bridge Discussion- Vice Chairman McCoy had Mr. Richmond put up pictures of the Covered Bridge. He stated inside the bridge there are some broken stubs and Boards that provide ancillary support. Vice Chairman McCoy stated this damage was done by a truck hitting the top and there are a number of problems that have occurred over the years with the bridge. Vice Chairman McCoy expressed the need to have someone come in that has expertise in the area of repairing historical landmarks and advise the County on what can be done to preserve the covered bridge. Vice Chairman McCoy explained the need for someone to come in that knows how to repair and preserve this bridge because if something happened to it, it cannot be put back. Vice Chairman McCoy was seeking permission in seeking out an expert to come down and look at this bridge and also has a name provided to him of Mark McDonald. Chairman Threadgill suggested speaking with someone at the Historical Registry as there may be money set aside for projects such as the covered bridge and they may have engineers they recommend coming out and provide what is needed. Chairman Threadgill stated that if something happened to the bridge, it could never be replaced as there will never be another Horace King that could rebuild it. He stated there are only a few left and it needs to be preserved. Commissioner Hines thanked Vice Chairman McCoy for bringing this to the Board's attention. She suggested getting the community behind helping and maybe have a campaign group as this is a historical landmark. She stated this is a jewel for the County and she sees the importance of getting someone to look at this structurally and historically. Vice Chairman McCoy stated the security is working well. Administrator Gay stated we would reach out to the name provided to us and also possibly contact GDOT. Carolyn McKinley stated there is a bike ride on May 1st that would be coming through the County. She stated that this is for the gravel travel project and she had spoken with the Sheriff and there were no conflicts with the fair, but the group has requested to ride the bicycles through the covered bridge. Mrs. McKinley stated there would be about 250 bicyclists and they would not all be going through at the same time as there would be a lead pack of approximately 10-12 and the group would follow with about 3-4 at a time. Mrs. McKinley stated before the ride can happen, they would need permission to go through the bridge. Chairman Threadgill stated that before the Board can authorize that, the bridge would need to be examined structurally. Chairman Threadgill stated he would get back to her as soon as possible.

X. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR

Finance Director Bill Gregory stated that the general funds were strong. He provided reports to the Board. He had nothing further to report.

XI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Administrator Gay started out by thanking Coweta County Water and Sewer for their assistance with an issue at the Industrial Park that happened late in the day. He appreciated their great attitude and wanted to recognize them for their help in the matter. Administrator Gay stated the staff had been working on the recreation grant and he had attended a census webinar. Administrator Gay stated he attended the meetings of the Board of Elections, Water and Sewerage Authority, IDA, Recreation Advisory Board, Lake Meriwether Board, and the Airport Authority. Administrator Gay stated that he worked with the Chairman of the Board from Clinch County. Clinch County had to travel 4.5 to 5 hours to Greenville for their girls to play in the championship basketball game. Administrator Gay stated there were about 20

carloads of parents who came to support their children and were not allowed in the facility due to COVID. Administrator Gay allowed them to use the parking lot in front of the building to park and watch on a television in their cars. He stated he could not tell they had been there. Chairman Metz from Clinch County called back and left a voicemail thanking Meriwether County for allowing the parents to park. Administrator Gay wanted the Board to know he extended hospitality to Clinch County. He had no further comments.

XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Shirley Hines: Commissioner Hines had several topics to discuss. She stated she received a call from Miss Betty Poole on Oakland Road. Commissioner Hines stated Mrs. Poole had contacted her six different times and now has informed her the mail carrier would not be delivering mail to the property due to the condition of the road. Commissioner Hines stated this is an ongoing challenge and Mrs. Poole expressed her concern as she depends on the delivery of groceries and medications and indicated to Commissioner Hines that she feels trapped. Commissioner Hines said she is getting calls about tar getting on cars from potholes that have been repaired. Commissioner Hines advised that she has noticed once the potholes are repaired the tar is popping back up and different methods may need to be looked at in repairing the potholes. Commissioner Hines appreciated the work Public Works has been doing to get to the potholes as they are bad this time of year. Commissioner Hines stated she received calls regarding the 2 house fires from the previous week on Main Street in Luthersville and Kodiak Lane off Primrose Road. Commissioner Hines stated the homes were a total loss. She stated the Board had worked really hard to provide fire services and had went from a volunteer fire service to a full-time fire service. Commissioner Hines said she is not sure what happened, but she received reports of it taking a while for the fire dept to arrive and once they got there only one person was on the truck. She stated she was told there was a problem with the fire hydrant at the fire in Luthersville and Coweta County had to provide assistance. Commissioner Hines would like a report to take back to her constituents due to their concerns. Commissioner Hines stated the area of primrose is growing and people want to make sure they are moving into an area where they and their property are safe. She stated she would like to know the ISO rating for the fire department from the state. Commissioner Hines stated that the residents in Primrose want to know a more defined time of when they will have a fire station. She expressed to Administrator Gay that she knew he was working on this project. Administrator Gay stated he is working on this and will be reaching out to a gentleman to discuss property as it was a great location. Commissioner Hines stated she appreciated the work Administrator Gay was doing and if the location did not pan out, we need to continue to be proactive as it was disheartening to receive the calls she received regarding the fires, and she was grateful no lives were lost. She stated the young lady on Kodiak Lane lost everything. Chairman Threadgill addressed the comment made regarding one person being on the fire truck. He stated this is the standard as there is only one person in the fire station. Commissioner Hine stated as long as he knows what the standards are, she can relay these back to her constituents. Commissioner Plant stated there had been four fires last week and there was a lady saved in one of the fires by the police chief in Woodbury. Commissioner Plant was told there was one structure saved but most were fully engulfed when the fire department arrived, and it is a matter of timing. Commissioner Plant also stated there would be an investigation into the fire in Luthersville due to issues with electrical cords outside and generators. Commissioner Hines stated that this was not her area of expertise and whatever information she shares with her constituents needed to be accurate and she wanted to ensure their confidence that we are doing our absolute best and have their best interest. Commissioner Hines asked Attorney Lee for the findings on the information requested regarding a possible illegal vote to appoint someone to the IDA. Commissioner Hines stated that nothing had been reported to the Board. Attorney Lee stated there was no evidence of an illegal vote.

Commissioner Rosla Plant: Commissioner Plant reminded everyone about early voting through Friday and then Tuesday is the day of voting for ESPLOST. She explained this was the only item on the ballot and this is a continuation of ESPLOST and not a new tax. She encouraged everyone to shop Meriwether.

Commissioner Neely-Hadley: Commissioner Hadley stated Warm Springs will be having their Spring Fling on Saturday, April 10th, 2021. She stated there has been a good response from vendors and is looking forward to a good event. Commissioner Hadley stated she would like to clarify a comment she made when having discussion earlier about another office in the County. She stated when she said she is tired of getting calls from citizens, she did not mean she was tired of citizens calling her. She expressed citizens can call her anytime and in no way did she mean she did not want them to call her, she meant to express that she was tired and sorry about all the issues the citizens are having.

Vice Chairman McCoy: Vice Chairman McCoy thanked Tyrell Johnson and Bill Cawthorne for all the work they are doing. He expressed his concern about culverts seeming to fail. He stated something is different about the rains this year. He stated on one of the roads there seemed to be undermining. Vice Chairman McCoy stated that he attended the Lake Meriwether meeting on 3-9-2021 and work is still being done on the Flint River Trail and strides are being made and he feels it will be a big thing for Meriwether County. He stated they will actually start breaking ground in July. Commissioner Hines asked if culverts could be examined. Vice Chairman McCoy advised her a good example for viewing would be ½ mile from Alvaton Road on Garner Road at Dutton Branch.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: None

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Nathan Lee had nothing to report but stated there was a need for executive session to discuss personnel and litigation.

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Charlene Glover- needing help understanding permit that was issued on Saturday. Mayor Glover stated that she has taken a lot of heat for allowing another school to have a celebration due to the tailgating. Another issue, she is having is that she does not have any control over the Tax Commissioner's office and does not have the manpower to go out and check the length of the line and report back to callers. She stated that as soon as something can be done it would be highly appreciated. She requested help from the Tax Commissioner to get this straightened out.

Antonio Richardson- Stated he had a couple of concerns. Mr. Richardson stated that when Primrose road was resurfaced, one end of the road is fine, but the other end is like driving on a dirt road. He stated that tar is coming up on the vehicles. Chairman Threadgill exited the meeting at 11:01 a.m. He also stated that a tanker truck has been sitting at the end of the road since it was resurfaced. Mr. Richardson continued by stating that Primrose Rd is one of the roughest roads to travel on besides a dirt road. He asked when someone was coming back to complete the job on Primrose Road. Administrator Gay stated it was in the contract to complete the repairs on Primrose Road and he had been in contact with the contractor, and they should be out to complete the road soon and it would be done as good as the rest of the road. Mr. Richardson expressed another concern regarding Kodiak Lane. He wanted to know why the road had bottom out just to get it scraped and the road is not being taken care of. He commented on Marie Prather's home stating that he stood at the home 15 minutes or longer before he heard a siren. He stated his neighbor had to help put fire out and felt like the home should have been saved. He stated his house sits behind his and is the only house with city water. He wants to know what to do if his home catches on fire. Administrator Gay stated he will take a look at the issues and make sure we are as prepared as we can be. Damon Rosser from Primrose Road. He would like to say that he commends the builder that will take care of the situation on paving the road. He would also like to discuss the fire on Kodiak Lane. He stated he was the individual who helped pull hose and put the fire out. He feels there was a delay on the response and the fire situation could have been a lot better if there were more resources on the scene. Mr. Rosser went on to state that the first responder to the fire should have been on the scene within 6 minutes and other aid within 10-15 minutes. He stated that there is something that needs to be done as the citizens

in that area of Primrose and Zion Hill feels that if their home catches on fire, they will lose everything and have to start over again. He stated personally that half of her home should have been saved. He said he knows as a fire fighter for 29 years something should have been done better than it was on the scene of the fire at Miss Prather's residence. He stated he feels Mrs. Plant needs to reach out to Mrs. Prather and the people on that side of the County. He stated the County themselves needs to figure out a way to get the infrastructure better on this end of the County.

Catherine Jenkins apologized for not speaking during the constitutional officer time and wanted to take the time to let the public know of some things coming up in the Tax Office. She stated to address the issue with the lines that they have. She stated the lines have been long and some of this is due to staffing and some is due to the Drive System going down. She stated they are getting the lines down and most of the time there is no longer a wait time longer than 10-15 minutes. She stated the hours will be changing the hours at the Tax Commissioner's from 8:30 to 4:30 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and on Tuesday from 8:30 to 5:30, extending their time one hour. She states a kiosk will be available for anyone outside the County to allow citizens to renew their registration and get their decals at the same time. She stated that Coweta County will also have a kiosk. She stated she heard the discussion about her office earlier. At that time, the buzzer went off and she stated she is disappointed that the Board would rather seek to have a recall rather than helping her office out. Vice Chairman McCoy then held Mrs. Jenkins statement.

Commissioner Hines then thanked Mr. Rosser in helping and assist in the situation with the fire and those that work and serve in that capacity will always step up and help. She wanted to personally applaud those that go the extra mile. She felt there needs to be more discussion as the County grows.

Attorney Nathan Lee- wanted to make it clear that the Board was not starting a recall. Attorney Lee stated that the Commission Board does not have the legal power to start a recall. Commissioner Plant stated she was trying to advise the citizens that were reaching out to her and wanted it understood the Board is not trying to seek a recall. Attorney Lee wanted to make sure it was clear on the record the Board does not have the legal authority to conduct a recall. Attorney Lee stated he did not hear anything wrong from Commissioner Plant. Commissioner Plant confirmed again that she was only advising citizens that had reached out to her what the procedures were.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and Seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to go into Executive Session at 11:14 a.m. to discuss Personnel and Litigation. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to go out of Executive Session at 11:39 a.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Shirley Hines to go back into regular session at 11:42 a.m. All were in favor.

There was no action taken during executive session.

XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES

Vice Chairman McCoy announced future meetings.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

County I.T. Director Skip Richmond addressed the Board regarding the email stating he hung up on the Tax Commissioner. He stated he had answered Mrs. Jenkins question three different times and she refused to understand what he was saying, and he did have to hang up the phone as he was repairing another computer. The second time she is stating she was hung up on, he is not aware of. He also wanted to thank the Board for supporting him.

Motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Hines to adjourn the meeting at 11:44 a.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: *majority vote of the Board of Commissioners*

Attest: *Allyson L. Stephens*

Date: *March 23, 2021*
