

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
April 12, 2023
9:00 A.M.

Commissioners Present: Vice Chairman Gene King, Commissioner Rosla Plant, Commissioner Emmett Collins, and Commissioner Adam Worsley
Commissioners Absent: Chairman Bryan Threadgill
Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, Deputy County Clerk Allyson Stephens, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and Attorney Nathan Lee
Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Gene King called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. INVOCATION

The Invocation was given by Fire Chief Danny Stephens

III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

All

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

The motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to adopt the Agenda with the following addition under New Business #7 -Allow County Attorney Nathan Lee to look into the laws and legalities to develop a referendum for county-wide liquor sales. All were in favor.

V. PRESENTATIONS

None

VI. FINANCE REPORT

Bill Gregory, Finance Director, provided the Bank Balance Report and stated there was nothing out of the ordinary with the exception of the EMS fund is at \$130,000 and he picked up a check from the billing company on the way in for March in the amount of \$123,000 which Mr. Gregory stated is the largest check we have received from them in years and felt this was from the work that Chief Stephens and his staff had done. Director Gregory stated that they will close out the month of March in the next week or so and that we are 6 months into the budget year and meetings will be scheduled with the Department Heads and Constitutional Officers to go through their budget progress and see if there is anything that the Board would need to know about and bring it back to the Board. Director Gregory stated that budget time is coming up for the agencies that the Board supports such as the Library, Health Department, D.A.'s office, and the Public Defender's Office. Director Gregory stated these offices are on the State budget cycle and their budgets start on July 1st. Director Gregory explained that the subsidies for these offices will need to be approved at the night meeting at the end of June and he will gather all their requests and present no later than the morning meeting in June but more than likely the night meeting in May. Director Gregory stated that any increase requests from those agencies will be presented to the Board at that meeting. Commissioner Worsley asked Director Gregory if the Board could get a

forecast of what the next 6 months will look like once he finalizes the budget. Director Gregory stated he would provide that to the Board hopefully by the night meeting at the end of April.

VII. CITIZEN COMMENT

None

VIII. MINUTES

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Adam Worsley to approve the Minutes from the March 28, 2023, 6:00 p.m. meeting. All were in favor.

IX. PUBLIC HEARING

A motion was made to go into Public Hearing at 9:06 a.m. by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to hear Case# 2023-001 Fortified Telecom Services – request to rezone 4.73 acres from LDR-to-LDR Special Use for the use of a cell tower. The parcel is known as tax map 164-003. All were in favor. Community Development Director Cassandra Sharpe stated that the request is from Fortified Telecom Services for a cell tower at 5334 Alvaton Road. Ms. Sharpe stated it is a 155-foot monopole tower and is surrounded by a 75x75 ft. compound with the area being a 100x100 ft. leased area. Mrs. Sharpe stated the Planning Commission recommended approval for the 100x100 ft area to be rezoned from LDR to LDR-Special Use for the cell phone tower. Mrs. Sharpe stated Mr. Greg Spence was in the audience today. Vice Chairman King asked that Mr. Spence come up and asked him when the last time was his company had spoken with the landowner because the landowner had called him before the meeting with some questions this morning and stated he had not heard from the company and doesn't have a clue as to what's going on. Vice Chairman King stated the landowner was frustrated with it and wanted it either tabled or completely taken off the board because he didn't care to do it anymore. Mr. Greg Spence stated that his company had signed an amendment with the landowner just a couple of months prior because they had to move the property and shift it because of the development of the landowner's main parcel just behind the proposed area. Mr. Spence stated that the landowner signed the amendment just a couple months ago as well as the owner/authorization form for the company to be there and there has been some time since the planning commission meeting because the March 28, 2023, meeting was to reset the Public Hearing for April 12, 2023. Mr. Spence stated he had not spoken with Mr. Wurster anytime recently, which is not uncommon once they take over. Vice Chairman King asked Mr. Spence what the timeline would be if approved before building was started. Mr. Spence stated this was on the building plan for the end of 2023 and that would be the proposed timeline for the tower being there. Mr. Greg Spence stated he is with Fortified Telecom Services and is a real estate broker for Verizon for the Georgia/Alabama market for the last 20 years. Mr. Spence stated that Verizon is looking to build a 155 ft. monopole tower that is capable of holding additional carriers as per the code and also gives Meriwether County space on the tower for E-911 services and otherwise for county equipment if needed. Mr. Spence stated the monopole tower that will go up is the least visually intrusive style of tower there is. This doesn't have any guidewires or self-support lattices and is not as wide. Mr. Spence stated this is just a straight pole with the antenna at the top. Mr. Spence stated that they originally applied before the landowner Mr. Wurster had started the development of the back parcel of property and in order to meet the Ordinance without any variances or otherwise that was needed, the tower was centered on the property in the event that there was a catastrophic event and the tower fell like a tree, which is not what they are designed to do, then it would be maintained in the parcel and not cross any other parcel lines.

Mr. Spence stated their proposed tower meets that height of tower setback. He stated the setback is almost 400 feet off the main highway and as it goes back down the access road, the tower compound is shifted to the left and as you drive by there is enough tree coverage so that you won't see the base of the tower or any of the fencing that goes around it. Mr. Spence stated that as Verizon was looking to develop the site, they have gone out 2 miles and there are no other co-location opportunities within that 2-mile range that meet the objectives of RF. Mr. Spence stated the proposed tower height is the minimum height and that has been reduced because they originally wanted 185 feet so it would go better with the surrounding network. Mr. Spence stated they have been able to cut that down, so they are able to maintain the ordinance of 155-ft level and this height is the minimum height needed to properly provide improved rural coverage and accommodate anticipated future growth for wireless demand in the area. Mr. Spence stated the tower is not lit and therefore will not be seen at night and is battleship gray which is the majority of galvanized steel towers that you would see and doesn't reflect or have glare or do any type of reflection in that manner. Mr. Spence stated the FAA forms, and the antenna structured registration forms were submitted by Verizon through the NEPA process and has been approved by the FCC in order to build the tower at this location. Mr. Spence stated that it was just located at this site because there were no other co-locations in the area or within 2 miles which is a large area or zone not to have coverage and this will be built to accommodate additional carriers that move into the area as per Meriwether County Ordinance. Commissioner Worsley asked what the impact reclassification of this property would have on the Tax Digest. Attorney Lee stated that everything is based upon Fair Market Value and that question would need to be asked to the Tax Appraiser's office as he doesn't know what a cell tower does and how many taxes it broke of, but whatever the value of the improvement, they will be taxed upon that value. Mr. Spence stated that Verizon pays that tax directly and it is not the responsibility of the landowner. Finance Director Bill Gregory asked if there would be a cost to the County for the County to place their equipment on the tower. Mr. Spence stated there is no cost to the County, but the County would have to assist in performing the structural analysis to make sure the equipment would fit on the tower and that cost is usually about \$2,500 and this is to make sure that there is no structural issues with additional carriers and anytime there is an antenna modification performed, it goes along with a permitting requirement that there is a passing structural analysis. Director Gregory asked who we would use for that. Mr. Spence stated generally you would want to use the engineer that designed the tower when running the structural analysis and there would need to be record of the equipment that is going on the tower and the space is no less than 120 feet with 10 feet of vertical space, which is what the carriers typically use. Commissioner Worsley clarified that the County would only pay the of the assessment of the weight of what the County wanted to put on the tower and the cost of installation, but the County would not pay a lease to Verizon. Mr. Spence stated that is correct. Attorney Lee asked Mr. Spence if what he was saying was, he was willing to proffer as a condition that the County could co-locate on the tower so long as they pay the engineering cost. Mr. Spence confirmed that was correct and is stated in the application. Mr. Spence stated the only other consideration they are asking for is for the landscape buffer to be waived up until there's a point that it is needed because the area is wooded, and they would have to clear more trees to plant trees. The condition of the Planning Commission according to Mr. Spence was that as so long as the tree cover is appropriate for screening of the tower itself, they would like to not have to plant a buffer, but if at any point the county decides the tower is too visible, they would plant a buffer. Vice Chairman King stated that he looked at the property and right now there is no need to plant anything as there plenty of coverage. There was no one

else present that wanted to speak on this case. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to close the Public Hearing at 9:16 a.m. All were in favor. A motion was made by Vice Chairman King to approve the cell tower with the condition that the County be able to co-locate so long as it pays the engineering costs. This was seconded by Commissioner Worsley. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to go into Public Hearing at 9:17 a.m. to hear Case# 2023-002 a request from Brandon Esteppe to rezone 2.00 acres from LDR to NHC for the use of a Homebased Tree Service Business. The parcel is known as tax map 118 013. All were in favor. Community Development Director Cassandra Sharpe stated that the applicant in this case has requested this case be continued as he was unable to be in attendance. Attorney Nathan Lee stated that what this means is by law, staff has to advertise the Public Hearing in the newspaper, so the public has knowledge. Attorney Lee stated if the Board wants to continue the Public Hearing there would need to be a motion to continue the Public Hearing to what meeting date they decided. Attorney Lee stated that if anyone came to speak on this request because they saw the ad the Board is entitled to let them speak today and they can come back and speak again if they would like, it was up to the Board. Vice Chairman King stated he would like to allow those who came to hear the zoning request speak.

Mr. Roger McFarland of 1051 Bill Todd Road stated that he had lived at his location for 30 years and is opposed to the zoning being changed. Mr. McFarland stated when he bought the property from Greenville Bank years ago, it was zoned as a residential area and that is the reason, he bought the property. Mr. McFarland stated the road is a narrow dirt road and he knew that when he bought the property, and he is not opposed to it now. Mr. McFarland stated he likes the country feel and it is the reason he moved to Meriwether County in 1974. Mr. McFarland stated that the gentleman that is requesting the rezoning of the property has lived on the property approximately 5 years and came there with the purpose of starting a business and having a residence at the same location. Mr. McFarland stated that the applicant has violated the zoning laws for approximately 5 years. Mr. McFarland stated he spoke with the applicant 3-4 years ago about his equipment and trucks blocking the road because several times he would try to go down the road, the applicant would have the road blocked. Mr. McFarland stated the road is a narrow road and it would be difficult getting two fire trucks to pass on that road. Mr. McFarland stated that he spoke with the applicant and his girlfriend and asked them to be better neighbors as his wife was laying in bed with COVID and he couldn't get her into a hospital because every hospital south of Atlanta wouldn't take any patients and he was having to take care of her with the assistance of Dr. Cunningham from Warm Springs tutoring him. Mr. McFarland stated the applicant runs 4-wheelers up and down the road at 2:00-3:00 in the morning waking his sick wife up and have not been good neighbors and he can't see them running a good business. Mr. McFarland stated he was a policeman in Metropolitan Atlanta for 30 years and he knows the zoning and laws. Mr. McFarland stated if the applicant had been better as a neighbor, they probably wouldn't be at the Public Hearing today. Mr. McFarland stated he believes in a person having property and having property rights, but he moved there for a reason, and that was to live, pay his taxes on time and die when it is time. Mr. McFarland doesn't believe we should zone that for a business. Mr. McFarland stated that Alvaton Road is a dangerous and narrow road and when he moved to Meriwether County in 1974 you could sit in the middle of the road for periods of time but now at 6:00 in the morning if you go out there you could get run over. Mr. McFarland stated it is 498 ft from Alvaton Road to where visibility is lost and traffic coming from the west to the east meets that sunshine in your eyes and you can't see anything. Mr.

McFarland stated that in the late 1970's his sister was hit head on at that location and stayed in a body cast for a year before she recovered. Mr. McFarland stated this is a country-built residential road and is dangerous. Mr. McFarland stated that potholes are patched weekly due to large trucks busting up the roadway and he doesn't feel the area constitutes a truck business. Mr. McFarland asks that the Board look at this request closely because if approved and there is a fatality the Board will have some obligation because it is very dangerous in that area. Mr. McFarland stated he ran radar in Fulton, Clayton, and Dekalb Counties for years and he can estimate the speed of a car between 5-8 miles of a speed limit, and they have vehicles running 60-70mph down the road and it is dangerous. Mr. McFarland stated he would like to live his life out in a residential area. Mr. McFarland stated that diesel trucks will be cranked up in the morning causing diesel smoke and noise and the applicant wants to put in a shop within 40 feet of his neighbor. Mr. McFarland stated in his opinion it is not a good location to allow the rezoning. Mr. McFarland thanked the Board for allowing him to speak.

Mr. Gary Buchanan, 1868 Alvaton Road stated he owns 60 acres on the corner of Bill Todd and Alvaton Road and his home is approximately 50 yards from where the applicant is requesting to put their business. Mr. Buchanan stated they have had many problems with noise coming from the shooting of guns and racing up and down the road on 4-wheelers at 2:30 in the morning. Mr. Buchanan states this has been zoned low-density residential and he doesn't see why it would be fair for the applicant to come in with the type of equipment he has and force it on the neighborhood. Mr. Buchanan states it is not right, and he printed some information off the internet about the awareness on his website they he gave to each Commissioner. Mr. Buchanan stated this is public information and can be read if you pull up Campbell's Tree Service on the internet. Mr. Buchanan doesn't feel the County should be looking at putting a commercial business in a residential area as Alvaton Road has become more residential in the last 5 years with new homes coming in such as behind the event center with 36 homes. Mr. McFarland stated that this is strictly residential area, and they are entitled to peace and quiet and a good neighborhood. Vice Chairman King asked if this was the reviews of the business website. Mr. McFarland stated this was and, on the website, he got this off of, once someone posts a review it is on there forever and cannot be changed or deleted. Mr. McFarland stated that he felt the duty of the Commissioners was to provide the neighborhood a safe place to live and a quiet neighborhood like it has been for years and doesn't feel this should be considered or the meeting changed. Mr. Buchanan stated that with the change of the date of the meeting there were several of his neighbors that could not be there to express their opposition. Mr. Buchanan stated that one of the neighbors is Ms. Maggie Samples and her home is 40 feet from where all the racket goes on. Mr. Buchanan stated that every time the applicant and his crew goes out for the day's work their equipment beeps alarms and it is loud. Mr. Buchanan stated that was all he had to say. Mrs. Raeleen Buchanan of 1868 Alvaton Road stated she opposed the rezoning and feels it is a shame that one person can disrupt the entire neighborhood. Ms. Buchanan stated there are neighbors all around the applicant that do not want the rezoning. Ms. Buchanan stated that she had asked for assistance with this 3 years ago and nothing was done. Ms. Buchanan stated that when the applicant first moved in, he only had a chipper and a truck and then continued to grow and had 4 derelict ambulances sitting on the property. Ms. Buchanan states that everyone can hear things going on at the applicant's property and on New Years Eve at 3:00 in the morning someone was shooting guns and it sounded like a cannon. Ms. Buchanan states she hears beeping, clanging of metal, and chipping in the middle of the night. Ms. Buchanan stated the noise is loud and everything echoes. Ms. Buchanan states that the applicant blocks Bill Todd

Road and has a mouthy and rowdy gang that works with him with no consideration for the neighbors. Mrs. Buchanan stated a lot of the people in the community are retired or sick and since the applicant was made to remove the equipment from his property it has been very quiet and has been a blessing. She said that the four-wheelers on Bill Todd Road were very loud and one of them did not have a muffler. Mrs. Buchanan stated they have lived at their property 20+ years and never had that problem and the property had previous owners but the new owner acts entitled and if neighbors try to talk to him, he has a smart mouth and is belligerent. Mrs. Buchanan stated they have tried to be good neighbors and helped him when his horses got out as well as prayed for him during an accident, but the feeling is not returned. Mrs. Buchanan asked that the Board please not rezone the property and leave it as it is. Mrs. Buchanan stated that if the applicant has made all this money he brags about, he should buy two-acres of commercial property somewhere else, and this would solve the problem. Mrs. Buchanan thanked the Board for listening to her. Vice Chairman King stated he reached out to the applicant when he started to receive complaints. Vice Chairman King stated that the applicant assured him that he was not running a business at the location and that he was just parking excess equipment there and stated he's parked the equipment there so if the County ever had an emergency the equipment would be there and ready and accessible. Vice Chairman King stated that the applicant stated to him that he was based out of Peachtree City and rented property from Mr. John Prophet. Vice Chairman King stated he knows Mr. Prophet and also told him his business license was in Peachtree City. Vice Chairman King told the applicant he would get back in touch with him and when he contacted Peachtree City, he was told that the applicant had not had a business license in Peachtree City for two years. Vice Chairman King then contacted the applicant back and asked him the address of where he was renting from Mr. Prophet and the applicant asked him why? Vice Chairman King stated he explained to the applicant that he would like to go and take a picture of his equipment there and let the Board know that he was based out of Peachtree City, and it would help with his situation. The applicant, according to Vice Chairman King stated that would be a problem right now, because right now he was parking all the equipment at his house because people were stealing his stuff. Vice Chairman King stated he contacted Mr. Prophet and Mr. Prophet let him know that when the applicant bought property two years ago in Meriwether County, he no longer rented from him and moved all his equipment to Meriwether County. Vice Chairman King stated this individual has been running a business for the last 2-3 years without a Peachtree City license, without a Meriwether County license, and operating out of his home. Vice Chairman King asked the applicant why he didn't have a business license when he originally told him he did, the applicant stated that since COVID, they didn't send him a renewal. Vice Chairman King stated that he has tried to work with the gentleman but feels like he is being misled and the gentleman hasn't been straightforward with him, as Vice Chairman King was trying to reach out to him as a commissioner and help both sides and protect both sides to come together with a solution. Vice Chairman King stated that with the Hearing open, the way the applicant's property is set up, he doesn't have enough room for the setbacks for the required buffer for the equipment. Vice Chairman King asked County Attorney Nathan Lee if we could act today, even though the applicant is not attendance. Attorney Lee stated that once the request is properly advertised, then it would be the Board's discretion whether or not to continue the Public Hearing. Attorney Lee stated that the Board had complied with the law and held the Public Hearing, so the option now would be to continue the Public Hearing to a specific date or to close the Public Hearing and take action. Commissioner Worsley asked where the summary was from the Planning Commission. Community Development and Planning Director, Cassandra

Sharpe stated that the Planning Commissioner recommended denial and she did not include the summary as the applicant requested it be continued. Attorney Lee stated there is no obligation to continue the Hearing, but it can be continued according to the laws put forth by legislators. There was no one else signed up to speak. A motion was made by Commissioner Collins to close the Public Hearing at 9:40 a.m. This was seconded by Vice Chairman King. All were in favor. Vice Chairman King stated that he would like to make a motion to deny the request at this time as it is not a prime spot for commercial and wishes the applicant the best and that he could move far enough back on the property to be out of sight. Vice Chairman King stated he does not feel it will serve the purpose for the community and does not fit the land use from the Comprehensive Plan. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Worsley based on the fact the applicant did not show up for the Public Hearing. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to go into a Public Hearing at 9:41 a.m. to hear Case# 2023-003, a request from Charles Hudson to sell wine and beer on 1.97 acres known as tax map 133 038 001. All were in favor. Director Sharpe stated that Mr. Hudson requested to sell wine and beer at this parcel in the Raleigh area and had a conflict with today's meeting and was unable to attend and is requesting a continuation. Director Sharpe stated the Planning Commission recommended approval; however, the applicant doesn't have a current business license or current building remodel permit. There was no one in attendance to speak for or against the rezoning. Attorney Lee stated this was the same as before, the Board can vote to continue to the Public Hearing or close the Public Hearing and take action. Vice Chairman King made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 9:42 a.m. This was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor. Vice Chairman King confirmed with Director Sharpe that the applicant doesn't currently possess a business license. Director Sharpe confirmed the applicant doesn't have a current business license and is remodeling the building and has somewhat jumped ahead. Vice Chairman King also stated there is a requirement for the beer and wine license that he be serving food. A motion was made by Vice Chairman King to deny the request at this time because there is not an established restaurant there and it is redundant to approve a beer and wine license as the applicant doesn't have a business license. Commissioner Collins asked if this was a denial until he obtains a business license. Attorney Lee confirmed that the applicant can reapply. County Administrator Michelle Irizarry stated that the requirements are that the applicant serve food and he would need to be inspected by the Health Department as well. The motion to deny the application was seconded by Commissioner Worsley. All were in favor.

A motion was made to go into Public Hearing at 9:45 a.m. by Commissioner Plant to hear Case# 2023-004 a request from Sandra and Jamie Tigner to rezone 2.0 acres from RD to RD-Special Use for the use of a family cemetery. The parcel is known as tax map 035 030 004. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Worsley. All were in favor. Director Sharpe stated the request is from Ms. Tigner and her brother to rezone two acres of property owned on Branch Hebron Road for a family cemetery. Director Sharpe stated that normally only one acre is required, but she visited the property and there is a lot of big rock in the front part of the area and cannot be dug into. Director Sharpe stated the cemetery will have to go to the back part of the acreage and there is a plat reported on the two acres. Director Sharpe stated the Planning Commission did recommend the rezone and approval of the 2.0 acres for the family cemetery and Mrs. Tigner is in attendance.

Mrs. Tigner stated she lives at 3335 Odessa Road and owns 40 acres and there is a lot of rock. Mrs. Tigner stated that they want to have a family cemetery to honor her father and have his

remains moved from Branch Hebron Cemetery to their family cemetery. Mrs. Tigner explained that has 5 brothers and 4 don't have a place to be buried. No one spoke for or against the request from the audience. A motion was made by Commissioner Worsley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to close the Public Hearing at 9:47 a.m. All were in favor. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant to approve the request for the rezoning of 2.0 acres for a family cemetery. This was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

X. APPOINTMENTS

None

XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Request from Lake Meriwether Advisory Board to purchase a storage building for Lake Meriwether. Commissioner Collins made a motion to table this request to the May 10, 2023, Regular Meeting. This was seconded by Commissioner Worsley. All were in favor.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Mayor Ruth Nash request for assistance.

Mayor Ruth Nash stated she lived at 19090 Highway 85 in Gay. Mayor Nash requested the continued mowing inside the City from two weeks until the fair time for each fair every year. Mayor Nash stated that they have had an agreement and the agreement was broken as she was told that we were not doing any more mowing inside the City. Mayor Nash stated that the fair affects a lot of people in this County and there is no way the Town of Gay can buy a tractor to mow it as their budget is \$60,000 for their General Fund and \$60,000 for their water which can only be used for water. Mayor Nash stated she needs the roads to the wells and around the cemetery mowed twice a year, as well as all the property inside the city and continue to clean the roads as per Mayor Nash has always been done. Mayor Nash would like a motion from the Board today because the fair is two weeks away and she would like to know how to proceed. Commissioner Worsley asked Mayor Nash what the Agreement was that she was speaking of. Mayor Nash stated they have always had an Agreement, but when they did the L.O.S.T. negotiations it was in the L.O.S.T. negotiations but it ended before the L.O.S.T. ended. Mayor Nash stated she was total nothing inside the City of Gay, period. Mayor Nash stated that they go above and beyond to help the County and have moved their water lines three different times in three different directions, and she stated she would also be requesting approval to extend water lines about another mile on Oakland Road. Mayor Nash stated they had previously extended the water lines on the left side, but for some reason the County told the people that have the small church in the triangle that they couldn't build on that property because it was all right of way. Mayor Nash stated the next thing she knew was they were building onto the building that's already there, and they built over the city's water lines and now they will need to go to the right of the road and extend it another mile. Vice Chairman King asked Mayor Nash if the grass if the County is cutting the grass twice a year, who is cutting it the rest. Mayor Nash stated it doesn't get cut. Mayor Nash stated she noticed the County had tractors in town over the weekend, but they haven't moved, and she didn't know if the County was planning to cut the grass or not. Vice Chairman King explained he understood how important the fair was and he spoke with Public Works and with the tornados and the amount of flooding that had occurred, it was discussed that they would get to it if they could. Vice Chairman King stated that we are short of help and have citizens that can't travel up and down dirt roads and doesn't want to put the grass as priority.

Vice Chairman King stated that at this time there are 7-8 roads out and feels that if there is time and the Board agrees then Public Works can cut the grass, but we don't want to make it the top priority. Administrator Irizarry asked Mayor Nash if any of this was on State Routes. Mayor Nash stated that some of it is, and the State usually takes care of that. Mayor Nash stated she had a roadside meeting with State workers on Hwy 85 because they were parked, and she stopped to see if she could help them. Mayor Nash stated that the drain at the Fire Station was stopped up and has been for a while. Vice Chairman King stated that if this in the State's Right of Way we cannot touch that unless we have permission, and they would be responsible. Mayor Nash stated they are stating it is the County's responsibility and she understands it to be the State. Mayor Nash also stated the drain at Magnolia Road was also stopped up and has been for about 10 years, which is washing out Magnolia Road and is on the State's right of way also. Mayor Nash stated that she was on the Planning Commission for about 22 years and the issue with cemeteries is coming up more and more often and when that property is sold and there is one grave there, there will be a big problem for anyone that wanted to do something else for that property. Vice Chairman King stated that even if that property is sold if there is a grave, there is a right to come visit the grave for 100 years. Mayor Nash stated that she also has a cemetery on her property that is not hers and allows people to come visit, however there are going to be tiny cemeteries all over the County and will be a problem in the future. Commissioner Worsley asked if this was part of the request for assistance and what needed to be done to handle the request and move on with the Agenda. Commissioner Worsley stated that he feels the Board should not take action on this item today but should accommodate a meeting and setting up some sort of Agreement as was in the past as it is not the Board's responsibility at this point. Commissioner Worsley stated the Gay fair is a big draw to the community and a chance to showcase our County and we want it to look presentable and feels we should do whatever we can to make it look good on short notice here, but it may not be something we can do due to the current emergencies going on. Commissioner Worsley stated that he feels we should talk with the Town of Gay and see what can be done to consolidate resources but doesn't feel this is an urgent matter we need to dive into and make a motion on today. Vice Chairman King agreed with Commissioner Worsley and stated that if the County has time and can cut the grass then it would be good because the fair draws in around 30,000 people, however we shouldn't commit because of the repairs Public Works are trying to make with the roads. Administrator Irizarry stated that she wanted to add that Fire and Emergency Services also serves during the entire fair so there are some good things and County attendance as well. Mayor Nash stated that the Town of Gay pays the Fire Department and Police to be in attendance at the fair at a rate of \$25.00 per hour individually. Fire Chief Danny Stephens stated that he had not seen any payment or check. Mayor Nash stated that they paid it and the total was \$4,300 at the last fair. Administrator Irizarry asked Finance Director Gregory. Vice Chairman King asked Mayor Nash to clarify that there was \$4,300 paid at the last fair. Finance Director Gregory stated he did not recall receiving payment and would have to go back and look into the records to see if it came to the County, as if it came to the individuals, he would not have record. Mayor Nash stated it was paid to the individuals. Fire Chief Stephens stated that his workers have not been paid. Mayor Nash stated that they have a meeting with Brin and the Sheriff's Office for April 12, 2023, and the meeting had already been set up. Mayor Nash stated that what is paid is paid to the Fire Department and that Fire Chief Stephens is shaking his head but doesn't know what he is talking about. Commissioner Worsley stated that he doesn't feel there needs to be a motion made as the Mayor has asked for assistance and we have explained that we will provide assistance if we can. Attorney Lee stated that staff

has already stated they would provide help if they could. Vice Chairman King stated that there doesn't need to be a motion because the County will help out if they can and the Board doesn't want to make a motion to say they will and then they are unable to. Mayor Nash stated she understood and thanked the Board for their service as she understands it is thankless. Administrator Irizarry stated that Mr. Brin Jones was able to reach GDOT and they stated they would be sending out engineers today to check on the drains.

2. **Set Work Session for April 25th, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. to discuss County Business.**

Administrator Irizarry stated this was to set the Work Session and to properly advertise. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to set a Work Session for April 25th, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. All were in favor.

3. **Request to purchase a new zero-turn mower for Public Works to replace an older mower that is inoperable.**

Administrator Irizarry stated that Mr. Bill Cawthorne was in attendance to go over the quotes presented to the Board, located in their packet. Administrator Irizarry stated that staff recommendation was to approve the purchase of the zero-turn mower from Absolute Mower in the amount of \$7,922. Mr. Bill Cawthorne stated that Public Works is in dire need of new mower and has had two 20-yr old Kubota's that are completely worn out and have been rebuilt several times. Mr. Cawthorne stated the request is to purchase one new zero-turn as one was purchased last year. Commissioner Worsley asked Finance Director Gregory if this was in the budget to make the purchase. Finance Director Gregory stated this could be done with the capital in the General Fund under the Capital Improvement line item. Finance Director Gregory stated that usually if it is below \$10,000, we can use the General Fund, but if it is over \$10,000, he asked for funding through SPLOST or TSPLOST. Commissioner Worsley asked why this would need to come to the Board for approval. Finance Director Gregory stated that the purchase is above \$5,000 and there are funds set aside for purchases such as these, but with the purchase being over \$5,000 it is brought to the Board for approval. Finance Director Gregory stated that the Purchasing Policy states that if it is over \$5,000 it has to come before the Board. Commissioner Worsley stated that he is asking the questions because he feels some things are frustrating to him and seems we are delaying action. Commissioner Worsley stated things such as cutting the grass, if it is in the budget for the mower, why are we waiting to purchase the mower if it is already approved in the Budget. Finance Director Gregory stated that if there was a specific line item in the budget for the mower, then it would not come to the Board for approval, they would go ahead and purchase. Commissioner Worsley stated that there should be a portion of the budget set aside for things such as this. Administrator Irizarry stated there is, however, she is only able to approve up to \$5,000, which is why it comes to the Board. Commissioner Worsley stated he understood but wants to put the authority in staff's hands as they are the experts in what they need and don't want delays in waiting on the Board for approval. Vice Chairman King stated that he has several zero-turn mowers and that it needed to be commercial grade and he doesn't know one you can buy for \$7,000 as they start out anywhere from \$12,000 to \$17,000. Vice Chairman King stated that if it is not commercial grade, it will wear out in no time. Mr. Cawthorne stated that all of the quotes provided were for entry-level commercial grade mowers and he looked into that to make sure it wasn't a residential model. Vice Chairman King stated things such as the steel plate, heavy dutifulness, bearings, and gears are important. Mr. Cawthorne stated that all the quotes provided for the Board such as John Deere, and Scag are entry-level commercial mowers and come with safety rocks. Commissioner Collins asked Mr. Cawthorne if the Bobcat mower that was being recommended had a 3-year, 1000-hour warranty. Mr. Cawthorne stated that it did and

had a little more than the others as most of the others had a 3-year, 500-mile warranty. Mr. Cawthorne stated that he went to Absolute in Newnan and looked at the Bobcat mower on the showroom floor. A motion was made by Commissioner Collins and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to approve the purchase of the Bobcat Zero-turn mower. All were in favor.

4. Approval to purchase a new Tire Changing Machine due to the unavailability of the one approved during the March 28, 2023, Board Meeting.

Finance Director Gregory stated that the request from Public Works would be to purchase the Tire Changer priced at \$6,749 due to it having the capability of changing the smaller and larger tires. Commissioner Collins stated that he looked at both quotes for the tire changers and is familiar with tire changers. Commissioner Collins stated they will both tire changers are exactly the same in the size tires they will change and recommended the approval be for the lower priced tire changer, or Coats RC-45A for the County. Commissioner Collins stated he looked at the specs on both machines and think they both change the same sized tires. A motion was made by Commissioner Collins to approve the Coats RC-45A in the amount of \$5,499. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman King. The motion passed with Vice Chairman King, Commissioner Collins, and Commissioner Plant voting in favor. Commissioner Worsley was opposed.

5. LGRMS Safety Action Plan Discount Form and Update

Administrator Irizarry stated that the LGRMS Safety Action Plan provides safety programs as well as discounts to the County. This is done yearly and would need to be signed by the Chairman. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant to move forward with the LGRMS Safety Action Plan Discount Form and Update and allow the Chairman to sign. This was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

6. Coweta Judicial Circuit Split Request and Resolution

Administrator Irizarry stated the County received a request from the Coweta Judicial System, which is currently made up of 5 counties, Meriwether, Troup, Heard, Carroll, and Coweta Counties which is looking to split and provide a circuit for Troup, Meriwether, and Coweta, and another circuit for Carroll and Heard Counties. Administrator Irizarry stated this would be a Resolution that would need to be signed by the Chair for the Board's support in the split of the circuit. Commissioner Plant confirmed with County Attorney Lee that this would be a Resolution to support the split, however, it would still have to be heard by State Legislature. Attorney Lee stated that is correct and has been discussed for a long while due to the population continuing to grow, particularly in Coweta and Carroll Counties. Attorney Lee explained that the 5 counties provide a supplement, and this is basically to show support for the split, as they believe it would be a cost savings, but it would ultimately have to go before the State Legislature. A motion was made by Commissioner Worsley to support the Resolution and allow the Chair to sign. This was seconded by Commissioner Collins. All were in favor.

7. Allow County Attorney Nathan Lee to look into the laws and legalities to develop a referendum for county-wide liquor sales.

Vice Chairman King stated that he has been receiving numerous calls from residents wanting to understand why there are liquor stores in Luthersville and Woodbury, however when you get out in the larger areas of the County, mostly the north end of the County there are none. Vice Chairman King stated that some citizens are traveling out of the County and there is tax revenue that the County is losing out on. Vice Chairman King stated that the store owners are wanting to know what can be done and he is requesting a motion to allow County Attorney Lee look into the laws and legalities of this. Vice Chairman King stated that this would be for package stores. Attorney Lee stated that he wanted to see if this is something the Board wanted him to go back

and research, but this would be something that would need to be put on a referendum for the citizens to decide. Attorney Lee stated if the Board wanted him to look into this, he would look into it, come back to the Board with a Resolution and if the Board approved the Resolution, get it to Patty with Elections to put on the ballot, and the citizens vote on it. A motion was made by Vice Chairman King to allow Attorney Lee to look into the laws and legalities of this request and bring back a Resolution. This was seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Administrator Irizarry – stated she wanted to congratulate DeAnn Cruse for being sworn in on Monday for a term of March 23, 2023, through December 31, 2024, as Tax Commissioner, as well as Jodi Timperio for being sworn in as Deputy Tax Commissioner. Administrator Irizarry stated the Director for Three Rivers Regional Commission was selected and was Mr. Mark Butler. Administrator Irizarry advised the Board that GDOT is proposing a roundabout at the Interstate in Hogansville. Administrator Irizarry stated this is only being proposed by GDOT and she will get the information to the Board so they may provide any feedback to GDOT.

Administrator Irizarry stated that Diverse Power is in the process of getting Broadband to the Airport and I.T. Director, Matthew Brown, is working on getting that organized. Administrator Irizarry provided the Board with the current road closure list, which she stated has not changed and is posted on the County's social media platforms. Administrator Irizarry read the list of River Cove Road, Reaves Road, Jimmy Clark Road, Dukes Waddell Road, Oakland Road, Harman Road Bridge at Dallas Mill Road, Waddell Road, Seven Branches Road, and Silver Street are all closed due to the severe storms and flooding from a couple weeks prior.

Administrator Irizarry stated that there are good things happening in the County with baseball and softball starting up and staff will get that calendar on our website and the Board was provided with a packet of events and happenings in Meriwether County and around.

Administrator Irizarry stated that today is the celebration and memorial at Little Springs Amphitheater in Warm Springs that starts at 2:30 p.m. that will include speakers and a tribute, as well as the retirement of the U.S. flags. Administrator Irizarry stated the Spring Fling Festival is April 15th and April 16th in Warm Springs which is sponsored by the Warm Springs merchants.

Administrator Irizarry reminded everyone of the upcoming Keep Meriwether Beautiful event as well as the Cotton Fair on May 6th and May 7th and Peaches in the Pines on June 10th.

Administrator Irizarry stated there will also be a Finish Line Walkathon presented by Meriwether County NAACP on April 29, 2023, at Luthersville City Hall.

XIV. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Emmett Collins: Thanked all of the county employees, staff, and Commissioners for doing such a great job.

Commissioner Rosla Plant: Encouraged all to participate in Keep Meriwether Beautiful on April 22, 2023. Commissioner Plant stated the School Board is having a job fair on April 25, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. for staffing and all those looking for a job are encouraged to come. Commissioner Plant stated that to celebrate Community Action Month, there will be a health fair in Manchester on May 20, 2023, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Commissioner Plant stated Chairman Threadgill would be in attendance and there will be a lot of health opportunities. Commissioner Plant thanked the County employees for all their hard work and understands there is still a lot of work to be done on the roads and hopes there will be dryer weather. Commissioner Plant stated that on April 15th from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m., Artisans on the Square will have 20

professional artists from Georgia and Florida painting that week. Commissioner Plant stated this is the 7th year of supporting art education in Meriwether County and encouraged those to attend if they have never been as the artists are painting things from around the County and the art is available for purchase.

Vice Chairman Gene King: Stated he had been working with Bill Cawthorne and would like to see a miscellaneous subcontract on roadwork. Vice Chairman King stated this would be situations for example a 40-ft section of road that the County was able to use a Bobcat on and the County came and put rock down recently. Vice Chairman King stated he knows he cannot do work for the County and is not, but the spot was fixed in little to no time and feels we need to discuss during the Work Session maybe having a list of 4-5 contractors that could help the County when Public Works is tied up with major jobs. Vice Chairman King stated this would be for miscellaneous expenses and jobs that could be done in a shorter time and possibly cost less than what the County could repair it for. Vice Chairman King stated this would be to help the County get caught up until they have full-staff operations. Administrator Irizarry asked Vice Chairman King if he was referring to on-demand vendors that are approved by the Board and insured, with unit prices in place. Vice Chairman King stated that is correct and put a max price on these types of repairs and require Bill Cawthorne or Barry to go out and approve the work. Vice Chairman King asked Mr. Cawthorne to work on a dirt road priority list. He stated that ditches need to be cleaned out and pipes are backing up causing the road to wash out again. Vice Chairman King would like to have a list of priority dirt roads. Mr. Cawthorne stated he has a priority list started. Vice Chairman King thanked Public Works for the 2 areas with quick repair. Commissioner Adam Worsley: Thanked everyone for their hard work and hopes there will continue to be better weather and appreciates the job everyone is doing.

XV. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

No reports from the County Attorney, but Administrator Irizarry advised of the need for Executive Session to discuss Litigation, Real Estate, and Personnel.

XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to go into Executive Session at 10:25 a.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to go out of Executive Session at 11:22 a.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to go back into Regular Session at 11:25 a.m. All were in favor.

There was no action taken in Executive Session.

XVII. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES

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

XVIII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to adjourn the meeting at 11:25 a.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority Vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Beverly B. Thomas, County Clerk

Date: April 25, 2023