

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Work Session

June 30, 2022, 10:00 a.m.

This meeting was held in person and also by Zoom due to COVID-19

Commissioners Present: Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley, Vice Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Commissioner Shirley Hines, Commissioner Rosla Plant and Commissioner Alfred "Buster" McCoy

Commissioners Absent:

Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, Finance Director, Bill Gregory, Director of Special Projects Theron Gay, and Deputy Clerk Allyson Stephens

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas and County Attorney, Nathan Lee

I. WELCOME – Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

II. ADOPT AGENDA

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner McCoy to adopt the Agenda. All were in favor.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Future Road Projects and Priorities: Director of Special Projects, Theron Gay thanked the Board for coming back to discuss this topic in a Work Session. Mr. Gay stated that Bill Cawthorne had done some work on the grading of the road system and Bill Gregory had looked at some budget numbers and they have shared the information with Michelle as they have gone forward. Mr. Gay stated that they wanted to share the state of where the County is with the paving and road system and also talk about some of the needs and funding that is available and potentially available and then speak about priorities of the Board as a whole. Mr. Gay stated that Bill Cawthorne has reviewed the roadways and there are 92.8 miles of paved roadways that have a surface rating of 32 to 28. Mr. Gay stated this is actually roads that already have some moderate or severe base failure. Mr. Gay explained that once the base of a road starts to fail, it doesn't matter what is put on top of it, the foundation is damaged. Mr. Gay explained the most cost-effective way to take care of that is full depth reclamation, which he stated has been done on some roads. Mr. Gay explained with that kind of damage it would take forever to repair and the estimated cost of FDR for the 92.8 miles is \$46-\$47 million dollars. Mr. Gay explained there will need to be a plan to do something different, seek more funding, or make changes a long the way. Mr. Gay explained that there was 84.32 miles of paved roadway that has a surface rating of 27 to 26 with moderate cracking and less than 20% base failure. Mr. Gay explained that those can be repaired and resurfaced, but, there again, looking to try to do all that is around \$11 million dollars. Mr. Gay explained there is another 30.76 miles of roadway with minor cracking with another \$3.7 million dollar repair for that. Mr. Gay explained that the numbers are astronomical, and he is not trying to scare the Board. Mr. Gay explained that Meriwether County is not unique in this situation as everybody in the Country has problems right now with trying to keep up their infrastructure. Mr. Gay stated that the Board and Citizens have done a good job utilizing all that we have such as SPLOST AND TSPLOST. Mr. Gay stated that in 2021 the county began improvement on Luthersville Road by reconstructing the roadway with FDR, binder, and topping. Mr. Gay stated the roadway was widened from a varied width of 19-20 feet to 21 feet. Mr. Gay stated another section of Luthersville Road is being improved in 2022, leaving a section of 5.4 miles to Hwy 362 to be improved in the future at an estimated cost of \$3 million dollars. Mr. Gay stated there is an additional three miles from Hwy 362 to Hwy 85 to be repaired with an estimated cost of \$1.5 million dollars. Mr. Gay explained the three-mile section from Hwy 362 to Hwy 85 is not as bad as the first section. Commissioner McCoy asked about the alligator cracking that he is seeing more and more of on the side of the roadways. Mr. Gay explained that those roads would fall in the 24 to 25 rating. Mr. Bill

Commissioner McCoy stated he is starting to see a lot of that. Commissioner Hines asked what road they were questioning. Commissioner McCoy stated both ends of Alvaton Road and more so on the Luthersville side. Mr. Gay stated there is a large pipe/culvert project on Strickland Town Road and as time goes on there will be more and more culverts and things showing up after rains. Mr. Gay also discussed Forrest Road. From the South City Limits to Cousins Road is about 4 miles and there are several options, with ideally FDR being used at a \$2.1 million dollar cost estimate. Mr. Cawthorne explained that was just the southern 4-mile section and there is probably another 2-3-mile northern section. Commissioner Hines stated the northern end of Forrest Road was resurfaced back in 2010 and it is okay, but unfortunately due to the traffic being rerouted when there is an accident on Interstate 85 there is a lot more traffic, but that end of Forrest Road is fine. Commissioner Hines stated the southern section of Forrest Road towards Greenville is in worse shape. Mr. Cawthorne stated that the northern section of Forrest Road is 3.2 miles and rated a 27. Commissioner Hines asked if there was, anyway we can determine how many roads feed into a state highway. Mr. Gay explained that those roads are all over the County and every road on Hwy 27 to Luthersville, such as Allie Rd. feed into a state route, with Coleman Creek Rd. feeding into a state route twice. Mr. Cawthorne stated that Judson Bulloch feeds into a state highway. Chairman Neely-Hadley explained that Phil Howe Road and all the roads running into Raleigh Road as it is a State Highway. Commissioner Hines stated if we are able to go to the State for additional funding, it would be good to have a general idea of what those roads look like feeding into the state highways. Commissioner Hines stated that these roads are being mainly impacted because they do feed off of a State Highway. Mr. Cawthorne stated he would get a list put together for Commissioner Hines. Mr. Gay explained that one of the things that might be something to look at when making a priority list are those roads that connect state routes, such as a one that goes from one state route to another. An example was given of River Road as it connects Hwy 85 W with Hwy 85. Mr. Gay explained the largeness of the County and the many roads that connect, explaining there are four state routes that come into Greenville as well as crossroads in Woodbury and Alvaton. Commissioner Hines explained that if there was at least an outline of what those roads look like you can determine which roads would need to be addressed earlier and not waiting until the last minute. Commissioner Hines stated you would also need to see how many of those roads have bridges as we are not isolated from any other county but would need to project out as far as we can because as the County grows and industry comes there is more traffic. She stated the weight of the vehicles is astronomical. Mr. Gay noted that Luthersville Road does not have any bridges and when you start looking at roads with bridges and bridges need widening there are additional costs. Mr. Gay stated that Mr. Bill Cawthorne has looked at Forrest Road and he provided figures to do the FDR. Mr. Gay stated there are options to do patching and patching will add up quickly. Mr. Gay stated that to patch Forrest Road the cost would be approximately \$337,000. Mr. Cawthorne stated that when patching or patching work begins, the patches get bigger. Mr. Gay explained the problem with patching is ultimately you will have to go back and fix the area between the patches as the patches will hold, but the other area in between will fail. Mr. Gay explained that another thing discussed with Mr. Cawthorne was a temporary overlay that would seal the road and the areas that are coming apart. Mr. Gay stated it would need to be understood that the overlay won't last forever, but it could put it off just a little bit and make it safe until funding can be obtained for the entire 4 miles. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked how much it would be to do the overlay. Mr. Gay and Mr. Cawthorne explained it would be approximately \$120,000. Commissioner Hines explained that in just this year alone, Public Works had gone out to Forrest Road 6 different times, last year 12, and the year before 6. Commissioner Hines asked why when Public Works is patching can they not square it out. Mr. Cawthorne stated that you can square it out, however, you are wasting a lot of time, labor, and materials because the base is failing, and the structure is over flexing. Mr. Cawthorne explained that the best area for square patching is if you had a small 5x5 area and you square patched it, and the other area around was not in base failure it would last a long time. Mr. Gay explained that the reason for cutting would be to get out the bad material and into good areas that have not failed, however, in this situation there is no good material to get to. Commissioner Hines asked if Mr. Cawthorne was suggesting patching those 5 areas. Mr. Cawthorne stated that would be up to the Board, but to at least make them safer to drive. Commissioner Hines stated

that it is not just the middle, the edges and side of the road are bad as well. Mr. Cawthorne stated that is typical with all the roads in the category of 28-30. Commissioner McCoy asked how much for FDR. Mr. Gay explained \$2.1 million would cover 4 miles. Mr. Gay explained that he would like to talk about funding. He explained that we use our SPLOST to subsidize our 30% match for the LMIG program every year. Mr. Gay explained that the TSPLOST has done well and to this point all work has been done and paid for. Mr. Gay explained that Mt. Pilgrim Road, Peaceful Lane, and Tuskegee Lane had been paved with the use of TSPLOST. He explained that with the use of TSPLOST, there had been repairs to storm drains, equipment purchased, and to date we have spent about \$1.5 million dollars. Mr. Gay stated the projected collection for TSPLOST is \$5.52 million which is economy driven. Mr. Gay stated from the inception of TSPLOST to date, the County has collected \$2,698,000 and spent \$1.5 million. This leaves a balance of \$1,177,280.00. Mr. Gay stated that if you project revenue to the end of the year, we are looking at \$2,024,448.00. If you project collections through the remaining term of TSPLOST after December of 2022, we should collect an additional \$1.9 million dollars in fund balance. Mr. Gay stated that out of the dollars remaining, there is a commitment to do Beulah Evans Road and that projected cost is \$1.5 million. If we use that \$1.5 million and did Forrest Road, you would be looking at only having \$400-\$500 thousand dollars left in the TSPLOST program. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated all of that money would go to one end of the County and not provide to the entire county. Mr. Gay stated you would have spent 3/4ths of the money on a couple of projects. Mr. Gay stated that he and Bill Cawthorne met with GDOT last week and spoke with them about projects and what we could do. Mr. Gay explained that they spoke with GDOT about safety and noted that GDOT has different pockets of money. Mr. Gay stated GDOT correlates safety to things such as signage and striping, however, years ago, Mr. Gay explained they were able to go to GDOT to get funds for improvement projects for safety such as narrow roadways. Mr. Gay stated that Luthersville Road is a prime example of needing to be widened and is so much better where it was widened. Mr. Gay explained that when they start discussions with GDOT he would like to see if they can pull safety money into that project as well and let the County combined the safety money to allow more widening of the road and pool all the money together to complete FDR. Mr. Gay stated that widening can be done on roads that don't necessarily need a lot of repairs, and then tie in the overlay with the widening into the regular paving so people don't see a big patch running along the edge of the roadway. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that from what everyone is saying it sounds like Forrest Road is in just as bad of shape. Mr. Gay stated that Forrest Road is in pretty bad shape. Mr. Gay stated that one of the reasons he wanted to come back and speak with the Board is that GDOT has told them they get a lot of requests, and they need to know that everyone is on the same sheet of music of what they want. Mr. Gay reminded GDOT that their motto has always been we will help you if you help yourself and the County has helped itself. Mr. Gay explained the road concerns have been dealt with appropriately and TSPLOST passed unanimously. Mr. Gay noted again that we have helped ourselves and he is hoping that they will help us. Mr. Gay asked the Board to develop a priority list and rank that priority list to show where funding is needed first. He also explained that the first trip to GDOT the county will not get everything it needs or wants, but feels a good way is to get a project from GDOT, come back and complete the project efficiently, and then go back to GDOT and say we did what we said we would do and here's this project it looks good. What can you help us with now? Mr. Gay explained in the early 90's GDOT had matching programs and for every dollar the County put in GDOT would put in a dollar, which was a tremendous program allowing all types of projects to be complete. Mr. Gay stated that he would like to go to GDOT and first see if they will give us dollar for dollar for what we've got and then that could turn our \$2 million dollars into \$4 million dollars. Mr. Gay felt that there would be a willingness from GDOT as Luthersville Road has four major highways feeding into it. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that if we put in dollar for dollar and we put in \$1 million we would have \$2 million. Mr. Gay explained to the Board if they would set Luthersville Road and Forrest Road as their priorities, then he will get a letter for the Chairman to sign to send to GDOT as well as set up a meeting right away with the GDOT Commissioner and invite Dennis McIntire to go with them and discuss funding. Mr. Gay suggested that the Board move quickly to get the meeting set up and prepare a letter and packet with what we need. He suggested that the Chairs go and see what GDOT will give towards funding and projects. He

then stated we take what they give us, complete the project, and then go back again. Commissioner Hines stated she feels like Vice Chairman Threadgill in the sense we know Forrest Road and Luthersville Road will need repairs, but it is so good to know what the projects look like. Commissioner Hines stated we don't have to go asking for all the projects, but it would be good to let them know we have done our due diligence and that as we move forward, we are not just coming that one time as there are other roads that will need to be addressed as there are so many major highways coming into Meriwether County. Commissioner Hines stated that the infrastructure money is helping the State and there is a lot of work going on, but she is disappointed that nothing has been put into place to address rural areas. Commissioner Hines stated that rural roads make up 60% of Georgia roadways and have less revenue and feels that it is important to talk with the State Representatives to make sure that some of that funding trickles down to the rural areas and not just the metro areas. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that it was important to go in asking for as much as you need such as \$90 million and they will come down and compromise, giving maybe the \$4 million. Chairman Neely-Hadley suggested taking seven projects to GDOT, knowing that Luthersville Road and Forrest Road are the top priorities and see if they will meet us in the middle. Commissioner Hines thanked Bill Cawthorne for the spreadsheet he presented to the Board and wanted to see if this would be saved in our system for future use as when a new Board starts, they will need the information. Commissioner Hines stated that one of her challenges when she came onto the Board was finding information, such as what was done prior and resurfaced. Commissioner Hines suggested that this information be put into place, such as a database that can be changed and adjusted as needed as well as researched. Administrator Irizarry stated this information was in OneDrive. Commissioner McCoy stated that he was looking at the window of opportunity that the Board has, and it is July now, and they have August and September, and things need to be done. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that their budget starts over on July 1st and we need to get things going before they commit their funds. Mr. Gay confirmed that what he is hearing from the Board is they want to put together a priority list, with the top priorities being Luthersville Road and Forrest Road and then have other projects on the priority list, primarily those that connect state routes or other roads that run into state routes. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that we would need to hit high. Mr. Gay explained that a contract was let on LMIG, and a couple of roads were removed to address Forrest Road. Mr. Gay suggested going ahead and paving those two roads with a commitment to do something to Forrest Road with at the very least the overlay. Commissioner Hines stated that one of the roads, Weaver Road is not a high priority and there is a road that's off of Beulah Evans road that needs it more and if not extend it onto Luthersville Road. Commissioner Hines stated the Board could have changed, but she thought that in deciding on roads to address, she thought it was which road needed to be done the most, and not by district. Commissioner Hines stated going back to the District way is fine, but she has roads in her District that are much more of priority than Weaver Road. Commissioner Hines stated that Weaver Road has one trailer on the road and she is not sure that anyone even lives in it. Commissioner Hines wants to make sure that whatever roads are selected are roads that are desperately needed. Commissioner Hines stated she doesn't have a problem taking Weaver Road off and not using it for Forrest Road, but she has two other roads that have much more of a priority with numerous people living off of them which run off of Beulah Evans Road. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated he would say that two of the roads that they are working on now, one his parents live on and one he lives on, but the roads have not had anything done to them in 40 years and no striping for at least 25-30 years. Mr. Bill Cawthorne stated that he presented the list to the Board based on the larger dollar amount for Luthersville Road and on the other roads, typical resurfacing would be done minus the surface treatment. Mr. Cawthorne stated you have to get to those roads that are not really bad, before they get really bad because those that get really bad are going to cost a lot of money. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated he wished he knew what they did to that road 40 years ago, because it was really held together and was done by a prisoner system. Mr. Gay stated they wanted to ask about the LMIG to see what the Board wanted to do. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated they definitely need to go to GDOT with the list as they talked about with the understanding that if for some reason, we don't get it, at the minimum we will do the overlay on Forrest. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that the incident regarding the ambulance side mirrors being damaged due to narrow road sections needed to be taken to

GDOT, saying that these are safety issues. Commissioner Hines stated that when GDOT came and they discussed Mt. Carmel Road, they wanted the data and number of accidents. Commissioner Hines stated that one of the things they were really surprised about was there wasn't a lot of good data, because the state patrol report was needed. Commissioner Hines stated the only thing they were able to get on Alvaton Road and Hwy 362 was the flashing light. Commissioner Hines stated they are data driven. Discussion was had about the intersection of Luthersville Road and Hwy 362 and the number of accidents. Mr. Gay stated that this location is one that would probably benefit from a roundabout. Chairman Neely-Hadley suggested looking at some dates the week after the holiday. Mr. Gay stated that it needed to be done as soon as we practically can, and he will need to get with the GDOT Commissioner to see what his schedule looks like and once we know we can contact Mr. McIntire and let him know as his schedule is a little more flexible. Mr. Gay would like to include Tyler Peek who is our District Engineer in the loop. Commissioner Hines gave Administrator Irizarry another packet for a grant opportunity for the Bridge Investment Program. Administrator Irizarry stated she passed that onto Mr. Cawthorne. Commissioner Hines suggested that next year to reach out to the Senators regarding earmark money. Commissioner Hines also mentioned the SS4A grant due in September. Mr. Cawthorne stated that this is something that would need to be done with other counties. Mr. Gay stated that there will be a State Aid Administrator at the meeting, and they can discuss what available infrastructure grants are available. Commissioner Plant clarified that what had been done was King Road and Weaver Road be removed from the LMIG contract to address the five areas on Forrest Road or get pricing. Commissioner Plant asked if that would need to be submitted for bid. Mr. Gay stated it would need to be bid as there is a limit on what can be added to the existing contract. Commissioner Hines stated that she would like to reemphasize that Weaver Road does not need to be resurfaced and she has been on the road, no one lives on the road, and there are other roads that need the attention much more off of Beulah Evans Road. Commissioner Hines stated that she did not select that road and cannot justify to her constituent's why Weaver Road would be resurfaced. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that he didn't think any of the Commissioners selected the roads. Mr. Cawthorne stated that he selected the roads based on paving conditions, trying to find roads with certain distances to accommodate pricing limitations. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated he did not select his road. Chairman Neely-Hadley left the meeting at 10:56 am. Mr. Gay stated that we could go ahead and address King Road and skip Weaver Road until we get to the next meeting. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that if we could meet with GDOT on the Tuesday before the meeting, we may know more then. Commissioner Hines stated that she has been on King Road, and it needs repair. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated if we can meet with GDOT we can bring back options at the Wednesday meeting. Commissioner Hines stated that Coyote Trail needs attention and they are all in bad shape and she was contacted by Ms. Womack the other day. Commissioner Plant stated that she is concerned if Weaver Parks Road is skipped then it could be worse later. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that he would like to stick to what the people in that area want and however it is done they come back and vote on it on Wednesday. Mr. Gay clarified that the consensus is that King Road is okay, and Weaver Road will be held and discussed when they are back from GDOT meeting. Mr. Cawthorne stated that he will have to make sure there is enough money budgeted. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that he would like to get the meeting with GDOT for July 12th and come back and vote after we have more information at the Wednesday meeting.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

V. CONCLUSION OF MEETING

A motion was made to adjourn the Work Session at 10:59 a.m. by Commissioner McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.

VI. FUTURE MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Future Meetings were listed on the Agenda

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Allyson R. Stephens, Deputy Clerk

Date: July 13, 2022