

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

**August 24, 2021**

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

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

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Shirley Hines

Staff Present: Theron Gay, Deputy County Clerk Allyson Stephens, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and County Attorney Michael Hill.

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas

**I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Threadgill called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**INVOCATION** – Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**II. ADOPT AGENDA**

A motion was made to adopt the agenda by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.

**III MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to accept the minutes of the August 11, 9:00 a.m. Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.

**IV. MUNICIPAL COMMENTS**

None

**V. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS COMMENTS**

None

**VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS**

None

Chairman Threadgill welcomed new County Administrator Michelle Irizarry. The Board welcome Ms. Irizarry and looked forward to working with her.

**VII. PUBLIC HEARING**

Case# 20-2021 – John Knight requests to rezone 10.47 acres on Goldmine Road, Tax Map and Parcel #046 001 Land District 11, Land Lot 51 from LDR (5-acre minimum) to RD (2-acre minimum). The purpose is to create 5-residential Lots to build a 2500 sq. ft. home on each lot. District 1. A motion was made to go into Public Hearing at 6:02 p.m. by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor. Butch Oliver, Interim Director of Planning and Zoning stated the request is in Commissioner Hines District and that John Knight was requesting to rezone 10.47 acres from LDR to RD to build 5-residential lots with 2500 sq. ft. homes on each lot. Mr. Oliver stated that Planning and Zoning recommended the rezoning. Mr. John Knight stated that the homes would be 4-5 bedrooms and 3-4 bathrooms and be in the mid \$200,000 range. Mr. Knight stated the homes would be on about 2.1 acres. Vice Chairman McCoy asked would water be available. Mr. Knight advised the homes would be on wells. No one else requested to speak during the Public Hearing. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant to go out of Public Hearing at 6:05 p.m. All were in favor. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant to approve the rezone request of 10.47 acres from LDR to RD. All were in favor.

Case# 21-2021 – Allen Jackson request to rezone 1125 Charlie Fuller Road, Tax Map and Parcel #047 008, Land District 11, Land Lot 82 from LDR (5-acre minimum) to NHC. The purpose of this is to operate an automotive body repair shop. District 1. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to go into Public Hearing at 6:05 p.m. All were in favor. Interim Director of Planning and Zoning, Butch Oliver stated that Mr. Allen Jackson was not present but Mr. Chris Jackson who is also on the application was in attendance. Mr. Oliver stated this is in Commissioner Hines District. He stated the property is currently zoned LDR and Mr. Jackson would like to rezone the property to Neighborhood Commercial in order to have an automotive body repair shop. Mr. Oliver stated there was a petition from the surrounding homes in the neighborhood in favor of the rezoning. He stated that there had been no opposition to the request. Mr. Oliver also stated that the auto repair shop would have a paint booth and office. He stated they are waiting on the Health Department, but plans had been submitted showing air filters and air purifiers would be placed in the shop. Mr. Oliver also stated that the conditions were no more than 3 automobiles parked outside the shop and 1 inside would be a condition per County ordinance. Mr. Chris Jackson was in attendance for questions. Commissioner Neely-Hadley wanted to make sure of the stipulations of no more than 3 automobiles outside at a given time and 1 in the shop. Chairman Threadgill asked about EPD regulations regarding the paint booth. Mr. Oliver stated the plans presented account for the EPD regulations regarding the paint booth. Commissioner McCoy asked if there would be a disclaimer to follow all federal, state, and local laws. Mr. Oliver advised him that there was a disclaimer stating this. No one else was present to speak. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to go out of Public Hearing at 6:11 p.m. All were in favor. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to rezone 1125 Charlie Fuller Road from LDR to NHC for the purpose of operating an automotive body repair shop. All were in favor.

Case# 23-2021 Road Closure Request – Edwin Madan request the closure of approximately 2,348 feet on Walnut Creek Road, from Imlac Road to Jones Mill Road, District 1. Butch Oliver, Interim Director of Planning and Zoning stated that Mr. Madan was in attendance, and he is requesting the closure of approximately 2,438 feet of Walnut Creek Road east of Jones Mill Road. Mr. Oliver stated Mr. Madan owns the property on both sides of the road and there has been illegal dumping and deer shining going on in that location. Mr. Oliver stated that he traveled the distance on the paved road, and it is about the same as going to the stop sign. He also advised that he had spoken with Public Works Director, Tyrell Johnson and he was in favor of closing the road. Vice Chairman McCoy asked if Mr. Madan owns the property up to the stop sign. Mr. Oliver stated that he did. Chairman Threadgill asked if there was another route(s) in case of an emergency. Mr. Oliver stated that there were other routes and the section requesting to be closed is a rough dirt road. Ed Madan stated to the board that he has had trouble with trash dumping and also deer shining. He stated that the property is behind the shed at Fitzgerald Farms. Commissioner Plant asked if gates would be put up. Mr. Madan stated they would put up gates. Theron Gay entered the meeting during the Public Hearing and stated to the Board that he had spoken with Commissioner Hines as she was not able to be in attendance and she has requested that this be continued to a time where she could be in attendance to hear the request. Mr. Gay advised that the road is not much of a road and the question is does it service a public purpose? No one else was present or requested to speak. A motion was made to go out of Public Hearing at 6:18 p.m. by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley. All were in favor. Attorney Michael Hill stated that that the road would have to serve no purpose or substantial interest. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to close the 2,438-foot section of Walnut Creek Road, east of Jones Mill Road, from Imlac Road to Jones Mill Road. All were in favor.

Ordinance #2021-03 Broadband Ready Community- A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to go into Public Hearing at 6:22 p.m. All were in favor. Mr. Gay stated that Ordinance# 2021-03 is for a Broadband Ready Community. Mr. Gay stated this will assist the County in obtaining grants and other assistance associated with the expansion of broadband. No one requested to speak. A motion was made to go out of Public Hearing at 6:22 p.m. by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley. All were in favor. A motion was made by

Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to adopt Ordinance# 2021-03 Broadband Ready Community and allow the Chair to sign. All were in favor.

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Request from Wargo's Pumpkin Patch to close Johnson Road from the last weekend in September until the first weekend in November (Fridays from 9-12), (Saturdays from 9-6) and (Sundays from 1-6). Mr. Gay stated this had been done in the past and has improved safety during the event. A motion was made to allow the closure of Johnson Road for the approved time by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.
2. Participating Agreement with Library System. Mr. Gay stated this is something that has been done and remains in force until one party wishes to withdraw with written notice. He stated this is done to ensure funding and is required from the library for all participating entities. Mr. Gay stated this is reviewed every budget year. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to accept the participating agreement with the library system and allow the Chair to sign. All were in favor.
3. Discussion of Juke Line Road. Mr. Gay stated that Robinson Paving is doing work to build up the shoulders of a state highway. He stated that the trucks need to load fill dirt from a borrow pit area in the City of Warm Springs. Mr. Gay advised without being able to use Juke Line Road, the trucks are having to travel through Durand, and this is a great distance out of the way. Robinson Paving has agreed to lower their loads by 30% and would need to utilize Juke Line Road for 3-4 days according to Mr. Gay. Mr. Gay advised that he would notify Public Safety that Robinson Paving would give notice prior to needing the 3-4 days. A motion was made to allow Robinson Paving to use Juke Line Road to transport fill-dirt for 3-4 days with notice given for specific dates by Commissioner Neely-Hadley. This was seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.
4. Set Date and Time for Public Hearing and Adoption of FY 2021-2022 Millage Rate. Finance Director Bill Gregory stated the Public Hearing would need to be on September 8, 2021, at the 9:00 a.m. meeting. He also stated the School Board would have their meeting on September 7, 2021. A motion was made to set the Public Hearing and Adoption of the FY 2021-2022 Millage Rate for September 8, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. by Vice Chairman McCoy. This was seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated there would be no reason for the called meeting on August 30, 2021.
5. Set Public Hearing for September 8, 2021, for FY 2021-2022 Budget. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to set a Public Hearing for September 8, 2021, at the 9:00 a.m. meeting for the FY 2021-2022 Budget. All were in favor.
6. Discussion and clarification of various funding requests to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Gay stated there have been lots of request for the funding of various programs in the County. Mr. Gay stated that although those programs may be good programs, he wanted clarification on when it was legal to utilize County funds. He stated the County would have to be a partner or receive a substantial benefit. Attorney Michael Hill stated there is a provision in the Georgia Constitution that prohibits all donations and gratuities that are not of substantial benefit to the County. Attorney Hill stated that substantial benefit is more than a general cause. He stated the County is not to use taxpayer funds regardless of the merit of the cause that you would pay to an individual or a corporation. Mr. Gay suggested that requests be made to the staff to review prior to being presented to the Board if the cause is a substantial benefit to the County. He stated that this would eliminate government favoring from one individual to another. No action was needed.

**X. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Finance Director Bill Gregory stated the bank balances were good and strong. He stated the General Fund Balance was 3.849 million. Director Gregory stated the balance in 2020 was 2.5 million and in 2019 was \$828,000. Mr. Gregory stated there were 5 more weeks left in the budget with 3 more payrolls.

## **XI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Mr. Gay started by stating how proud he was to have Michelle Irizarry join the County. Mr. Gay stated she would do a phenomenal job and he was happy to have her in attendance. Mr. Gay stated he had received two applications for paving dirt roads and in the preliminary review it appears one may qualify, and one will not. Mr. Gay stated that he would complete the review and have recommendations at the next meeting.

Mr. Gay stated the Boy Scouts of America Citizens award is coming up and is Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Gay stated that Mr. Jim Mabon and Mr. Dan and Mrs. Marie Branch will be recognized. Mr. Gay stated he had several broadband meetings and met with Butch Oliver and Ms. Jane regarding a new industry coming into Meriwether County. Mr. Gay also met with Carolyn McKinley and representatives of Warm Springs Institute and discussed broadband. Mr. Gay stated discussion was also made regarding getting broadband to the airport. Mr. Gay stated he wanted to add a LMIG change to the next meeting and also some Public Works equipment. Mr. Gay stated the equipment is being obtained off the Sourcewell Contract. He stated that we needed to move forward, and it can be cancelled.

## **XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Shirley Hines: Absent

Commissioner Rosla Plant: Commissioner Plant stated Commissioner Neely-Hadley would cover the information on the Roosevelt Pools. Commissioner Plant stated the work continues on broadband. She expressed her appreciation for all the help from the staff on the new industry coming into the County. Commissioner Plant stated there had been numerous calls regarding dirt roads.

Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley: Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated Commissioner Plant, Chairman Threadgill and herself met with the Executive Director of the Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites and also with the Friends of the Little White House a couple weeks ago. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated an effort is being made to try to obtain funds to restore the pools in Warm Springs. She stated the pools are in complete disrepair and the group started before COVID hit. She stated the group had already raised over \$600,000 in private donations but they are asking for the Governments to send letters of support and requests to the Governor to the Friends of State Parks to get funds through foundations and grants. She would like to see if the Board would like to do a letter of support. She stated she spoke with the City of Warm Springs, the Warm Springs Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and the Warm Springs Merchants Group. She stated Drew Ferguson was down and met with the groups last week and will be trying to help on a federal level. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated they have the plans drawn up and the project is not just a renovation, but a complete restoration with a price tag of about \$6,000,000. She stated this would be great economically for Warm Springs and would be opened three weekends a year for people to swim. She would like to ask the Board to submit a letter in support of the efforts that all Commissioners would have to sign. She also stated individuals could send letters of support on their own as well. Chairman Threadgill stated President Roosevelt's image is on the dime because the March of Dimes actually helped to fund the pools there. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated she has the sample letter, and one needs to be mailed and one emailed. Commissioner Plant asked if this would be okay to put on our website. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated the Harvest Hoe Down will be October 9, 2021, and she also welcomed Michelle. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated there was a young couple whose home caught on fire. She stated that she received a call from a neighbor of the couple commending the Fire Department on their response as they had to go down a rough dirt road and across a pasture. Commissioner Neely-Hadley stated that she contacted Chief Smith and let him know that the neighbor had called commending the job done by the Fire Department.

Vice Chairman McCoy: Vice Chairman McCoy stated that he would like to add that with the discussion of broadband this is a very comprehensive plan across the county with a lot of players involved. Vice Chairman McCoy stated that he has received calls regarding the roads, rights-of-way, and ditches and the calls are unending. He also stated there had been so much rain this year and he wanted to give a shoutout to the Public Works Department as he knows they are working hard to resolve the issues and it is a hard job. Vice Chairman McCoy directed everyone to see the article in the Guide to Georgia regarding the Flint River Trail and our involvement with the trail. He stated this should roll out the first of the year.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: None

**XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY**

County Attorney Michael Hill had nothing to report and stated there was not a need for Executive Session.

**XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Marcelle Womack of 194 Turkey Trail Court wanted to commend the Public Works as she has sent several emails over the last two weeks requesting new road signs. She stated the stop signs had been replaced and some are being printed. Mrs. Womack stated that she asked someone about speed limit signs she was told that there was no ordinance. She would like to have speed limit signs and sent an email out on what roads she would like those on. Mr. Gay stated that the reason that the signs are not on the speed limit posting list is because the roads are not approved by GDOT, and the Sheriff's Office cannot run radar on the roads. Mrs. Womack stated she understands but would like to have signs as a notification until the road is paved and speedbumps are installed. She stated from what she has gathered most subdivisions are 25 mph and she is suggesting 15 mph. Chairman Threadgill stated they would look into this.

**XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES**

Chairman Threadgill announced future meetings.

**XVII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 pm. All were in favor.

*Approved by: Majority Vote of Board of Commissioners*

*Attest: Allyson J. Stephens, Deputy Clerk*

*Date: 9-8-2021*