

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

**October 25, 2022**

**6:00 P.M.**

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

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

Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, County Deputy County Clerk Allyson Stephens, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and Attorney Michael Hill

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Beth-Neely Hadley

**II. INVOCATION**

Commissioner Alfred "Buster" McCoy

**III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

All

**IV. ADOPT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Plant to Adopt the Agenda with the following changes: *Remove #3 Discussion of Meriwether County paying for Utilities at Manchester Fire and replace with New #3 Discussion of GDOT funding.* All were in favor.

**V. FINANCE REPORT**

Finance Director, Bill Gregory, provided financial reports to the Board. Finance Director, Gregory stated that the General Fund has a balance of \$1.6 million and the County did receive the insurance premium tax distribution early this month, as well as the third quarter tipping fees from Waste Management. Director Gregory stated that helped out a lot. Director Gregory explained the September SPLOST distribution from the Department of Revenue pointing out the total distribution was \$239,897.25 with the County's portion being \$155,957.20. Director Gregory stated that if you look to the next page the average for the first 9 months of 2022 is \$148,000.00 and originally it was budgeted collections around \$90-\$95,000 which is really good and up about \$20,000.00 for the 12 months of 2021. Director Gregory explained the total TSPLOST distribution was \$199,597.99 with \$129,758.65 being the County's portion. Director Gregory stated that brings the 9-month average of TSPLOST to \$123,366.00 which is approximately \$20,000.00 more per month than the average of the 12 months for 2021. Director Gregory stated that the SPLOST distribution as the highest we have ever seen and received and TSPLOST was second highest. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked if these averages were for the same time period. Director Gregory stated that it was. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that a \$30,000.00 difference was significant. Director Gregory explained that TSPLOST was mostly gas tax.

## VI. CITIZEN COMMENT

Scott Quamme of 205 Rockspray Ridge, Peachtree City Georgia spoke to the Board about the Airport in Meriwether County which Mr. Quamme stated was the oldest continuously operated airport in the state and he attended an Airport Authority meeting that many of the Commissioners attended. Mr. Quamme stated after that meeting, he received a notice that he was going to be evicted from a hangar that he had been renting for over two years at the Meriwether County Airport. Mr. Quamme stated he received an eviction notice today and he wants to make sure the Commissioners are aware that he filed a complaint with GDOT and the FAA for unfair practices. Mr. Quamme stated the complaint is being taken seriously and is a 12-page report and he finds it a little disturbing that during this time period, the Airport Authority instead of trying to resolve the issue, has stonewalled him and the Airport Authority is now seeking to remove him, not only from the hangar, but from the Airport itself. Mr. Quamme stated he knows you can be evicted from public property, however, according to Mr. Quamme, he would think, and most people would agree that you would have to do something incredibly egregious or break the law. Mr. Quamme stated he paid his rent, on time except for one month and he paid the late fee for that. Mr. Quamme stated that the Airport Authority currently holds rent money that is paid through December. Mr. Quamme stated he is not being evicted for not paying his rent. Mr. Quamme stated in his mind's eye he is being evicted because he came to an Airport Authority meeting and in 15 minutes, he voiced grievances that had happened over a two-year period. Mr. Quamme stated he spoke freely, passionately, and truthfully. Mr. Quamme stated that since that time he has received numerous letters from County Attorney Nathan Lee, accusing him of being a liar and bullying county employees. Mr. Quamme addressed the Board, stating that this is not true, and he emphatically denies that. Mr. Quamme stated he will be fighting the eviction and he is very concerned that when the DOT renders its decision on the complaint that he filed along with the FAA, that he will continue to be treated poorly. After Mr. Quamme spoke the allowed three minutes, he requested an additional minute. Commissioner Hines made a motion to allow one additional minute for Mr. Quamme to speak. This was seconded by Chairman Neely-Hadley. All were in favor. Mr. Quamme thanked the Board and stated he found out tonight that at least 3 of the Commissioner's had not received an email that he sent. Mr. Quamme stated that in August he sent each and every County Commissioner an email to talk to them about what is going on with the Airport regarding the Airport Authority. Mr. Quamme provided his email address and it is written on the sign-up sheet and he understands that there was an internet change, and his email may not have been received. Mr. Quamme stated the same thing happened to him in December of 2021 when the Airport Authority sent a lease to him for 2022. Mr. Quamme encouraged the Board to contact him as there are issues going on with the Airport Authority that the Board needs to be made aware of and he offered to share emails with the Board that he received from the Attorney that are very threatening and most attorneys use words such as "seems" or "may" to avoid a direct confrontation with someone. Mr. Quamme stated these don't contain those words and he is flat out called a liar and he is not; he assured the Board of that. Mr. Quamme thanked everyone for their time. Mr. Brown signed up for Citizen Comment but he was not in attendance.

## **VII. MINUTES**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Rosla Plant to approve the Minutes from the October 12, 2022, 9:00 a.m. Regular Meeting. All were in favor.

## **VIII. PUBLIC HEARING**

None

## **IX. APPOINTMENTS**

### **Appointment – Water & Sewerage Authority, District 5 to fill an unexpired term that will end 12-31-2024**

1. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that this is the for the district she represents, District 5, and she had recently appointed someone, and they have reached out to her to let her know that due to some things that had come up, they would not be able to serve. A Motion was made by Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman Threadgill to appoint Theron Gay to the Water & Sewerage Authority, to fill the unexpired term. Voting in favor of the Appointment was Commissioner McCoy, Vice Chairman Threadgill, Chairman Neely-Hadley, and Commissioner Plant. Commissioner Hines was opposed. The motion passed.

## **X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Office of the Tax Commissioner – Aged Taxes**

1. Administrator Irizarry stated that Tax Commissioner Deann Cruse is in attendance to discuss the aged taxes and County Attorney Michael Hill also has some legal information as well. Administrator Irizarry stated that as discussed in the last meeting it has to do with the law and what is uncollectable at a certain time. Commissioner Hines stated this is not just mobile homes this is any other taxes that are due 7 years and older as well. Administrator Irizarry stated it is for real property, timber, personal property, and mobile homes. Tax Commissioner Cruse stated this was for taxes dated 1998 through 2015. Attorney Michael Hill stated that generally speaking, you are not allowed to enforce a tax execution after a 7-year period unless it was already on the execution docket, and it has been renewed on the execution docket every seven years. Attorney Hill stated that while it doesn't say what to do when you can't enforce, there are a couple of cases that suggest that you just cancel those debts. Attorney Hill stated that a citizen who is subject to one of these stale tax debts would be able to sue for cancellation as a remedy, which implies that the Board could strike out the tax themselves. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked if any of the taxes continue to be behind currently, does the 7 years still apply, if they have continued year after year after year? Attorney Hill stated that if you have a 1998 tax debt, then the debt arose in 1998 meaning you have 7 years. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that what he is saying is the debt from 1998, is it attachable to each year that it is behind. Attorney Hill stated it is not attachable for each of those years that go beyond the 7-year period. Attorney Hill stated that for portions of more recent periods that were also in arrears, those would be attachable. Administrator Irizarry stated that if there are FIFAs attached that also changes the situation as well. Tax Commissioner Cruse stated that is correct unless they haven't been renewed. Attorney Hill stated you can renew a FIFA every seven years as well. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated one take

way from this discussion is that all efforts need to be made to collect these taxes before the seven years is up because by law if nothing can be done after that then the County is sitting in a position with these on the books that nothing can be done about. Tax Commissioner Cruse stated that they have just started a Mobile Home campaign with the Tax Assessors Office that includes going out and placing door hangers on mobile homes to make them aware that if they don't get their taxes for their decal, there will be a FIFA placed and could result in a tax sale. Tax Commissioner Cruse also stated that they have partnered with GTS who is sending out notices of FIFAs for 2021 and 2022. There are plans for a tax sale in March. A motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill to cancel stale tax debts from 1998 to 2015 as presented in the list provided by the Tax Commissioner. This was seconded by Commissioner McCoy. All were in favor.

#### **Equipment purchase for Meriwether County Recreation**

2. Administrator Irizarry stated this is carried over from the previous meeting and there was an Intergovernmental Agreement as directed by the Board at the last meeting which would state that the purchase would be property of the County but required maintenance would need to be followed and provided by the City of Manchester. Administrator Irizarry stated that there also had been a \$5,000.00 donation that was presented today by Vice Chairman Threadgill. Administrator Irizarry stated this would leave a balance of \$3,743.82. The Board was presented a copy of the Intergovernmental Agreement. Commissioner Hines stated that as she had brought up in the last meeting, with the County owning the equipment and the City keeping maintenance up on the equipment, she would like to know that in the event any other department needs to use this facility would it be available. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that it would not be because the Intergovernmental Agreement for the County to own and the Manchester to use the equipment. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that it could void the agreement because the City would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep. Vice Chairman Threadgill said it would be per manufacturers guidelines. Attorney Hill stated that he did not include a provision of insurance as he was assuming that the County will want to insure the equipment, but if they wanted it a different way, they would need to include it. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that there is a line item, and it would take the total from \$8,743.82 to \$3,743.82 with the donation. Commissioner Hines asked Vice Chairman Threadgill if that was the line item that says small equipment. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that it was. Commissioner Hines stated that in talking with Finance Director, Bill Gregory, maybe there needs to be clarification, but she was under the impression that the small equipment was for Lake Meriwether. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that could be used. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated she thought it was for recreation. Commissioner Hines stated that it has special projects and small equipment listed under Recreation and asking Director Gregory, she was informed it is for Lake Meriwether, so if it doesn't specifically state that on the line item, she guesses not, but she just wanted to make the Board aware and wanted clarity on that. A motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner McCoy to purchase the John Deere Gator with the Intergovernmental Agreement between the County and Manchester and allow the Chair to sign funding coming out of the line item under Recreation for small equipment. The motion passed with Commissioner McCoy, Vice Chairman Threadgill, Chairman Neely-Hadley, and Commissioner Plant voting in favor. Commissioner Hines was opposed.

Tax Commissioner Deann Cruse came back up to the podium as Chairman Neely-Hadley received word from viewers online that they could not hear her earlier. Tax Commissioner Cruse stated they have started the campaign to collect the mobile home taxes that are delinquent. She stated that her office in conjunction with the Tax Assessors are going out to delinquent mobile homes and hanging door hangers to let them know the taxes are not paid, giving the owners 30 days to bring current and if no payment is made, they will be moving forward with FIFAs and possible tax sales. Tax Commissioner Cruse stated the Tax Commissioner's office has partnered with GTS who is the delinquent tax company. She stated that GTS has sent out FIFA notifications that if taxes are not paid within 30 days, the property will be issued a FIFA. Tax Commissioner Cruse stated they are hoping to have a tax sale in March.

## **XI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **ACCG – Adoption Agreement with ACCG, Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthcare Plan of Georgia, Inc. dba Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield**

1. Administrator Irizarry stated that because the County has enrolled with ACCG's health insurance, the group adoption agreement is required for participation in the program. Administrator Irizarry stated that because we are a new member, it is requested that the documentation be signed and returned by mail. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked if this included any increases or decreases. Administrator Irizarry stated it was not and was just partnership between Meriwether County and ACCG. A motion was made to adopt the agreement with ACCG and Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthcare plan of Georgia, allowing the Chair to sign by Vice Chairman Threadgill. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor.

### **Authorization for Attorney to prepare a Code of Conduct**

2. Administrator Irizarry stated that in the packet there is information on a Code of Conduct for all local governmental grounds in Meriwether County. Administrator Irizarry advised that there was a webinar provided by ACCG that was attended by staff at the Administration Office and staff from the Sheriff's Office. Administrator Irizarry stated that our Attorney reached out to the Attorney that presented the information. This is a request to proceed with a first draft for a Code of Conduct for Meriwether County. A motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Plant to move forward with drafting a Code of Conduct. All were in favor.

### **Discussion of GDOT Funding**

3. Administrator Irizarry passed out a letter to the Board received in response to the letter that was sent to GDOT earlier in the year. She stated that the unfortunately the funding request for Luthersville Road, Forrest Road, Primrose Road, and River Road was not approved, however GDOT did want to move forward with Coleman Creek Circle. Administrator Irizarry stated that it would be at the discretion of the Commissioners if they would like staff to proceed in talking with GDOT in reference to any roads that may need attention prior to Coleman Creek Circle. Administrator Irizarry stated that there will need to be work done on Coleman Creek, but it will have to be redone after the detours for the project. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that in prior discussion with the Board she felt that their priority was Luthersville Road. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that after speaking with Mr. Gay, we certainly don't want to turn down the gift, but maybe see if it could be used towards what is more of a priority, if we all agree that Luthersville Road is

more of a priority than Coleman Creek Circle. Administrator Irizarry stated that she feels we would be more justified in stating that because there will need to be more work done in the area, we don't want to redo the road and then with all of the traffic, put the road back into the same state as before the repairs. Commissioner Hines stated that in discussion previously, Coleman Creek Circle is GDOT's project and not a County project. Commissioner Hines stated she doesn't understand the olive garden in this, and asked what do we get out of this? Chairman Neely-Hadley explained the plan was to use Coleman Creek Circle as a detour, because of the bridge project. Commissioner Hines stated the cost of what that is, GDOT is willing to give us a certain amount of funds to offset that? Administrator Irizarry stated that they have asked for estimates, and we haven't received a final number at this point in time, but if the Board would like staff to move forward and talk with GDOT to express the concern regarding the upcoming project and the road going through a lot of abuse and traffic. Administrator Irizarry stated that we could express that Luthersville Road is the priority. Commissioner Hines asked if this was in the form of a grant. Administrator Irizarry stated this was additional LMIG funds that GDOT had identified. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked if we thought the cost of the two roads would be around the same amount. Administrator Irizarry stated she did not know but we could cut it down to just the amount unless they wanted to give us more. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated to do all of Luthersville Road would cost a substantial amount. Administrator Irizarry stated there is no guarantee if this is proposed that GDOT would say yes. Commissioner Hines stated if there was a general idea of how much funding we could expect, we could see how much of Luthersville Road could be accommodated. Administrator Irizarry stated that we have an estimate of what it would take to do Coleman Creek Circle, however, our estimate may not be in line with what GDOT thinks. A motion was made to allow staff to proceed with speaking with GDOT in moving the funding from one road to another by Chairman Neely-Hadley. This was seconded by Commissioner McCoy. All were in favor.

## **XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Administrator Irizarry provided the River Cove Landing Dedication Ceremony invitations. She advised the event will be November 9, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. and was coordinated with DNR and Meriwether County. Administrator Irizarry stated this should be a very nice event and there are going to be a lot of state representatives and county representatives and encouraged the Board to attend. Administrator Irizarry stated that Biometric Screenings have been going on since last week. She stated they will wrap up this week and there will be a few extra days for make up appointments. Administrator Irizarry stated that the County is advertising for a Building Inspector, and we have received a few applications and will be going through those as they are received. The GCIP grant through ACCG for interns is open and last year Judge Rasnick had an intern and was showcased in a magazine. There is a request from three constitutional officers for interest. Administrator Irizarry stated that on September 29<sup>th</sup>, Bill Gregory, Allyson Stephens, and myself attended the financial work session for the Greenville Recreation Facility Grant which is the last administrative step in order to get the project started and we have received a letter we can proceed.

### **XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**Commissioner Hines** – stated that there was discussion removed from the Agenda and she is unsure why but would like more information about. Chairman Neely-Hadley expressed this was removed to allow staff to get more information. Commissioner Hines also brought to the Board's attention and wants the County Administrator to follow-up a matter brought to her by the Mayor in Gay. Commissioner Hines stated there was an ATV that was donated to the fire station in Gay a while back and it is under the County insurance and unfortunately there was an accident and wanted the status of replacing that. Administrator Irizarry stated that she had information that she could share. Commissioner Hines stated that she could get with her later and bring it back to the Board. Commissioner Hines stated she had her Town Hall meeting last Thursday in Luthersville and thanked everyone for coming out and thanked all who participated. Commissioner Hines stated the United Way is having their major fundraiser and she will bring back that information to the Board as a whole at the next meeting.

**Commissioner Plant** – Commissioner Plant had no comments.

**Chairman Neely-Hadley** – Reminded all that next week is the last week for Early voting and the Election is November 8, 2022. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that Candlelight weekends in Warm Springs will start on November 18<sup>th</sup> and will run through Christmas Eve. She encouraged all to shop local and support our local merchants.

**Vice Chairman Threadgill** – No comments at this time.

**Commissioner McCoy** – stated that work is proceeding at Lake Meriwether, and they are hoping to get that completed by the end of the month.

### **XIV. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY**

Attorney Hill had no report but understood there was need for Executive Session to discuss Litigation and Personnel.

### **XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Plant to go into Executive Session at 6:36 p.m. for Litigation and Personnel. All were in favor. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner McCoy to go out of Executive Session at 7:12 p.m. All were in favor. There was no action taken in Executive Session. .

### **XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES**

Future Meetings and Notices were announced.

### **XVII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business to discuss, motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Plant to adjourn at 7:14 p.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Allyson L. Stephens

Date: November 9, 2022

