

**MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

October 26, 2021

This meeting was held by Zoom due to COVID-19.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy, Commissioner Shirley Hines, Commissioner Rosla Plant and Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley
Staff Present: Administrator Michelle Irizarry, Director of Special Projects Theron Gay, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and County Attorney Michael Hill

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

II. INVOCATION – Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – All

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to adopt the Agenda with the following changes. Add under New Business: 6. Confirm Letter of Support for Southern Rivers Energy's Broadband Infrastructure Grant Application and allow signature of Chairman 7. Allow Chairman to sign the ACCG Group Self-Insurance Workers' Compensation Fund, Safety Discount Verification Form 8. Allow Chairman to sign the ACCG Interlocal Risk Management Agency, Safety Discount Verification Form

All were in favor.

V. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR

Finance Director Bill Gregory provided a copy of the Bank Balances. The County has received good responses on the roofing bids for the Courthouse. The bids are due to the County no later than 11-19-2021.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT

Marcele Womack – Thanked the Road Department and Public Works for their hard work. Ms. Womack was excited about the resurfacing of Bob Cat Trail and thanked Commissioner Hines for the work and implementation of the procedures for paving. Ms. Womack thanked the Board for adopting the procedures. Ms. Womack brought to the Board's attention, an incident that occurred on Beulah Evans Road within 8' of where a car had gone off the road and into a deep ditch as shown to the Board in a video presentation several months back. A Firetruck slid off the road while on a call and this could have been disastrous. Ms. Womack stated she knows we cannot help that it rains, and emergency situations do not take time off. Ms. Womack asked that the Board of Commissioners take a vote regarding paving Beulah Evans Road.

Tax Commissioner Catherine Jenkins was signed up to speak but was not in the audience or on the Zoom call.

VII. MINUTES

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy to approve the Minutes from the October 13, 2021, Regular Meeting at 9:00 a.m. with the following change under Adopt Agenda, 7th sentence, change from Chairman Hines to Commissioner Hines. All were in favor.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARING

None

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Finance Director, Bill Gregory, stated at the last Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board requested staff to renegotiate with Charter for a 3-year term rather than a 5-year term. The monthly cost for a 5-year term was \$5,610 and after negotiating for a 3-year term the cost would be \$5,800. Originally, the equipment upgrade, to help with security and the firewall was \$220,000. With IT Director Skip Richmond's negotiating skills, the cost will be \$143,600. This will qualify for funding through ARP (American Rescue Plan). Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to accept the recommendation of Finance Director Gregory and pay \$143,600 up front through ARP funding and make monthly payments of \$5,800 for internet coverage for the 3-year term. All were in favor.

2. Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to confirm action taken in Executive Session during the September 28, 2021, Board of Commissioners Meeting. Discussion followed. Attorney Hill provided information to the Board concerning the vote. Motion was amended by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to confirm the vote with action taken in Executive Session on September 28, 2021, for County employee raises in pay. Voting in favor were Beth Neely Hadley, Vice Chairman McCoy, Chairman Threadgill and Rosla Plant. Shirley Hines abstained.

X. APPOINTMENTS

None

XI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to allow Public Works to purchase two 2021 trucks, VIN #1FT7W2A65MED54150 AND VIN #1FT7W2A60MED54153. All were in favor.

2. Administrator Michelle Irizarry stated she would like permission to reach out to State Representative Debbie Buckner and ask her to serve as the Meriwether County Legislative Sponsor to work with the Reapportionment Office for redistricting. Commissioner Hines commented the County has two Representatives and understands it will take two Representatives once redistricting has been approved and asked if we were not going forward with reaching out to both. Administrator Irizarry stated in the class that was held by ACCG, they said to obtain a Legislative Sponsor to work with the Reapportionment

Office so this is just step one. Chairman Threadgill stated Representative Buckner covers 4/5th of the County. Administrator Irizarry stated later on, the County will reach out to both Representatives but for now this is just to get the ball rolling. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to reach out to State Representative Debbie Buckner and request that she serve as the Meriwether County Legislative Sponsor to work with the Reapportionment Office for redistricting. All were in favor.

3. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to table the revision of Solid Waste Ordinance RE: Franchise Section 26-118 (7) and approval of Solid Waste Application. All were in favor.

4. Clerk of Superior and Juvenile Courts, Kye Gibson, requested COVID ARP funds for the purpose of providing criminal e-filing to constituents. Legislation was passed in 2019 to allow for criminal e-filing, but the legislation was not funded. The Clerk of Court currently offers e-filing in civil and real estate cases. This cost of that service is paid in full by the filer. The next step is to provide criminal e-filing. Currently, all criminal filings are hand-delivered or delivered by USPS or another delivery carrier. Due to the state of the Postal Service, it has been a huge burden on the court system which has caused delays in court filings. Peachcourt, by GreenCourt Legal Technologies, is the current civil e-filing vendor and preferred vendor for criminal filing. They currently provide criminal e-filing for 47 courts across Georgia. The software and support cost will be \$500 per month or \$5K annually. The pandemic

highlighted the necessity for civil and real estate e-filing and criminal e-filing is the next logical step to reduce foot traffic in a small office. It will provide a 24/7 filing option, provide instant access to documents, and remove delays caused by the mail system. Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to approve the request and pay annually at \$5K using ARP funds. All were in favor.

5. Finance Director, Bill Gregory, stated we have an opportunity to apply for a grant through the State to secure more ARP funds. This will be for First Responders, 911 Operators, Fire, Volunteers, and EMS. It will provide \$1,000 for full time and \$300 for Volunteers. The grant is in the system and the Chairman would have to click a button to accept the terms and conditions. Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Vice Chairman McCoy to allow the Chairman to log in the system and click the button to start the grant. The portal opens on October 31st. All were in favor.

6. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to confirm the letter of support for Southern Rivers Energy's Broadband Infrastructure Grant Application and allow the Chairman to sign. All were in favor.

7. Motion was made by Beth Neely-Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to allow the Chairman to sign the ACCG Group Self-Insurance Workers' Compensation Fund, Safety Discount Verification Form. All were in favor.

8. Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to allow the Chairman to sign the ACCG Interlocal Risk Management Agency, Safety Discount Verification Form. All were in favor.

XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Administrator Irizarry reported Rosewood Lane, outside of Woodbury, is closed due to a hazard. We hope that it will be reopened tomorrow afternoon and if not it should reopen no later than Thursday morning. The CGIP grant is a grant that ACCG send out regarding interns. Valerie Chambers, HR Director, forwarded the information to all Department Heads and Constitutional Officers and received interest from Chief Alan Smith with Fire/EMS, Probate Judge Rasnick, and Tax Commissioner Jenkins. The applications will be reviewed, and we will move forward. There was no opposition.

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Neely-Hadley: Attended the meeting last night with the City of Manchester and there was good news regarding the possibility of new development and exciting things in the future.

Warm Springs will hold their Candlelight Weekends November 19th – December 18th. Everyone was invited to visit Warm Springs and attend the Candlelight weekends.

Greenville Middle and High School, Unity Elementary and Manchester High School will have a trunk or treat, through the School Reading Program, on Saturday from 10:00 am – 12:00 p.m.

Commissioner Rosla Plant: reported the City of Greenville is sponsoring a Halloween Festival with a lot of activities in downtown Greenville this Saturday from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. They have requested the County allow them to use the County electrical outlets located on the lawn area of the Courthouse Square. Another request was concerning decorating the Courthouse for Christmas. The trees are in storage, and this would be a smaller version of the Country Christmas. Staff will coordinate the completion of the decorations before Thanksgiving.

One side of Mt. Pilgrim was paved yesterday, and they are coming back to pave the other side today. There have been several accidents on Primrose Road due to the curves. The County has added chevron signs and speed limit signs.

Thursday night Hope Harbor will hold an event at Bogle Farms. Everyone was asked to support this program.

Commissioner Shirley Hines: reported there will be a Veterans Expo in Newnan at the Summit YMCA on November 4th from 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. and it is open to the public. It is a good opportunity for Meriwether County Veterans and others. They will have different vendors and resources. The event will be well attended.

Commissioner Hines stated she had been appointed to the United Way Board of West Georgia. They work to promote education, health, and basic needs for citizens. Commissioner Hines hopes to bring more support from Meriwether County. The United Way received over 900 calls from Meriwether County, and they were able to serve 300-400 people.

Commissioner Hines attended the Flint River Keepers annual fund raiser at Big Red Oak Plantation. It was well attended. The County received a grant for the Flint River Water Trail.

This past Friday a meeting was held with Governor Kemp and was hosted by the Black Georgia Chamber Association. Commissioner Hines was asked to speak about economic development in rural areas. There is a need in the rural areas for economic development and they also spoke about the ARP funds and how they could be used to support some of our small businesses.

Commissioner Hines asked the Board to allow Ms. Johnsie Reeves to come forward to speak since she was unaware of our new Agenda process.

Chairman Threadgill asked Ms. Johnsie Reeves to come forward to speak. Ms. Reeves thanked the Board for their support of the Luthersville Senior Center. It reopened in July. Thanks were expressed for the sympathy card sent to Ms. Reeves and her family in the loss of her sister. Ms. Reeves asked the Board to remember LeRoy Robinson Road when we start paving.

Commissioner Hines spoke on how to get the word out regarding the change to the Agenda.

Commissioner Hines was disappointed and not in favor of not having an area for Constitutional Officer Comments on the Agenda.

Vice Chairman McCoy: shared information from the American Legion Post 186. There will be an American Red Cross Blood Drive on November 1, 2021, from 2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. On November 11th at 11:00 a.m. there will be a Veterans Day Service and the guest speaker will be Stacy Hummer. Ms. Hummer will speak on rebooting recovery programs. There will be a two-day class for first responders and training to assist any veteran with PTSD. Currently, twenty-two veterans are lost each day to suicide. Vice Chairman McCoy attended the Grand Opening of the new Veterinarian Clinic in Woodbury and stated it is a nice facility.

Vice Chairman McCoy attended the Extreme Rider Grand Opening in Warm Springs.

Vice Chairman McCoy stated we are working in more areas than one with Broadband. Meetings have been held with Diverse Power and Southern Rivers regarding Broadband in the County. There was discussion of meeting with Upson regarding corralling all EMC's in the area. The EMC's are on fiber optic and may go with ariel in some areas. Work is being done to have internet service at the Airport and Lake Meriwether by the end of the year.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: Chairman Threadgill introduced the new City Manager of Manchester, Mark Pullium and welcomed him to the meeting.

Chairman Threadgill attended a meeting at the Presidents Theater last night where there was discussion of new opportunities for Manchester including an expansion around the old mill, two new restaurants, a new art gallery and a new furniture store. There was discussion of new streetscapes, parking, and outside dining.

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Michael Hill stated there was a need for Executive Session to discuss Litigation, Personnel, Real Estate, and Tax Matters.

Theron Gay, Special Projects Director, stated the portable Vietnam Memorial will be displayed in Centralhatchee, Georgia and is free to the public. It will be open 24/7. Several schools are bringing their students to see the display.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to go into Executive Session at 6:43 p.m. to discuss Litigation, Personnel, Real Estate, and Tax Matters. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to go out of Executive Session at 7:36 p.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Shirley Hines to go back into Regular Session at 7:39 p.m. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Beth Neely Hadley and seconded by Rosla Plant to extend non-paid leave, per the request of an employee with no FMLA pay, for 6 weeks post partem. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Beth Neely-Hadley to divest 2-acres to the Meriwether County Industrial Development Authority at the corner of Waddell Road and Harmony Church Road. Voting in favor were Vice Chairman McCoy, Beth Neely-Hadley, Chairman Threadgill and Shirley Hines. Rosla Plant abstained. The Motion passed.

XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES

Chairman Threadgill announced future meetings and notices.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy and seconded by Rosla Plant to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m. All were in favor.

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

Attest: *Beuedya Thomas, County Clerk*

Date: *11-10-2021*