

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 10, 2017, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #2, 214 W. KING STREET

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

The Chairman called the meeting to order.
Pledge of allegiance to the Flag
Roll call to determine quorum

The following members were present:

R. Lynette Laughter, Chairman
Harold Brooker, Vice Chairman
Greg Jones, Member
Roger Crossen, Member
Barry W. Robbins, Member

Others Present:

Mark Gibson, County Administrator
Robert Smalley, Attorney
Citizens
Department Heads
Press

Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve the agenda. The motion was approved 4-0.

Mr. David Metcalf was named the Whitfield County Employee of the Month for May 2017. Mr. Metcalf works in the Whitfield County 911 department.

BOARD APPOINTMENT

1. **Appointment to the Dalton-Whitfield Library Board of Trustees:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to appoint Jonathan Bledsoe to the Dalton-Whitfield Library Board of Trustees to a three-year term to expire June 2020. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to approve the Regular Business Meeting Minutes of June 12, 2017, Special Called Meeting June 26, 2017, and the Work Session Minutes of June 26, 2017. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, Brooker and Robbins in agreement.

FOR CONSIDERATION

1. **Fire Department Personal Protective Clothing Purchase:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to approve the low bid for turn out gear from NAFECO for \$45,703.25. This will include 26 sets of gear, at \$1,828.13 each from the vendor NAFECO out of Decatur Alabama that has the patented inner liner system that no other company can provide. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Jones, Brooker, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.
2. **Fire Department – Surplus Radio Repeaters:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve the surplus of two (2) VHF repeaters with associated equipment, and to be sold on GovDeals.com. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Robbins, Jones and Crossen in agreement.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 10, 2017, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #2, 214 W. KING STREET

3. **May 2017 Financial Statement:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the May 2017 Financial Statement as presented by Finance Director, Alicia Vaughn. In discussion, Mrs. Vaughn reported that Local Option Sales Tax for May 2017 is \$831,010. LOST percentage 2017 = 62.653%, Local Option Sales Tax for May 2017 show an increase of 1.3% compared to Local Option Sales Tax Collections for April 2017; Local Option Sales Tax collections for May 2017 show an increase of 3.6% compared to May 2016 collections. May 2017 Year to date Local Option Sales Tax collections of \$3,995,389 show a decrease of 2.9% compared to Year to date May 2016. Year to date actual Revenues of \$11,288,057 for May 2017 are over year to date projected revenues of \$10,772,777 by 5%. Year to date actual Expenditures of \$16,300,146 for May 2017 are under Year to date projected expenditures of \$17,137,232 by 5%. TAVT collections for May 2017 were \$158,041 budgeted revenues were \$143,750. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, Brooker and Robbins in agreement. **(SEE EXHIBIT "A")**

4. **Finance – 2017 Budget Amendment No. 3:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the 2017 budget amendment No. 3 as presented by Finance Director, Alicia Vaughn. Budget Amendment No. 3 for 2017 uses \$150,035 of contingency funds from the general fund to cover the following; bathroom/concession POD project for the recreation department, software maintenance for the DA's document storage system and the building lease agreement for the public defender's office space. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Crossen, Brooker, Jones, and Robbins in agreement. **(SEE EXHIBIT "B")**

5. **Public Works – Engineering Proposal for Bridge Work:** Motion was made by Commissioner Robbins and seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve the professional services proposal bid from Heath and Lineback Engineers, Inc. in the amount of \$31,100.00. This agreement is for the development of a Bridge Asset Management Plan in Whitfield County. Heath and Lineback Engineers, Inc., will develop a plan to best ensure that the inventory is maintained in a state of good repair at the least cost to the County. Whitfield County holds and is responsible for a total of 61 in-service bridge structures of which 18 are posted with load restrictions. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Jones, Brooker, Crossen and Robbins in agreement. **(SEE EXHIBIT "C")**

6. **Parks and Recreation – Fence Bid:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to approve low bid of \$29,988 from Summit Fence for a perimeter fence at the Edwards park for the football/soccer fields. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.

7. **Rezoning Recommendation:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the rezoning request of Mark Ridley to rezone a track of land (parcel 12-088-23-000) containing a total of 0.67 acres, from Low Density Single Family Residential (R-2) to General Commercial (C-2). The Planning Commission has recommended that the Board approve the rezoning. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen, and Robbins in agreement.

8. **Special Use Permit – Andrea Bradley:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the Special Use permit request of Andrea Bradley for a General Agriculture Special Use permit for an event center (parcel 11-318-15-000).

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 10, 2017, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #2, 214 W. KING STREET

The Planning Commission has recommended that the Board approve the special use permit for an event center. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Jones, Robbins, Brooker and Crossen in agreement.

9. **Special Use Permit – Verizon Wireless:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the Special Use permit request of Verizon Wireless for a General Agriculture Special Use permit to allow a telecommunications tower on a tract of land located at 1710 Bowers Road, (parcel 09-071-21-000) containing a total of 138.76 acres. The Planning Commission has recommended that the Board approve the special use permit for the monopole communications tower. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Jones, Robbins, Brooker and Crossen in agreement.
10. **Special Use Permit – Verizon Wireless:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the Special Use permit request of Verizon Wireless for a General Agriculture Special Use permit to allow a telecommunications tower on a tract of land located on Wheeler Dam Road, (parcel 11-135-01-000) containing a total of 177.55 acres. The Planning Commission has recommended that the Board approve the special use permit for the monopole communications tower. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Jones, Robbins, Brooker and Crossen in agreement.
11. **Property lease – Quebec Dr.:** The consensus of the Board was to allow County Administrator Mark Gibson to move forward and seek out a tenant for this property. This property is located in the South side of the County and was acquired for the purpose of building a recreational facility. There is a residential structure on the property and the tenant would be the caretaker of the property.
12. **Sale of Property – Old Health Department on Applewood Dr.:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve a resolution accepting the bid from Hamilton Medical Center in the amount of \$250,000, and to authorize Chairman Laughter to sign the proper documentation to finalize the sale. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Robbins, Jones and Crossen in agreement.
13. **Discussion Re: Tax Exemption for the Elderly:**

Chairman Laughter asked for the public to come forward and speak either for or against the proposed exemption.

Darryl Long came forward and spoke in favor of the Board to asking the local legislation to allow a referendum on the November 2018 general election ballot asking Whitfield County Citizens to vote on this tax exemption.

Deanna Mathis came forward and spoke against the tax exemption stating that it is not fair for other demographics to make up the difference.

Ed Painter came forward and spoke against the tax exemption noting that it shifts the tax burden from one person to another.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 10, 2017, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #2, 214 W. KING STREET

Commissioner Greg Jones noted that he would like more public input on this before the Board makes a decision.

Commissioner Roger Crossen also noted that more public input is needed on this issue.

Commissioner Harold Brooker noted that he does not see himself voting on this exemption if it will just shift the taxes to other people.

Chairman Laughter noted that she would not like to have this exemption on a ballot.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Octavio Perez came forward to speak about the recent property tax assessments. Mr. Perez noted that in the last couple of years property values have decreased 30%-35% in property value while property tax assessments have increased almost 25%. Mr. Perez questioned the Board on how they can justify the recent increase in property assessments.

Cathy Snyder spoke on the topic of property tax assessments also. Ms. Snyder noted that there are many discrepancies in the recent property tax assessments and she would like the Board to look into it.

Phillip Neff came forward to speak about the property tax assessments. Mr. Neff asked the Board to control their wasteful spending.

David Pennington came forward to speak to the Board. Mr. Pennington noted that with the recent increase of property tax assessments that even with the rollback there will be a significant increase to property taxes. Mr. Pennington suggested to the Board to freeze the 2017 tax assessments at 2016's levels.

Cathy Holmes presented the Board with a law dating back to the 1800's that Fulton County recently used to freeze the 2017 assessments at the 2016's levels.

John Carmichael came forward to speak about Hamilton Emergency Medical Services. Mr. Carmichael stated that the citizens and taxpayers of Whitfield County deserve better services than Hamilton EMS.

Jevin Jensen came forward and questioned what software the Tax Assessors office uses to come up with the property tax assessments.

Joe Wise came forward and asked the Board how they can continue to increase the taxes.

Rueben Graham came forward and addressed the Board. Mr. Graham noted that many people are on fixed incomes however taxes still continue to rise.

Don Asbell came forward and stated that he believes that the increase in the assessments are excessive.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 10, 2017, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #2, 214 W. KING STREET

Executive Session – Property Acquisition: Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to go into executive session to discuss Property Acquisition. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Crossen, Brooker, Robbins and Jones in agreement. Present for the meeting were Chairman Lynn Laughter, Commissioners Robbins, Brooker, Crossen and Jones, County Attorney Robert Smalley, County Administrator Mark Gibson, County Clerk Blanca Cardona and Whitfield County Fire Chief Edward O'Brien.

Motion was then made by Commissioner Robbins and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to come out of Executive Session. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Robbins, Brooker, Jones and Crossen in agreement.

ADJOURN Unanimous

R. LYNETTE LAUGHTER, CHAIRMAN
WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BLANCA CARDONA, COUNTY CLERK

DATE: / /