

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M. AT EDWARDS PARK COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 115 EDWARDS PARK, DALTON, GA

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

Whitfield County is currently under a public health state of emergency as the community responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and in keeping with guidelines on public gatherings by Governor Kemp's Executive Orders 06.29.20.01 & 06.29.20.02 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: this meeting will be open to the public with social distancing measures in effect. Attendees will be seated with six (6) feet of spacing between them and seating for the meeting is limited to 50 persons. Due to reduced seating capacity the meeting will also be livestreamed using the following link: <https://livestream.com/accounts/25637515/events/7960637>

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
Barry W. Robbins, Member
Roger Crossen, Member
Greg Jones, Member

Others Present:

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

Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.

Chairman Laughter recognized Ms. Andrea Springfield, as Employee of the Month for May 2020. Ms. Springfield works in the Voter's Registrar's Office.

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2020 regular business meeting, special called meeting minutes of June 22, 2020 and work session minutes of June 22, 2020. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, Brooker and Robbins in agreement.

BOARD APPOINTMENT

Re – appointment to the Unified Board of Zoning Appeals: Motion was made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to re-appoint Tracy Ward to the Unified Board of Zoning Appeals. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Crossen, Brooker, Jones and Robbins in agreement.

FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1. 3% Pay Raise for County Employees with Exceptions:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to discuss a 3% raise for County employees. Commissioner Robbins stated he believes the employees should receive a raise however but noted now is not the right time for one. (A copy of Mr. Robbins full statement is included with these minutes.) Commissioner Jones agreed with Commissioner Robbins. The motion was put to a vote: Commissioners Crossen and Brooker in agreement and Commissioners Jones and Robbins dissenting. Chairman Laughter voted for the motion to approve a 3% raise for County employees with exceptions. The motion was approved 3-2.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M. AT EDWARDS PARK COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 115 EDWARDS PARK, DALTON, GA

2. **AP Triton Fire Study with City of Dalton:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to deny paying half of the Fire Study from AP Triton. The motion was approved 3-1, with Commissioners Robbins, Brooker and Crossen in agreement. Commissioner Jones dissented.
3. **Resolution – Strongly Encouraging the Use of Masks in Public Generally and Ordinance – Requiring the Use of Masks within Whitfield County Facilities and Vehicles to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the resolution that strongly encourages the use of masks in public and adopting the ordinance requiring the use of masks within indoor Whitfield County Facilities and Vehicles to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The motion was approved 3-1, with Commissioners Crossen, Brooker and Robbins in agreement. Commissioner Jones dissented.
4. **Engineering – Courthouse Renovations Architect Agreement:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to enter into a professional architectural services contract with Carter-Watkins Associates for courthouse renovations. Their fee is 5% of construction cost which is budgeted at \$5,714,285, making their total fee approximately, \$285,715. The motion was approved 4-0 with Commissioners Crossen, Brooker Jones, and Robbins in agreement.
5. **Engineering – Architectural Services Contract Riverbend Park Gym:** Motion was made by Commissioner Robbins and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to enter into a professional architectural services contract with Carter-Watkins Associates for professional architectural services for the design of a gymnasium/community center at the new Riverbend Park, which is a 2020 SPLOST project. Their fee is 5.0 percent of construction cost, which is conceptually budgeted at \$3,330,000, pending further design development and pricing. Their approximate total fee, therefore, is \$166,500. The motion was approved 4-0 with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, Brooker and Robbins in agreement.
6. **Engineering – Riverbend Park Grading & Site Design Contract:** Motion was made by Commissioner Robbins and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to enter into contract with Craig Cook Associates, Land Surveyors, to provide the County with construction plans for grading, drainage, erosion control, stormwater management, and other site design elements for the new Riverbend Park, which is a 2020 SPLOST project. The conceptual layout and grading design has been done in-house by the Engineering Department. Road and parking lot design will also be done in-house. Utility design will be coordinated with Dalton Utilities. Mr. Cook will incorporate our designs to develop the overall site plan and produce construction drawings, while working closely with the Engineering Department and Brian Chastain to ensure we make maximum use of the acreage we have to work with. Priority will be placed on efficiency of grading, accessibility, aesthetics, and ease of maintenance once the park is complete. This contract does not include redesign of the intersection at the South Bypass, where the new park road will intersect. That phase will be designed by others. It also does not include landscape design. Mr. Cook's fee is hourly at a rate of \$140 per hour to a maximum of \$75,000 for the current scope of the project. The motion was approved 4-0 with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, Brooker and Robbins in agreement.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M. AT EDWARDS PARK COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 115 EDWARDS PARK, DALTON, GA

7. **Engineering – Architectural Services Animal Shelter Design:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to accept the proposal from Carter-Watkins for Architectural Services for 3% of construction cost; the project budget is \$200,000. The motion was approved 4-0 with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, Brooker and Robbins in agreement.
8. **May 2020 Financial Statement:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Robbins to approve the May 2020 Financial Statement as presented by Finance Director James Garvin. Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) collections: Per the IGA, the County's LOST percentage for 2020 remains at 61.556%. It was last adjusted from 62.654% to 61.556% in 2019, down from a starting point in 2013 of 64.851%. The rate will next adjust downward in 2021. May 2020 collections of \$991,514 were 7.2% greater than budgeted collections of \$925,000. This was 15.1% greater than April 2020 collections of \$861,257. YTD May 2020 collections of \$4,488,762 were 2.2% less than same-period 2019 collections of \$4,588,036. TAVT collections for May 2020 were \$334,760. This was 36.5% greater than April 2020 collections of \$245,207. YTD May 2020 collections of \$1,705,316 were 53.6% greater than same-period 2019 collections of \$1,110,184. YTD May 2020 actual revenues of \$13,835,504 were less than projected revenues of \$14,266,581 by \$431,077, or 3.0%. YTD May 2020 actual expenditures of \$18,031,630 were less than projected expenditures of \$19,163,505 by \$1,131,875, or 5.9%. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Crossen, Jones, and Robbins in agreement.
9. **GEFA Resolution:** Motion was made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to modify the loan agreement with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) to change the project completion date from July 2020 to December 31, 2020. This agreement with GEFA is to upgrade the Carbondale Business Park's sewer capacity. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Robbins, Jones and Crossen in agreement.
10. **2019 Final Budget Amendment:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to approve the 2019 final budget amendment as presented. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Jones, Brooker, Robbins and Crossen in agreement.
11. **Professional Services Agreement Rocky Face Ridge Engineering Services:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to ratify the professional consulting services proposal from Earth Improvement Technologies regarding a geological study at Rocky Face Ridge Park. Hunt noted the park has experienced extreme erosion due to heavy rains and EIT will conduct the study and identify possible remediation that may be required. The amount of the proposal was \$44,266. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Crossen, Jones, and Robbins in agreement.
12. **Public Works – Annual Striping Bid:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Jones to award the annual road striping bid to Peek Pavement Markings, Inc. Peek Pavement Markings, Inc. was the only bidder. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.
13. **Administration Building #2 Demolition:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to authorize County Administrator Mark Gibson to issue an invitation to bid for demolition services for Administration Building #2. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M. AT EDWARDS PARK COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 115 EDWARDS PARK, DALTON, GA

14. **Edwards Park – Tennis Court Resurfacing:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to approve the low bid of \$51,506.17 from Sports Services International. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Jones, Crossen and Robbins in agreement.
15. **Edwards Park – Athletic Fields Turf bid:** Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to approve the turf bid to the low bidder that used the listed specification product. Advanced Sports Group, LLC was awarded the bid for a total of \$1,209,995.79, Construction \$506,954.79 turf and install \$703,041 total \$1,209,995.79. The motion was approved 3-2, with Commissioners Brooker, Crossen and Chairman Laughter in agreement. Commissioner Jones and Robbins dissented.
16. **Edwards Park – Regulation Size Soccer Field and Complex:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Brooker to authorize County Administrator Mark Gibson to issue an invitation to bid for a regulation size soccer field and complex at Edwards Park. The motion was approved 3-2, with Commissioners Brooker, Crossen and Chairman Laughter in agreement. Commissioner Jones and Robbins dissented.
17. **City of Tunnel Hill Annexation Request – 11-324-09-000:** Motion was made to approve the request by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Crossen for no land use classification objection to tax parcel number 11-324-09-000. The motion was approved 3-1, with Commissioners Crossen, Jones, and Robbins in agreement. Commissioner Brooker dissented.
18. **Rezoning Recommendation:** Motion was made by Commissioner Crossen and seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve the recommendation of the planning commission approving the rezoning request of Anthony Tackett to rezone (**Parcel 12-205-01-028**) from Low Density Single Family Residential (R-2) to Rural Residential (R-5) a tract of land totaling .59 acres located at 120 Dycus Road, Dalton, Georgia. The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Brooker, Crossen, Jones and Robbins in agreement.
19. **Whitfield County Unified Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment:** Motion was made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Crossen **to postpone Unified Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment until the August 10 regular business meeting.** The motion was approved 4-0, with Commissioners Robbins, Brooker, Crossen and Jones in agreement.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Daryl Long noted that he did not have anything nice to say.

Damary Gutierrez Hernandez commented the Board should implement a mask mandate.

Eros Hernandez spoke to the Board regarding the Sheriff's Office use of the 287g program. Mr. Hernandez would like more transparency regarding the budgeting of this program.

MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020, AT 6:00 P.M. AT EDWARDS PARK COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 115 EDWARDS PARK, DALTON, GA

Executive Session – Personnel: Motion was made by Commissioner Brooker and seconded by Commissioner Crossen to go into executive session to discuss Personnel. The motion was approved 5-0, with Chairman Laughter and 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, and County Clerk Blanca Cardona.

Motion was then made by Commissioner Robbins and seconded by Commission Crossen to come out of Executive Session. The motion was approved 5-0, with Chairman Laughter and Commissioners Robbins, Brooker, Jones and Crossen in agreement.

ADJOURN Unanimous

R. LYNETTE LAUGHTER, CHAIRMAN
WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BLANCA CARDONA, COUNTY CLERK

DATE: / /

From: Barry W. Robbins
Whitfield County Commissioner, District 1
Re: Response to Budget Amendment proposal (6/22/2020) and revised 7/9/2020

At the last called meeting of the Board of Commissioners on June 22, 2020 the Agenda included a Budget Amendment (which was postponed until the BOC meeting to be held on July 13, 2020) relating to a 3% salary increase for most County employees. This proposed salary increase concerns me in several areas:

1. Given the current state of the economy and pandemic issues, many businesses and organizations in Whitfield County face tough choices. They have experienced a serious drop in revenue and income. The goal of the SBA PPP found in the CARES Act has attempted to retain employees, yet many workers (taxpayers) have not yet regained full employment. The current unemployment rate of 11.1% for Metro Dalton MSA was reported in the June 30, 2020 edition Dalton Daily Citizen. This is same unemployment rate as November 2008 (during Great Recession).
2. Further evidence of the impact was the planned furloughs and layoffs of employees of area businesses. For example, the State of Georgia budget for 2020-21 for K-12 Education was cut \$1billion, which could translate to unpaid furlough days for some staff (Dalton Daily Citizen, June 19, 2020).
3. State revenues are projected to dip over 10% for this coming year, which will impact funding to Whitfield County.
4. Without knowing what the revenue shortfalls will be for Whitfield County, it is not prudent to add a large increase of \$380,000 (\$760,000 annualized) or more of expense to the budget.
5. Locally there are flooring companies and nonprofits who have eliminated salary increases, bonuses, and overtime. We need to be sensitive to the appearance of giving large raises to government employees while no other organizations in the area are providing increases. (And not every worker is even back to work yet).
6. In the 2019 budget hearings for the 2020 Whitfield County budget, the Chair asked if a 2% salary increase should be considered and that suggestion was rejected by Commissioners.
7. It was reported in the June 20, 2020 edition of the Dalton Daily Citizen about how the City of Refuge has seen a huge surge in food request for its food bank. Previously, it was reported that the Schools and Salvation Army were increasing their meal deliveries to kids and those in need. Furthermore, Chattanooga Times on July 8, 2020 reported food insecurity is expected to rise 42% overall in Whitfield County with Whitfield children's insecurity jumping 57%. A payroll increase will look fiscally irresponsible or even insensitive.
8. In the June 27 -28, 2020 edition of the Dalton Daily Citizen related to the State of Georgia's overall budget was reported "...budget proposal that is facing \$2.2 billion in spending cuts".
9. Inflation for 2020 is nearly nonexistent with some months having a negative inflation rate (deflation).
10. Since 2015, Whitfield County has lost 6 employees to the City of Dalton. In this same period, Whitfield County has hired 5 of the City of Dalton's employees.
11. There is no reason for a salary adjustment or cost of living adjustment to be awarded at this time. That is NOT being fiscally responsible to the taxpayer.

I will add that this is NOT a reflection on the efforts or performance of the fine Whitfield County employees. It is simply a reflection of the economic times we find ourselves.

Respectfully,
Barry W. Robbins