

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' WORK SESSION

4:00 P.M., MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2019

HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE, CLARKESVILLE, GEORGIA

A work session of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, February 18, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. in the Jury/DA's Conference Room of the Habersham County Courthouse in Clarkesville, Georgia.

Present: Chairman Stacy Hall; Commissioners Natalie Crawford, Dustin Mealor, Jimmy Tench, and Ed Nichols; County Attorney Donnie Hunt; County Manager Phil Sutton; County Clerk Lindsay Underwood; Administrative Assistant/Deputy Clerk Melissa Shank Gragg; Various Habersham County Department Directors and Employees; Individuals from the Media and Public.

Chairman Hall called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Chairman Hall led the Invocation.

Chairman Hall led the Pledge of Allegiance.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

- a. Habersham County Little League Presentation – Jeff Spivey

Jeff Spivey spoke about the Little League fields' need for erosion control, turf renovation, infield mix, and proper drainage due to general maintenance and upkeep needs. Sports Field Unlimited, Inc. visited the fields and provided cost estimates to address those problems. Mr. Spivey presented a 5-year plan on how these needs may be addressed. Year 1 of the plan addresses the urgent needs such as turf renovation and infield mix on fields 1, 2, and 3. Chairman Hall asked for clarification of whether the areas to be renovated were high traffic areas. Mr. Spivey said they were but that these issues can be managed by consistently aerating the fields. Commissioner Nichols asked if the County recently spent money on turf. Parks and Recreation Director Kurt Cooper clarified that sod was put down in 2015 and infield mix was put on the fields in 2017. Year 2 of the plan addresses turf renovation and infield mix for fields 4 and 5. Year 3 includes aerating and top dressing the fields, Year 4 would redo the mounds, and Year 5 would aerate the fields again. Mr. Spivey stated that some of the cost estimates received from Sports Turf Unlimited, Inc. could be trimmed by using County resources. Mr. Spivey also pointed out that the maintenance of the fields needs to be ongoing and that there needs to be good communication between Little League and the County.

Opening Day for Little League is March 23, 2019. Parks and Recreation Director Kurt Cooper said he felt that the current budget for his department would allow for the new turf from Year 1 of the plan to be put in. Chairman Hall and Mr. Cooper discussed the difference between Sports Field Unlimited's costs versus County costs. Mr. Cooper pointed out that when infield mix was installed in 2017, the County did the work. County Manager Phil Sutton stated that he and Mr. Cooper had discussed this and believed the plan could be accomplished using County resources.

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b. Tax Assessors Discussion on Reading Affidavits

Chief Tax Assessor Joan Church spoke regarding how to read tax affidavits. She explained the main reason for the affidavits is to report to the Commission any time a change is made such as a correction to an error in data, adding or removing exemptions, and if there are appeals. Ms. Church reviewed two affidavit forms and exemption codes. Chairman Hall asked for clarification of the codes used, Ms. Church explained that codes are used to relay information to the Tax Commissioner's office. She further stated that although an exemption amount may change, the value amount stays the same. Commissioner Crawford stated she would like to see how revenue would be affected by the change reported on the affidavit. Ms. Church explained to the Commission how that information would be calculated using the affidavit. County Manager Phil Sutton explained to Commission that they do not need to verify the amounts on the affidavits, they only need to acknowledge that a change has occurred and has been reported to the Commission.

c. Boards, Commissions, and Authorities Policy Revisions

County Clerk Lindsay Underwood spoke regarding revisions to the Boards, Commissions, and Authorities policy, which arose from a previous concern that some appointed to serve were not participating in required Open Records/Open Meetings training. The policy revisions will enforce the requirement to participate in training as well as make some other necessary revisions and clarifications. During his review, Attorney Jordan Posey recommended the inclusion of some language that anyone who misses three consecutive meetings without notice may be considered as voluntarily resigned, thus allowing the Commission to replace those appointments. Commissioner Tench stated that the Board of Tax Assessors are required to attend training that includes the Open Records/Open Meetings as part of that training and asked if that was acceptable. Mrs. Underwood stated they would need to bring her documentation that they had completed training. Chairman Hall asked if appointees would be notified of the changes if the policy revisions are approved, Mrs. Underwood confirmed that everyone would be notified and that there would be an Open Records/Open Meetings training offered soon.

d. Short-Term Use of the Old Airport Terminal Building by the U.S. Forest Service

County Manager Phil Sutton spoke about the U.S. Forest Service temporarily leasing the old airport terminal building prior to Air Methods potentially moving in. They have also asked permission to place a small trailer behind the building when Air Methods occupies the building. Commissioner Crawford asked to clarify that they are not requesting the County to provide the trailer, but for permission to place the trailer on the property, Mr. Sutton confirmed that was correct. Commissioner Nichols asked if that meant the County would collect rent from both parties, Mr. Sutton confirmed that the County would.

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e. Jail Financing Discussion

Andrew Tritt of Stifel, Nicolaus & Co. spoke about jail financing options and provided an amortization schedule. Two versions of the amortization schedule were provided, one if SPLOST 2021 paid 50% of the debt service, and another if there was a referendum passed with no SPLOST 2021 proceeds used to fund the debt. The planned project list for SPLOST 2021 will absorb all available SPLOST revenue, not including the jail project. County Manager Phil Sutton stated that the Commission ultimately has two financing options for funding the new jail. The first option is a bond referendum, the second is the creation of a Public Facilities Authority. Commissioner Nichols asked if a bond referendum would be at 100%, County Manager Phil Sutton confirmed it would. Commissioner Nichols expressed concerns that if, in the case of a referendum, then a later vote for SPLOST, one of those votes may not pass. Mr. Nichols asked Mr. Tritt his thoughts on that to which Mr. Tritt replied it was not his area of expertise, but that the difference in the two methods would be nominal. Commissioner Nichols asked what could be done if a bond referendum failed, Chairman Hall stated the County would be locked out of other financing option for a period of four years.

Chairman Hall stated he would prefer to table discussions on jail financing until the independent study, which will compare the costs of building a new jail versus continuing as we are, is received. He stated he would like to compile a needs list for the next SPLOST in the meantime, Commissioner Nichols agreed. Commissioner Mealor stated he is not interested in creating a Public Facilities Authority and feels this matter should go before the tax payers. Commissioner Crawford and Chairman Hall agreed they were not interested in a Public Facilities Authority.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION: None

Motion by Commissioner Nichols, seconded by Commissioner Crawford, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

ADJOURN: 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____
Chairman Stacy Hall

Attest: _____
County Clerk Lindsay Underwood