

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION
4:00 P.M., MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2021
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN STREET
CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523

A work session of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, February 15, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse in Clarkesville, Georgia.

Present: Commissioner Bruce Palmer; Commissioner Bruce Harkness; Chairman Dustin Mealor; Commissioner Jimmy Tench; Vice-Chairman Tim Stamey; County Attorney Donnie Hunt; County Manager Phil Sutton; County Clerk Lindsay Underwood; County Department Directors; Individuals from the Media and Public.

Chairman Mealor called the work session to order at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Stamey led the Invocation.

Commissioner Stamey led the Pledge of Allegiance.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

a. Habersham Medical Center Quarterly Report

Tyler Williams, Habersham Medical Center CEO; Susan McCrary, Habersham Medical Center Director of Finance; and Valerie Lewis, Habersham Medical Center Director of Nursing gave a report on Habersham Medical Center's FY2021 Quarter 2 Financial Status and a COVID-19 update.

Commissioner Harkness asked whether or not capital expenditures and CARES funding were reflected in the chart on page 5 of the report. They were not. Commissioner Harkness asked if the hospital had applied for grant assistance or PPP, the hospital is looking into various grants, but did not qualify for PPP since they have more than 500 employees. Commissioner Harkness asked for clarification on ICU beds/vent patients and when the COVID vaccine list will be opened up for the general public to get the vaccine. Criteria for the COVID vaccine comes from the State government, and the hospital won't know anything until the State changes the criteria.

b. Discussion on Team for Radio System RFP Review

Lynn Smith, E911/EMA Director, addressed the Board. The kickoff meeting for the RFP process was held on January 28, 2021. It has been determined that having four groups, consisting of Law Enforcement, Fire/EMS, Management, and Communications from the County and each of the 7 municipalities, is the best approach for the RFP selection process. Each group will grade the RFP's received, and the group as a whole will pick the RFP with the highest grade to recommend to the Commission for final approval. The Board of Education has not indicated that they are interested in participating in the process at this point. However, they will be kept updated on the progress of the project. Discussion ensued about there being a lack of participation from the municipalities during recent user group/radio system meetings. County Manager Phil Sutton stated he would reach out to each of the City Managers personally to encourage participation. The next RFP meeting is set for February 24, 2021. The Commissioners asked, once the RFP's are received and the grading criteria is

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completed, if Lynn Smith would ensure they received copies of the grading criteria. She said she would be sure to provide them.

- c. Discussion on Social Media Policy (Under Consent Agenda during the February 15, 2021 Regular Commission Meeting)

Carolyn McDuffie, Public Information Officer, addressed the Board, stating that the Commissioners have expressed interest in starting official Habersham County social media accounts as a way to provide public information to constituents. The policy is the next step in that direction, as it will provide procedures for staff, terms of use for users, etc. The policy was discussed in-depth at the Commissioner's annual retreat. County Manager Phil Sutton added this policy would become part of the personnel policies that all new employees receive and would go into effect immediately once approved. Commissioner Tench asked if accounts go through the County Manager, Ms. McDuffie clarified that all accounts created on behalf of the County will have to be approved by the County Manager's office. Commissioner Harkness expressed concerns with section i. of the policy. County Attorney Donnie Hunt stated the Commission could vote to move this item to new business during the regular meeting and revise the policy prior to approving it.

- d. Discussion on COLA Increase for County Employees, Pay Increase for CDL Drivers in the Public Works Department, and Related Budget Adjustment (Under New Business during the February 15, 2021 Regular Commission Meeting)

County Manager Phil Sutton and Vinitha Robinson, Human Resources Director, addressed the Board, stating that the COLA increases were discussed at the annual retreat. The cost for the COLA increase is approximately \$145,000 total for all full-time and part-time employees for the remainder of FY21. The agenda item also proposed that the pay tables move in order to accommodate four employees considered to be at the top of the pay scale, to ensure they receive the increase. The pay increase for CDL drivers was also discussed at the Commission Retreat, the proposed increase is \$2.00 per hour for field employees with a Class A CDL and \$1.50 per hour for field employees with a Class B CDL.

- e. Discussion on Demorest Fire Services

County Manager Phil Sutton and Chad Black, Emergency Services Director, addressed the Board. They have had conversations amongst themselves on how to best handle a potential merger of Demorest Fire Services with Habersham County Emergency Services. Mr. Sutton would like for the Commission to consider, at some point, appointing two Commissioners to serve on a committee that would consist of two Commissioners, two City Council Members, County Staff, and City Staff to have initial discussion about what the City wants and where to start with the discussions of this potential merger. The City approached the County about this, and there are still many unanswered questions related to recruiting Demorest staff, the ongoing discussions about purchasing a fire truck for Demorest, and the special service tax district that would need to be created if the merger occurred. The County would also want to move into Demorest's current fire station because it is in a better location. However, discussions would need to be had about the long-term plan to construct a new EMS base station near Demorest in order to ensure the best for both the City and County.

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Mr. Black stated that about 65% of Demorest's calls are going out of city, and if a merger were to occur it would result in as good or better coverage overall, and the increased personnel would help with that.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION: None

ADJOURN: 5:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____

Chairman Dustin Mealor

Attest: _____

County Clerk Lindsay Underwood