

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
6:00 P.M., MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022  
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM  
295 LLEWELLYN STREET  
CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523**

A regular meeting of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, March 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse located at 295 Llewellyn Street, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present: Chairman Bruce Palmer; Vice Chairman Bruce Harkness; Commissioner Dustin Mealor; Commissioner Ty Akins; Commissioner Jimmy Tench; County Manager Alicia Vaughn; County Attorney Donnie Hunt; County Clerk Brandalin Carnes; Individuals from the Media and Public.

Chairman Palmer called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Commissioner Akins lead the invocation.

Commissioner Tench lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Akins and voted unanimously to adopt the amended agenda. Changes that had been made to the agenda that was originally published for the public are as follows:

**Addition of item b. to Public Comment**

- b. Clayton W. King: Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts

**Addition of Applicant to Tax Assessors Board, Airport Commission and Development Authority:**

- Amy Vandiver Sgro

**Item b. Removed from New Business and Placed Under Hearings as Item (a).**

- a. CU-22-01: Habersham Homeless Ministries is seeking a conditional use to establish a homeless shelter at 825 Hwy 17 North in the LI, Low Intensity District.

**Addition of Item j. to New Business**

- j. Consider/Approve Creation of Full Time Job Position of Election Technician/Coordinator

**Rearrangement of All Items Under New Business for Improved Meeting Flow For Public**

**Correction to item c. under New Business:**

- a. Consider/Approve Contract for Storm Izzy Debris Removal from Fairgrounds

## PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Habersham Education & Research: Peter Madruga: Mr. Madruga was not in attendance to give his presentation.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- a. **CU-22-01:** Habersham Homeless Ministries is seeking a conditional use to establish a homeless shelter at 825 Hwy 17 North in the LI, Low Intensity District. Planning and Development Director Mike Beecham informed the Commission that this new homeless shelter is on a property adjacent to an existing homeless shelter operated by Habersham Homeless Ministries. The house on the property is a single-family home with three bedrooms. It is capable of housing either one family unit or six individual residents of either sex but will not house individuals of both sexes at the same time. Only one person spoke against the request citing concerns with safety issues and the opinion that such a facility would be better served by being located within a city closer to services such as grocery stores. The Planning Commissions only concern was that the existing house predates the setbacks and is very close to the right-of-way in the front of the home. They are unsure about parking in the back of the home as it is unknown at this time where the septic is located. The Planning Commission is recommending approval with the conditions of no parking in the front yard (all parking at rear and sides) and no parking on the septic system. Habersham Homeless Ministries Board Member, Pastor Tommy Stowe, spoke on behalf and in support of the shelter. No one from the public spoke against the request.

Motion by Commissioner Akin, seconded by Commissioner Mealar and voted unanimously to approve CU-22-01 with conditions as recommended by the planning Commission.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- a. **Peggy Fortson:** Support of Resurfacing of Tennis Courts for Pickleball. She has kept track of attendance via signup sheets and over the past 28 days 365 people have played pickleball both on inside and outside courts at all times of the day and night. She wanted to express that the pickleball community did not set out to convert the tennis courts, they had initially requested a new pickleball complex and it was not financially viable. Resurfacing the two tennis courts to convert them into pickleball courts was the only option that fit the available funds.
- b. **Clayton W. King:** Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts for Pickleball. He states that the Tennis Courts are fairly new and in good condition and that he believes that resurfacing two perfectly good tennis courts is wasting the initial money that went into building them. He says that the tennis community is happy to lobby for a new pickleball complex, but the pickleball community needs to be patient and wait for this to come about like the tennis community had to wait for the current tennis courts.
- c. **Clark Blackburn:** Opposition to the MOU for the Old Courthouse. Does not understand why it is being given away rather than sold.

- d. **Paula Wonders:** Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts. She expressed that she is in support of a new complex being built for the pickleball players as was originally intended but does not agree with taking away the courts from the tennis community to give to the pickleball community. Does not believe that the issue should be the distribution of the current courts, the issue should be that there are not enough courts in general between both sports. Building a new pickleball complex would relieve the burden on both sports by allowing all four tennis courts to be for tennis use only and giving the Pickleball players their own dedicated courts.
- e. **Jeff Caudell:** Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts for Pickleball. Mr. Caudell is a public-school educator whose son is on the tennis team. He believes that the Board of Commissioners should stick to their initial promise to build a new pickleball complex. He does not agree with the idea that there is not enough money or space to be able to do so and thinks the Commission should put off the decision and look into getting more bids for building a complex.
- f. **Chris Watson:** Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts for Pickleball. Informed the Commission that a petition was given to them with over 500 signatures expressing opposition to the conversion of tennis courts into pickleball courts. At the previous meeting, a Commissioner had asked them why no objections had been brought up previously. He says that this was because the general public had not been made aware of the change from building a new pickleball complex to resurfacing tennis courts. He said it would have been appropriate for a sign to have been put up at the tennis courts and for members of the tennis community to have been contacted. He also reminded the Commission that tennis is a current team sport in the Habersham County school system whereas pickleball is not.
- g. **David Green:** Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts for Pickleball. Started playing tennis from the early age of 9 years old. It is a difficult sport that takes years of practice to be proficient. How are young people supposed to be able to dedicate the time needed if they do not have enough courts to be able to play on? Feels that we should build more courts for both pickleball and tennis, not take away from either sport.
- h. **Miriam Iossi:** Support of Resurfacing Tennis Courts for Pickleball. As a pickleball player herself, Miriam has seen how much use both the inside and outside courts get. She uses the inside courts herself due to her age causing falls to be a concern, however the younger folks enjoy the ability to play outside even in the rain. She feels that these players deserve to have a dedicated place outside to be able to play.
- i. **Gene Caso:** Plays and supports both sports and wants to continue to see both sports grow. States that he has seen this struggle between pickleball and tennis and the fights over court conversions happening in Florida as well.
- j. **Bill McCalla:** Opposition to Resurfacing of Tennis Courts for Pickleball. He believes that the two sports shouldn't be forced into a position that pits them against each other. He states that the argument about who deserves the current courts is trifling. The pickleball community deserves to have their own pickleball complex as they initially requested. Converting the tennis

courts does a disservice to the tennis community as well as short changing the tennis community.

### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to adopt the consent agenda.

- a. Consider/Approve Minutes of February 21, 2022 Work Session
- b. Consider/Approve Minutes of February 21, 2022 Regular Meeting
- c. Consider/Approve Minutes of February 21, 2022 Executive Session
- d. Consider/Approve Tax Affidavit 2021-12
- e. Consider/Approve Tax Affidavit 2021-13
- f. Consider/Approve FY2022 Budget Adjustment 2022-01
- g. Consider/Approve Resolution Adopting Amended and Restated Defined Contribution Plan and Execute Adoption Agreement

### **REPORTS:**

- a. Manager's Report: Alicia Vaughn reported to the Commissioners that EMA/E911 Director Lynn Smith is applying for a grant to acquire two new generators that would be located at the Road Department and the Administrative Building. She also informed that the Finance Department completed the RFQ's for the new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and new Animal Control facility and that their approval of these RFQ's tonight would allow the projects to move forward into the design phase. Public Works is requesting a contract to be awarded at tonight's meeting that would allow for the removal of the Storm Izzy debris from the soccer field parking lots located at the Fairgrounds. Contracting this out is beneficial to Public Works as mowing season has started which will be tying up the staff. Mrs. Vaughn informed that one topic of concern that has come out of her Department Head meeting was issues with the supply chain in obtaining equipment and vehicles needed for the various Departments and that it has come to a point where purchases that would normally be planned for future fiscal years would have to occur now to get them in time. She updated the Commission on the status of her search for an Airport Manager and Emergency Services Director. She is in the process of interviewing for both positions using the new Spark Hire software. She reminded the Commission that the first of the two Departmental Budget meetings will be held on Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup> and invited the Commission to attend. This meeting has been publicly advertised and is open to the public so a quorum will not be an issue.

### **APPOINTMENTS:**

#### **BOARD OF TAX ASSESORS- 3-year term**

Steve Lindley- Term Expires 12/31/2021- Commissioner Mealor's Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Akins and voted unanimously to appoint Amy Vandiver Sgro to the Board of Tax Assessors for a three year term expiring on December 31, 2024.

**AIRPORT COMMISSION- 3-year term**

Greg Caudell- Term Expires 2/1/2022- Commissioner Harkness' Appointment

D.Higgins-Term Expires 2/1/2022- Commissioner Palmer's Appointment

Lawrence Bridges (Resignation)- Term Expires 2/1/2024- Commissioner Akins' Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Akins and voted unanimously to appoint Andy Anderson to the Airport Commission for a three-year term expiring on February 1, 2025.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously to reappoint D. Higgins to the Airport Commission for a three-year term expiring on February 1, 2025.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously to appoint Justin Schapansky to the Airport Commission for the remainder of Lawrence Bridges term expiring on February 1, 2024.

**DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY- 3-year term**

C. Allen Whitener 2/17/2022- Commissioner Tench's Appointment

Debbie Purcell-Term Expires 2/17/2022- Commissioner Harkness' Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Akins and voted unanimously to appoint Kelly Woodall to the Development Authority for a three-year term expiring on February 17, 2025.

Motion by Commissioner Tench to appoint C. Allen Whitener to the Development Authority. The motion was not seconded and thus the motion died.

Motion by Commissioner Tench, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously to table the appointment till the April 18, 2022 Commission Meeting.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. **Consider/Approve Award RFP 2022-008 for Pickleball/Tennis Court Resurfacing:** Finance Kurt Cooper informed the Commissioners that RFP#2022-008 was advertised in February 2022 for a public bid opening scheduled for March 7, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. This RFP was for the resurfacing of two (2) existing tennis courts and for two (2) of the tennis courts to be resurfaced to create 6 dedicated pickleball courts at the Habersham County Recreation Center. The three proposals that were received were reviewed and scored on March 14, 2022 by a review panel made up of Recreation Director Kurt Cooper, a local USA Pickleball Ambassador and Facilities Management Director Mike Bramlett. Signature Tennis Courts of Woodstock, GA was ranked #1. Their total pricing for the requested services was \$88,738.00.

Discussion was had by the Commission. Commissioner Mealor asked if was possible for us to find unused monies in other areas of the budget for funding the difference between what is budgeted for the resurfacing/conversion of the tennis courts and funding a new pickleball complex? He

mentioned that he believes that there are funds leftover from a trail system project that fell through that could potentially be used. He also asked if we could potentially reach out to the school system to see if they would be willing to help with some funding as well. He suggests that the board wait one more month to check into repurposing other funds and reaching out to other community resources to see if it is possible to come up with the needed difference. Commissioner Harkness stated that the taxpayers own the tennis courts at the school as well and that the public should reach out to the school system regarding opening these to the public. Commissioner Akin expressed that once Cornelia repairs the tennis courts that are not currently being used due to disrepair it would replace the ones that are being taken away and thus should alleviate any burden placed on the tennis community.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to table this item for the April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Commission Meeting.

- b. Consider/Approve MOU between Development Authority of Habersham County and City of Clarkesville for Redevelopment Plan for Downtown Clarkesville:** County Manager Alicia Vaughn stated that the MOU requires that the courthouse be converted into affordable housing and that certain investments be made or the property would be reverted back to the County.

Motion by Commissioner Akin, seconded by Commissioner Palmer to approve the MOU between the Development Authority of Habersham County and the City of Clarkesville. This motion failed 2-3 with Commissioners Harkness, Tench and Mealor dissenting.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor to table this item until the April 18, 2022 Commission meeting. This motion passed 3-2 with Commissioners Harkness and Tench dissenting.

- c. Consider/Approve Contract for Storm Izzy Debris Removal from Fairgrounds**

At 7:40 p.m. Chairman Palmer recused himself and removed himself from the meeting due to the fact that his son's business "Palmer's Firewood & Farm Services, LLC" was the lowest bidder and is being recommended for contracting to do this work. Vice Chairman Bruce Harkness presided during the course of discussion of this agenda item. He reiterated for the public that Commissioner Palmer does not own any interest in his son's business and that his son was in fact the lowest bidder. Public Works Director Jerry Baggett informed three separate vendors had given him a quote and Palmer's Firewood and Farm Services, LLC was the lowest at \$10,200. Commissioner Harkness asked Mr. Baggett about logs that had been removed from the brush pile and Mr. Baggett informed that these had been picked up and hauled off by a milling company. Commissioner Harkness expressed his disappointment that these were given away when he believes that the value of said logs would have reduced or eliminated the cost of the debris removal. Mr. Baggett stated that no one had been willing to come pickup the logs and that the cost and manpower it would have required to deliver the logs would have been more than their value.

Motion Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Akins to approve the contract with Palmer's Firewood and Farm Services, LLC for removal of Storm Izzy Debris from the Fairgrounds. This motion passed 4-1 with Commissioner Tench dissenting.

At 7:45 p.m. Chairman Palmer was brought back into the meeting and resumed presiding over the meeting.

d. **Consider/Approve Award of RFP 2022-005 for Design of New Emergency Operations**

**Headquarters:** Finance Director Tim Sims informed the Commissioners that RFP#2022-05 was advertised in February 2022 for a public bid opening scheduled on March 7, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. This RFP was for Architectural services for building design, construction documents and construction management services for a Fire/EMS Headquarters Administration Building. The five proposals that were received were reviewed and scored on March 14, 2022 by a panel made up of Emergency Service Co-Directors Jeff Adams and Jason Davey, E-911/EMA Director Lynn Smith, E-911/EMA Assistant Director Melanie Bellinger, Public Works Director Jerry Baggett and Planning and Development Director Mike Bramlett. Croft & Associates ranked #1 when all criteria was reviewed. Their cost for providing the requested services is a lump sum payment of \$45,000 for preliminary design service, 4.43% of construction costs for construction documents and 1.45% of construction costs for construction administration. The total of these costs is estimated to be \$440,000, however final cost estimates will not be available until the design phase is completed.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously to approve.

e. **Consider/Approve Award of RFP 2022-006 for Design of New Animal Control Facility:**

Finance Director Tim Sims informed the Commissioners that RFP#2022-006 was advertised in February 2022 for a public bid opening scheduled for March 7, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. This RFP was for Architectural services for building design, construction documents and construction management services for the Habersham County Animal Control Facility. The four proposals that were received were reviewed and scored on March 14, 2022 by a review panel made up of Animal Control Director Madi Nix, a local veterinarian volunteer, Public Works Director Jerry Baggett, and Facilities Management Director Mike Bramlett. Croft and Associates ranked #1 when all criteria was reviewed. Their cost for providing the requested services is a lump sum payment of \$31,500 for preliminary design service, 3.90% of construction costs for construction documents and 1.75% of construction costs for construction administration. The total of these costs is estimated to be \$181,000, however final cost estimates will not be available until the design phase is completed.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to approve.

f. **Consider/Approve Administration of Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding**

**(CESF) Grant:** Finance Manager Kiani Holden informed the Commission that the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) is awarding this grant to Habersham County in recompense for having inadvertently caused our county to lose funding from the VAWA grant. This money, like the money from the previous grant that was lost, will be used to reimburse a portion of the salaries for two (2) Sheriff's Office Employees and requires no match.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to approve.

g. **Consider/Approve Change of Prescription Plan from SouthernScript/ScriptSourcing to**

**Veracity Powered by ProCare.** Human Resources Director Ann Cain informed the Commission that the County's insurance broker MSI has researched and recommend this change in the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) and manufacturer assistance program (MAP) to help lower pharmacy costs. Research shows that these changes will reduce the average cost to fill a prescription

from \$8.25 to \$4.50 and open up the preferred pharmacy network to local pharmacy and grocery stores which would result in a savings of \$69,000. It will also lower the administrative costs from 20% of the drug costs, at this time \$108,000, to a fixed fee of only \$38,000 annually. This change will also result in increased engagement of members on the International Drug program resulting in a savings of \$93,000. The total estimated annual savings from these changes will be approximately \$290,620.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to approve.

**h. Consider/Approve MOU between Sheriff Department and Schools for School Resource Officers**

This new MOU covers aspects that were not covered in the previous MOU's. The school system agreed to fund a second SRO officer. Now the county will fund one (1) officer, the school will fund one (1) officer and the remaining six (6) are funded at 70% by the school and 30% by the county. The total cost of funding these eight positions is \*\*\*\*\* with the county paying only **\$191,573.36**. This is a great partnership between the school and the county to provide for the safety of the community's youth.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Tench and voted unanimously to approve.

**i. Consider/Approve Task Order for Design and Bid of Two (2) 10-Unit T-Hangars and One Commercial Box Hangar at Airport:** County Manager Alicia Vaughn informed the Commission that this task order has been approved by the Airport Commission and sent up to the Board of Commissioners for their review and approval. These hangars would be self-funded as the rent will cover the payments to the debt service. There are currently twenty-eight (28) individuals on a personal hangar wait list that is 8.5 years long. There are currently two (2) individuals on a newly started commercial box hangar wait list.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Tench and voted unanimously to approve.

**j. Consider/Approve Creation of Full Time Job Position of Election Technician/Coordinator:**

Human Resources Director Ann Cain informed the Commission that the responsibility of conducting federal, state, county and six (6) municipality elections on the new statewide implemented voting equipment while maintaining compliance with the new SB 202 election laws is putting a huge strain on the Elections and Voter Registration Department. Currently that Department only has two full-time positions, those of Election Supervisor/Chief Registrar and Assistant Election Supervisor/Deputy Registrar, and one part-time Elections Assistant. Elections Supervisor/Chief Registrar Laurel Ellison has requested that the part-time Elections Assistant be converted into a full-time position to handle the extra workload.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Tench and voted unanimously to approve.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

**ADJOURN: 8:06 P.M.**

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:06 P.M.

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