

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
6:00 P.M., MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN STREET
CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523**

The Habersham County Board of Commissioners held its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, April 17, 2023 in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse located at 295 Llewellyn St, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present were Chairman Ty Akins, Vice Chairman Bruce Harkness, Commissioner Bruce Palmer, Commissioner Dustin Mealor, Commissioner Jimmy Tench, County Attorney Donnie Hunt, County Manager Alicia Vaughn, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, County Department Heads, members of the media and the public.

Chairman Akins called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Commissioner Tench lead the invocation.

Commissioner Mealor lead the pledge of allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Commissioner Mealor to remove all the appointments for the Ethics Panel from the agenda, remove item f. "Consider/Approve Reactivation of Constitutional Development Authority" and replace with item f. "First Reading of Amendment to Code of Ordinances for the Purpose of Updating the Code of Ethics". Motion was seconded by Commissioner Harkness and carried 4-1 with Commissioner Palmer dissenting.

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Special Recognition of Chandler Franklin
- b. Employee Spotlight: Renee Watts (Finance)

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- a. Doug McDonald- Current Condition of the County and Other Related Issues
- b. Bill Gresham- Resignation from Planning Commission
- c. Janet Westervelt- Soque River Watershed Associations Interest in Purchasing 1387 Washington St Property from County
- d. Jason Smith- Requests Review of Policies for Planning Commission Regarding Conflicts of Interest and Requests Bill Gresham Reconsider Resignation
- e. Keith Canup- Opposition to Harvest Church Rd Subdivision and Opposition to Industrial Development Authority and Construction of Airport Hangars.
- f. Maggie Dryer- Concerns Regarding Enforcement of Current CLDO, Specifically in Regard to Harvest Church Rd Subdivision

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- a. Consider/Approve Minutes for March 20, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes
- b. Consider/Approve Erosion Control Easement with Board of Education for Fairview Tower Site
- c. Consider/Approve Surplus Vehicle Auction List

REPORTS:

- a. Manager's Report: Alicia Vaughn
- b. Updates from Grant Coordinator Lauren Long

APPOINTMENTS:

ETHICS PANEL 2-year term

Theresa Tapley (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Tench's Appointment
Virginia Webb (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Tench's Appointment
Patrick Ledford (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Meador's Appointment
Michael Day (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Meador's Appointment
Darrin Johnson (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Akins' Appointment
Bill Miles (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Akins' Appointment
Phil DeMore (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Harkness' Appointment
Stephanie Almagno (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Harkness' Appointment
Charles Ladd (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Palmer's Appointment
Fran Blackburn (Term Expiration) 04/20/2023- Commissioner Palmer's Appointment

All planned appointments for the ethics panel for this meeting were removed during the adoption of the agenda.

JOINT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY 4-year term

Brent Edwards (Resignation) 06/30/2023- At Large Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to appoint Kelly Woodall to serve the remainder of this term for the Joint Development Authority.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Consider/Approve Membership Fee Structure for Aquatic Center Fitness & Swim Pass

Recreation Department Director Brooke Whitmire addressed the Commission. The proposed fee structure was modeled based on data that was received from surrounding counties that provide similar services. The Recreation Department offered access to swimming and the fitness center for free through the month of March to allow for the time needed for enrolling current users into the new membership fee structure. They had 84 people sign up within the first month. Commissioner Palmer requested that a change be made in that

military and veterans be offered the same discount as county employees and senior citizens. Commissioner Harkness asked how much the salary was for the position that was created to supervise the fitness center, to which Ms. Whitmire informed him that it was around \$54,000 with benefits included. Commissioner Harkness stated that it would take over 200 members to cover the cost of the position. Commissioner Mealor asked how members who pay for multiple months at a time would be refunded if the Commission decides to close the fitness center? Ms. Whitmire informed him that this is easily done through the new Rec Desk registration software that they have, which will allow for partial refunds electronically. Commissioner Harkness asked about the fees that would be charged for swimming and County Manager Vaughn informed him that patrons who do not have a membership would pay a daily use fee for the pool, though indoor walking and open gym use would remain free. Ms. Whitmire stated that children will be allowed free use of the aquatic center with an adult who has a membership. Commissioner Palmer stated that the county has a scholarship fund to aid with fees for those who are unable to pay. Commissioner Harkness stated that feels that the government shouldn't be in competition with private, tax paying businesses in the community and that he is against the counties long term operation of the fitness center.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer to accept the fee schedule with the change of the fee for military/veterans being the same as employees and seniors. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Mealor and carried 4-1 with Commissioner Harkness dissenting.

b. Consider/Approve 2023 Health Insurance Plan Renewal

Finance Director Tim Sims addressed the Commission on behalf of Human Resource Director Ann Cain, who was unable to be present at the meeting. Even though regular medical claims were slightly under the estimated claim costs, there were 5-6 high cost claims that resulted in payments totaling over \$1.6 million by themselves. This has resulted in a slight increase in insurance premiums for the coming year. County Manager Vaughn informed the Commission that, though the premiums will increase, they are still much lower than what she has seen in other counties in part because Habersham County is self-insured.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve.

c. Consider/Approve Educational Affiliation Agreement Between Habersham County Emergency Services and NGMC Habersham for Advance EMT Training

Habersham County Emergency Services Director Jeff Adams informed the Commission that the county currently has this same agreement with Habersham Medical Center, however the agreement is needing to be updated to reflect the hospitals takeover by Northeast Georgia Medical Center. This agreement allows for Habersham County Emergency Services Training Center students to complete the hospital clinical rotations required by the State office of EMS. Students are required to pay for and provide their own insurance.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve.

d. Consider/Approve MOA with Emory University for Emory Rural Tele-EMS Network

Emergency Services Director Jeff Adams informed the Commission that around 2015 or 2016 Habersham County Emergency Services had tried to offer telehealth services but were unable to continue the program due to connectivity issues. He feels that the technology is better and that this time it will work. He sees this as being a great option for patients who don't necessarily want or need to go to the hospital but who still wish to speak with a doctor. The patient continues to have the option of going to the hospital if they desire. This is a grant funded partnership with Emory University with no cost to the county. The County already has a modem that was paid for by the Georgia Trauma Commission and the grant covers all other equipment costs.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Meador and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve.

e. Consider/Approve RFQ for Demolition of Old Courthouse

County Manager Vaughn addressed the Commission, informing them that the Development Authority voted at their last meeting to move forward with getting formal quotes for the cost to demolish the courthouse. The DCA has some grant opportunities are being explored to see if they can be used for funding this. Commissioner Harkness wanted everyone to know that the property was put out for bid and only one bid was received. Finance Director Tim Sims stated that the fact that only one bid was received meant that it automatically would have to be rebid. This rebid has been put on hold due by the Development Authority due to the city of Clarkesville's recent moratorium. The vote tonight is just on getting up-to-date quotes for costs on tearing the building down.

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve.

f. First Reading of Proposed Amendment to Habersham County Code of Ordinances Chapter 2 ("Administration"), Article III ("Officers and Employees"), Division 2 ("Code of Ethics")

Attorney Donnie Hunt addressed the Commission. This was a first reading of the proposed amendments only and no action was taken by the Commission. A second reading will occur at the next Commission meeting as well as a vote on the proposed amendment.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Commissioner Harkness thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Commissioner Palmer thanked everyone for attending the meeting and encouraged them all to apply for the many upcoming openings on the Boards, Commissions and Authorities. He wanted to remind everyone that he realizes that authorities are viewed negatively, but they can be beneficial to citizens in many situations such as lowering bond issuance rates.

Commissioner Akins informed everyone about the birth of his second grandson.

Commissioner Tench had no additional comments.

Commissioner Meador had no additional comments.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Property Acquisition & Disposal, pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-14-3§ (b)(1).

Motion by Commissioner Meador and seconded by Commissioner Harkness to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing Property Acquisition and Disposal, pursuant to O.C.G.A §50-14-3 (b)(1).

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Chairman Akins- yea
Vice Chairman Harkness- yea
Commissioner Palmer- yea
Commissioner Meador-yea
Commissioner Tench-yea

Motion carries 5-0 to entered to executive session at 7:32 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Tench and voted unanimously (5-0) to come out of closed session at 8:23 pm.

County Attorney Donnie Hunt reported that all matters discussed in executive session were limited to those matters allowed by the laws of the State of Georgia and asked for a motion authorizing the Chairman to make such a representation under oath on the affidavit.

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the representation authorizing such affidavit as per the Attorney's recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously (5-0) to surplus a .8 acre tract located at 121 Bryant St, Clarkesville, GA.

Motion by commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously (5-) to surplus a 1 story commercial building situated on a .4 acre site at 1387 Washington St, Clarkesville, GA.

ADJOURN

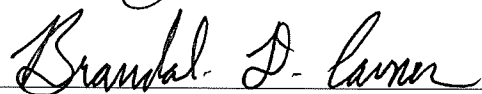
Motion by Commissioner Meador seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

By:


Commission Chairman Ty Akins

Attest:


County Clerk Brandalin Carnes

