

**MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2023  
3:30 p.m.**

**The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, February 13, 2023 at 3:30 p.m. in the Ware County Commission Chambers, 305 Oak Street, Suite 201 Waycross, Georgia 31501 with Chairman Elmer Thrift presiding.**

<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>	Chairman Elmer Thrift
<b>COMMISSIONERS PRESENT</b>	Commissioner Steve Barnard, Commissioner Leonard Burse, Commissioner Jerry Pope, and Commissioner Timmy Lucas
<b>COMMISSIONERS ABSENT</b>	None
<b>STAFF PRESENT</b>	County Manager Scott Moye; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog
<b>PRESS</b>	Danny Bartlett
<b>INVOCATION</b>	The Invocation was given by Danny Bartlett
<b>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</b>	The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift

**GUEST SPEAKER(S):**

**Victor N. Aldridge, P. O. Box 147, Waresboro**

Mr. Aldridge addressed the Commission regarding the Waresboro Volunteer Fire Station Building. He understands the Commission is waiting on pricing to weigh their options. Mr. Aldridge explained that the station was built by the volunteers with funds that they raised. To be prepared for potential growth in the future and to protect the ISO ratings, they built it with a kitchen, bathroom, and showers. They also were concerned about the ISO rating to help with citizens' insurance premiums and protecting the citizen's property. If the current building can't be repaired, he asked that the replacement building be comparable.

Chairman Thrift stated he felt that the Commission would do what is right, and, if the building couldn't be restored, they would replace what is there. He asked CM Moye when would pricing be received. Mr. Moye said that there are two foundation repair companies who are supposed to take a look at the building within the next couple of weeks.

**Joseph "Spence" Davis, P. O. Box 40, Waresboro**

Mr. Davis reiterated what Mr. Aldridge stated, and added that the building can also be used as an emergency shelter. He further explained that to maintain the current ISO rating, the building needs to have two bays and at least 12 volunteers. Without enough volunteers, the ISO rating would change and cost the taxpayers more. He said they need help from others to

get these numbers up. He hasn't received an offer of help from the Fire Chief. He also stated that he is willing to help get the volunteers, but it will take the firefighters and the Fire Chief working with the volunteers. In the past there were over 120 volunteers. With everyone working in harmony, Mr. Davis feels they can have that many again.

Commissioner Burse stated he agrees that if the building has to be razed, it should be replaced with what is currently there, a two bay building. The building is solid. If the foundation can be repaired, they could give the fire station a facelift and be ahead of the game. Commissioners Pope and Lucas concurred.

Chairman Thrift asked Fire Chief Dee Meadows if he was in agreement with the discussion, Chief Meadows agreed that the building needs to be repaired if possible. If not, it needs to be replaced with a comparable building. The issue is in the back corner, and he is hoping a company can salvage the building. Commissioner Barnard asked the Chief if he had reached out to the volunteers at the Waresboro Fire Station to try to see what is going on. Chief Meadows responded, "there is no one person who cares more about this community than Dee Meadows". He also stated that he takes offense to hearing that he hasn't reached out or done this or that. He stated that the volunteer program was low when he started and has remained low. He has spoken with the manager about things that could be done. An advertised class was offered last year. About 12 people showed up initially. After finding out the requirements, that number dwindled down to about six or seven. Another class will be held on March 27. It is being advertised in the paper and on the County Facebook pages in hopes of getting a large number of volunteers.

**Lewis Anthony Foster, 1020 Columbus Street, Waycross**

Mr. Foster advised the Commission that he is working on growing and preserving certain types of trees. He presented some acorns and potted plants and gave some information on the trees and why he thinks they need to be grown. He was advised to reach to the local extension office for assistance.

**Rachel Littlejohn, 1192 Paschall Rd, Waycross**

Mrs. Littlejohn addressed the Commission regarding the condition of this road. She is requesting that the road be paved. The Commission agreed to take a look at Paschall Road.

**Danny Bartlett, Southern Forest World & Board of Elections**

Mr. Bartlett addressed the Commission on behalf of Southern Forest World regarding funding sources. The State of Georgia, the County, and the City all used to contribute funds to Southern Forest World, but that funding has gone away. He and other representatives met with Georgia Senator Russ Goodman and Georgia Representative John Corbett to request State funding. Although they couldn't guarantee the outcome, they promised to bring it before the Georgia General Assembly. Mr. Bartlett stated he would be requesting assistance from the City of Waycross as well.

Switching gears, Mr. Bartlett then addressed the Commission as a member of the Board of Elections. He is currently attending the Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials (GAVREO). Based on the Jacobson verdict, lawsuits regarding elections will be against the local counties instead of against the state. Also, all voting machines will have to be updated/replaced.

## **Discussion**

Commissioner Pope asked that once the meetings are over that Mr. Bartlett bring the information to the Commission Board, County Manager, and Attorney. This way they can have a firsthand report rather than having to wait to read about it in the newspaper or to receive a report from ACCG. Mr. Bartlett agreed to report back.

Commissioner Burse asked if he recalled the amount of funding received from the County. Mr. Bartlett responded that he believed the amount to be between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Commissioner Burse then requested that the Election Superintendent be made aware of all of the changes as well. Mr. Bartlett advised that he is in attendance at the conference. Commissioner Burse felt that the Superintendent should come with Mr. Bartlett to report back to the Commission. He feels that the County needs to be proactive to remain in compliance with the State.

Chairman Thrift asked the County Manager about new legislation. CM Moye clarified that a request for change in State legislation is being introduced which has the Board of Commissioners appointing members to the Board of Elections instead of the political parties doing it.

## **AGENDA ITEMS:**

### **A. Request to Approve – Dirt Road Paving Project List**

Chairman Thrift asked County Engineer Wallace if \$5,290,800 is the total cost for the paving list. Mr. Wallace responded that is the total amount. The Chairman then asked the County Manager if the County has that much money. CM Moye answered that the County doesn't have \$5.2 million. There are \$4 million in the Regional TSPLOST discretionary money account. There are some funds left from the 2014 SPLOST, but he doesn't know how much is available after funds have been allocated to other projects. LMIG funds are dispersed every year. He suggested breaking this list out into three (3) phases to avoid spending all of the money at once and having some available for repairs. The new SPLOST hasn't started yet. Commissioner Barnard asked for the balance of the regular, single county TSPLOST fund. CM Moye deferred to CE Wallace who said the funds were being used to finish the projects that were on the ballot, and approved as part of the TSPLOST referendum. There is going to be a shortfall for the funding on that project list, so there will not be any funding left over. Commissioner Barnard asked if the list was almost completed. Mr. Wallace responded no because there is a shortfall of funds. The original expectations were for \$22 million, but the actual amount received was around \$16-\$17 million.

Commissioner Pope spoke up and said that in order to reduce the total cost of the proposed paving project list he removed some of the District 2 roads and will put them on a future project. The roads he removed from consideration are Mount Pleasant Road, Prescott Street, and Creswell Street. Mount Pleasant Road will also require City participation.

Commissioner Burse asked if the roads being paved would have curbing as well. Chairman Thrift, County Manager Moye, and Commissioner Pope all responded that it would be paving and drainage only, no curbing.

Commissioner Barnard asked County Engineer Wallace why the cost estimate for Gibbs Lane jumped from \$76,000 to \$800,000. Mr. Wallace responded that the County only has an easement agreement and does not have Right of Way on Gibbs Lane. There is no recorded document transferring ownership to the County. A Right of Way has to be obtained when spending public money to pave public property. He explained that the existing easement did not include conveyance of property ownership and just allows the County to use thirty (30) feet of the roadway. CM Moye added that the only way to get ownership is for the land to be donated or for the County to purchase it which would be done through a survey plat and a deed.

Commissioner Barnard asked if it is possible that the bid price could be lower than the estimated cost. Mr. Wallace said that is possible. Chairman Thrift asked how much money is available for this project. CM Moye responded that there is currently \$4 million in the TSPLOST fund. There is a little over \$1 million in the 2014 SPLOST. LMIG money comes in every year which could be used for paving. He reiterated that he does not recommend using up all the available funds at once, especially the TSPLOST money. Commissioner Barnard stated that he doesn't want to tie up future money on paving projects. He feels like some money needs to be spent on resurfacing previously paved roads. Chairman Thrift brought up roads on resurfacing list and mentioned that Astoria Road needs resurfacing and Commissioner Barnard agreed. He then asked if Albany Avenue and wondered if that shouldn't wait until the overpass is finished and pave the whole thing at a later date. Commissioner Barnard stated that if this section of Albany isn't repaved that pot holes will begin developing within the next couple of years. He and Commissioner Lucas stated that this portion could be paved now, and the remainder can be resurfaced once the bridge is complete. Commissioner Lucas then asked for CM Moye's opinion who stated he would phase these items in. Pick out about \$800,000 - \$1,000,000 worth of paving for now. Then, next year work through the list based on priority so that all of the funds are not being used at once. By dividing the paving into phases all of the funds will not be used at one time, and money will be building up in the TSPLOST account.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**B. Request to Add Juneteenth to Ware County Approved Holidays**

Mr. Burse proposed to add this holiday to the list of employees' paid holidays. He understood that other Commissioners wanted to add Veteran's Day also. As of last year thirteen (13) Georgia counties added this as a paid holiday, and 33 or 35 cities have added it as well.

Commissioner Barnard asked CM Moye how much it costs for a holiday. CM Moye responded that when he looked at this last year, the cost was around \$47,000 for one day.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**C. County Right of Way Mowing Contract Extension**

Chairman Thrift asked how many years the contract could be extended before having to bid it again. CM Moye stated only two (2) years. He explained that the first time this was bid out, K & A Mowing was the lowest bid. The second time it was bid out, K & A Mowing was the only bid. This contract is from the second bid. There have been no issues, so he felt the contract could be extended. Chairman Thrift asked if the contractor would accept doing the work for the same price. CM Moye stated he had agreed to the same terms. Commissioner Barnard stated he would like to see another trash pickup cycle added. Commissioner Burse asked Public Works Director Michael Brooks to come forward and make sure the Commission understands what is being offered.

Commissioner Barnard asked if the contractor would be willing to add a trash pickup. Mr. Brooks responded that he is; however, he needs to be notified ahead of time because he uses a subcontractor for litter removal. Chairman Thrift asked Mr. Brooks if he was satisfied with the work. He responded that he does a good job, and there have been no complaints. The trash pickup is before the first mowing cycle. He said it can be done again before the last cycle. Commissioner Burse asked how much for the second trash pickup and several answered simultaneously that the cost would be \$25,000.

Commissioner Barnard commented that it would cost approximately \$170,000 to have the mowing done by the contractor. He then asked how much would it cost if the County does it; including the employees, fuel, wear and tear on equipment. Mr. Brooks said he would have to figure that out. Commissioner Pope spoke up and said that was figured up before, and it was less expensive to have the contractor do it. Mr. Brooks confirmed that the County uses smaller mowers to get some areas that the Contractor can't reach with the big mowers.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**D. Purchase Request – HVAC Units (3) for Courthouse**

CM Moye told the Commission that this item is a proposal from the same vendor (TRANE) who sold the two (2) HVAC units that are currently being installed at the courthouse. There are three (3) others that have to be replaced due to their age and condition. One of these three had to be patched recently and is currently undergoing more repairs. This proposal is to go ahead and get these units replaced to avoid more repairs and before rising costs make them more expensive. ARPA funds will cover the replacement cost of all three (3) units which is \$440,948.

Commissioner Barnard said this should be put up for bid because he felt that the County could get a better price than what TRANE provided. Commissioner Pope said he thought the County would be better off sticking with the same company. Commissioner Lucas concurred saying two (2) different companies would mean two (2) different warranties. Commissioner Barnard stated that what scares him about simultaneously replacing all of the equipment is that in 20 years when they all tear up again, there will not be ARPA funds to replace them. Chairman Thrift said he agreed with CM Moye especially considering one of the three units is already not working, and all three units are the same age. CM Moye explained that these new units will not be available for a while. It took months to get the two (2) units that are being installed now due to waiting on parts for them to be built.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**E. Ordinance 2023-01: Establish Maximum Speed Limit in Augusta Springs Subdivision**

CM Moye stated that Public Works Director Michael Brooks brought it to his attention that none of the roads in that subdivision have a posted speed limit. Commissioner Barnard received a request to have the speed limit posted. This process requires an ordinance so that the Sheriff's Department can run a radar on those roads. Chairman Thrift asked if approval by the Commission is all that is needed. Mr. Moye responded in the affirmative.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**F. Appointment – Ware County Board of Assessors**

CM Moye told the Commission that this item is for the reappointment of Darrell Roberson to the board. There was no discussion.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**G. Appointment – Waycross-Ware County Land Bank Board - County Commission**

CM Moye explained to the Commission that Commissioner Burse's term has expired, and he must stay off the board for at least year. Commissioner Barnard asked if the spot has to be filled with another commissioner. CM Moye said yes. He also responded to Chairman Thrift's question about the length of the term stating it is a four (4) year term. Commissioner Burse stated he didn't think the replacement is required to be a commissioner, only that the Board of Commissioners has to make the appointment. Commissioner Barnard recommended the Tax Commissioner (*who was sitting in the audience.*) Tax Commissioner Collins spoke up and said that he is currently on the board, and the replacement person must be a commissioner. The Chairman stated that the Commission will have to figure out who to appoint.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**H. Appointment – Waycross-Ware County Development Authority**

CM Moye stated that Ms. Candice Moody Rice currently serves on this board and is willing to be reappointed. She should have been reappointed last year, so she will only be on the board another three (3) years.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**I. 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks Event**

Chairman Thrift asked what the cost is for this event. CM Moye stated he believed the County contributed around \$10,000 last year, but half of that amount was provided through sponsorships. The City put in \$10,000 because it is a \$20,000 show.

Commissioner Lucas asked CM Moye if the show was being moved to the Trembling Earth Complex. He said the City has one more time to host the fireworks at the Memorial

Stadium, so the City wants to keep the show within the city limits. He said the County isn't required to provide half of the funding. CM Moye said the County matched donations dollar for dollar. Last year's contribution was closer to \$8,500 with half of that coming from corporate sponsorships.

Commissioner Pope stated that EMA Director Jonathan Daniel has looked at the maps and measured, and there is nowhere else in the city to hold the fireworks show. Once the new middle school is constructed, the show will have to be moved.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**COMMISSIONER ITEMS:**

Commissioner Burse brought up the devastation brought on by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. He said to put it in perspective, the number of fatalities so far is about the population of Waycross and Ware County. He said that we have so much to be thankful for here.

Commissioner Barnard mentioned the death of Tommy Rouse who was a former Commission Chairman and very inspirational man who did so much for his fellow citizens.

**COUNTY MANAGER ITEMS: None**

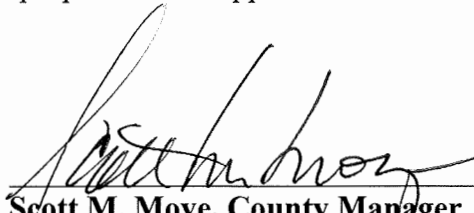
**ADJOURN:**

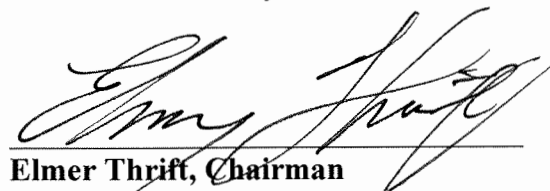
A motion was made by Commissioner Barnard to adjourn the Work Session, with Commissioner Lucas seconding the motion at 4:58 p.m.

CM Moye told the Commission that they would take a brief recess and be back at 5:10 p.m.

Commissioner Steve Barnard-aye; Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye; Commissioner Jerry Pope-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

Date proposed to be approved: March 13, 2023

  
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**Scott M. Moye, County Manager**  
*[SEAL]*

  
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**Elmer Thrift, Chairman**  
*03-14-2023*  
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**Date**