

**MINUTES  
CALLED MEETING  
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023  
4:00 p.m.**

**The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting, Monday, April 24 2023, at 4:00 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 Timmy Lucas Commissioner Jerry Pope
<b>COMMISSIONERS ABSENT</b>	None
<b>STAFF PRESENT</b>	County Manager Scott Moye; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
<b>PRESS</b>	Danny Bartlett, WJH
<b>INVOCATION</b>	The invocation was waived from the Work Session
<b>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</b>	The Pledge of Allegiance was waived from the Work Session

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion was made by Commissioner Burse to amend the agenda by moving the speakers to the end of the meeting, with Commissioner Lucas seconding the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

**CONSENT ITEMS:**

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Work Session	March 13, 2023
Regular Meeting	March 13, 2023
Work Session	March 27, 2023
Called Meeting	March 27, 2023

Motion was made by Commissioner Lucas to approve the meeting minutes as presented, with Commissioner Pope seconding the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

## AGENDA ITEMS

### **A. Group Health Policy Renewal**

John Leggett of MSI (Ware County Insurance Broker) presented the recommended changes for the County health benefit plan. Due to increasing costs, Mr. Leggett recommended that the Commission change the carrier, moving from Blue Cross Blue Shield Anthem (Option 1) to Meritain/Aetna. The plans will remain the same, with the exception being that option 2 offers a generic prescription plan.

Commissioner Pope made a motion to accept the recommendation of John Leggett of MSI (Ware County Insurance Broker) with the condition that dental and vision will change depending on the price. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

### **B. Bailey Street Park Pool**

CM Moye told the Commission this item is on the agenda because last year the YMCA declined to continue operations. For that reason, the County will have to find an operator and lifeguards to keep the pool open. He said a budget was included for the additional costs of hiring lifeguards for the months of June and July. He also told the Commission that one of the issues preventing the YMCA from continuing operations is that of security during hours of operation. He was told by the City police department that a uniformed officer is on patrol in the area. He isn't sure if full time security is needed given the history of fights. This item was presented to seek direction from the Commission regarding operations of the pool. Chairman Thrift asked if the cost of the County assuming operations is only an additional \$12,000. CM Moye told him the \$12,000 is just for lifeguards the chemicals and operations would be extra. Commissioner Burse asked if the chemicals are already in the pool budget, Mr. Moye said yes.

The Chairman asked if the YMCA would continue operations if the County provided security. Mr. Moye said he had asked that question but never received a response. Commissioner Burse said he is looking into the incidents that have occurred in the past to determine if they happened during the operating hours or during other events that are held there. Mr. Moye said the City issues permits for various events. Mr. Burse said he feels security should be addressed within the permits as well as a deposit for cleanup. Commissioner Barnard asked if the City would issue a permit to a citizen wanting to hold a birthday party at the pool. Mr. Moye said the County only operates the pool for a set time period. If the property is wanted outside of those hours, the County wouldn't provide any staff. Commissioner Barnard felt this would be a liability issue. Mr. Moye said any events that are permitted for after hours, the City provides cleanup. The County would only operate the pool during the daytime hours of the summer season which is pretty much just June and July.

Commissioner Lucas asked if the Sheriff's Office could provide security during the hours the pool is operated by the County. Commissioner Burse asked if the YMCA would operate the pool if the security issue is handled by the County. He then asked Recreation Director Lance Adamson would come the front to answer questions. He asked Mr. Adamson if there is a problem getting lifeguards. Mr. Adamson said he had been talking to Kevin Sullivan at the YMCA. Mr. Sullivan said getting interested lifeguards is easy, but getting them certified is the issue. When Commissioner Burse asked Mr. Adamson what he had heard about the incidents and security issues. Mr. Adamson responded that he had never heard anything from the YMCA staff. Commissioner Pope said he thinks the police are called when an incident occurs, but nothing is reported back to the County.

Commissioner Lucas asked about getting lifeguards. Mr. Adamson said that the YMCA is willing to offer extra training to get lifeguards certified for the County. Commissioner Lucas said he was willing to call the police department to find out what kind of incidents had taken place and how many had occurred. Commissioner Burse said he is currently waiting for a call back regarding this same information for the pool and the surrounding area.

Chairman Thrift suggested tabling the item and discuss it further with the YMCA to see if a compromise could be reached. Commissioner Barnard asked about costs for the pool chemicals and water during the off season. Mr. Adamson replied that the pool is drained after the season is over. Commissioner Barnard then asked about the condition of the building. Mr. Adamson said the restrooms were repaired last year which is an area that has to pass inspection to be in operation. The building is operation although it could use an update.

Commissioner Pope said he feels like every child should learn how to swim. He wasn't sure that three lifeguards would be sufficient. However, if lifeguards could be found and full time security provided when the pool gates are open, he said it would be worth the County trying to provide a place to for the kids to swim. Commissioner Barnard said he would like to see the City participate in this too. Commissioner Pope said that would be under the Services Delivery Strategy

Chairman Thrift asked if there was a motion on this item.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lucas to table the item. Commissioner Pope seconded the motion.

Chairman Thrift asked if there is any discussion.

Commissioner Burse asked what exactly was being tabled. Chairman Thrift said it was to find out if the YMCA would be willing to operate if the County provided security. Commissioner Burse said the County is still making plans to open the pool by June 1, but asked who would be operating it. Commissioner Pope said he was in favor of the Recreation Director, Lance Adamson, getting certified and hiring some lifeguards while details are worked out with the Sheriff for getting security on site.

Commissioner Lucas revised his motion to for the purpose of staff taking the necessary steps to open the pool including: getting the necessary training, looking into the lifeguard issue, checking back with the YMCA one more time then reporting back at the next meeting. All Commissioner showed they were in favor by saying "aye".

### **C. Regular TSPLOST Projects Committee**

CM Moye explained that the Regional TSPLOST process has begun. The last time there was a committee composed of two Commissioners and staff, and he wanted to know if this is how it is to be done this time. The County has to have a proposed project list which is the purpose of this Committee. Engineering estimates will have to be provided for the projects. He said the sooner a Committee is chosen, there will more time available to get engineering estimates put together. Chairman Thrift asked if there was a motion on this item.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lucas to appoint Chairman Thrift and Commissioner Barnard to the Regional TSPLOST Projects Committee. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion.

Chairman Thrift asked if there is any discussion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

**D. Albany Avenue Overpass Design Committee**

CM Moye said this item is like the previous item. Once the Commission appoints members to the committee, the City will do the same as he has already made them aware of what is needed. A contract has already been signed with Practical Design Partners. Once the committee is put together, they will meet with PDP to go over the design to make sure it is acceptable to everyone. Mr. Moye clarified that the committee will consist of 2 County Commissioners, County staff, 2 City Commissioners, and City staff.

Chairman Thrift asked if there was a motion on this item.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to appoint Commissioner Pope given his experience on the Commission and with like projects. Commissioner Lucas made a motion to also appoint Commissioner Burse to the committee based on his experience with the railroad. Commissioner Pope seconded the motion.

Chairman Thrift asked if there is any discussion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

**GUEST SPEAKER: SPENCER BAXLEY, WARE COUNTY BD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Internet Media Coordinator Spencer Baxley told the Commission that the meetings have been presented via live stream on Facebook since 2019 as a way for citizens to participate in the process of government, regardless of their ability to physically attend the meetings. The videos are also archived for review at a later date. He said the new Ware County Website debuted on March 31 which offers a variety of documents. The purpose of the design was to make everything easily accessible to everyone regardless of degree of ability.

Several citizens stood up to speak about issues with the Okefenokee Regional Library and its Board of Trustees. No one was formally introduced, but they were given a five (5) minute limit. After

several speakers, Asst. County Attorney Herzog reminded the Commissioners that they have limited input as to the policies of the library. She explained that the Commission's role with the library is that of a funding mechanism on behalf of the County. She further stated the County owns the building, and the Commission makes appoints to the library board. She understands the issues brought forth by the citizens. She can only offer legal advice to the Commission in keeping with their role as related to the library board. The Chairman stated that he believed because the County funds the library that the Commission should have some say but asked the County Attorney to correct him. Asst. County Attorney Herzog stated that the library board comes up with its policies, and the County is a partial funding mechanism and should not be micromanaging the policies of any of the programs it funds. If the Commission disagrees with the direction a program is heading, then it can take a careful look at the future budget and future appointments. She said this is the truth for any board that is funded by the County. She stated that each board is responsible for its policies, and the County has its responsibilities and needs to be cautious about overreaching.

Commissioner Pope asked to clarify that the regional board sets its own policies. The Ware County Commission does not set the policy. The local library board does not set policy but has to follow the state policy set by the regional board. The regional board sets the budget. Asst. County Attorney Herzog stated to clarify that the library does have a local constitution for the Waycross-Ware County Library, and there is a regional constitution. She said it is a layered approach with about five counties in that region. Commissioner Pope stated the region board hires the director. ACA Herzog said the region board hires the region director, but she isn't sure about the local director. He then asked if the local employees are state employees, not county employees, so the Commission has no control over the employees. She said that was correct.

Commissioner Barnard asked Commissioner Pope if the two of the could go over and visit the library. Commissioner Pope agreed.

**COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT: None**

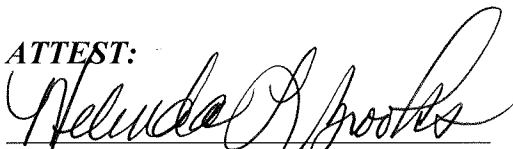
**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: None**

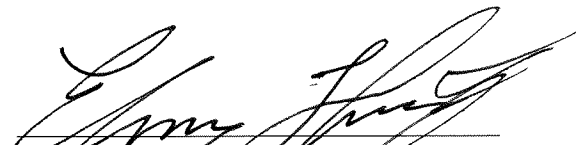
**ADJOURN**

A motion was made by Commissioner Lucas to adjourn the Called Meeting at 5:49 p.m., with Commissioner Pope seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Date proposed to be approved: May 8, 2023

**ATTEST:**

  
Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

  
Elmer Thrift, Chairman

5-10-2023  
Date

[SEAL]