

**MINUTES
CALLED MEETING
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Called Meeting, Friday, September 1 2023, at 9:00 a.m. in the Ware County Commission Chambers, 305 Oak Street, Suite 201 Waycross, Georgia 31501 with Chairman Elmer Thrift presiding.

CALL TO ORDER Chairman Elmer Thrift

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT Commissioner Steve Barnard; Commissioner Leonard Burse
Commissioner Timmy Lucas; Commissioner Jerry Pope

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT None

STAFF PRESENT County Manager Scott Moye; Assistant County Attorney
Jennifer Herzog (by phone); County Clerk Melinda Brooks

PRESS Danny Bartlett, WJH

INVOCATION The invocation was given by Danny Bartlett of WJH.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Thrift

GUEST SPEAKER: None

AGENDA ITEMS

A. Resolution 2023-25: Approve Ware County Board of Education Millage Rate

Chairman Thrift asked Tax Commissioner Roger Collins to come up and explain millage rate. He told the Commissioners what they had in front of them is the recalculated millage rate rollback, the reassessed values, and the values that were given to the assessors for the real property, personal property (motor vehicles, etc.). With the reassessed value, the millage rate is slightly less than the rate was last year. It was 13.052 for FY 2023. The rollback rate is 13.026. There were a little more than 5 mills rolled off the gross digest. He said he wanted to let everyone know that this year there is a grant being given back from the State for everyone who has a homestead exemption. In Ware County between the County and School Board tax, citizens will see about a \$527 reduction in their tax bill. The State will pay that money directly to the Tax Commissioner's office, and then it will be forwarded to the County and the School Board.

Commissioner Barnard commented that this item is for the BOE millage rate. Tax Commissioner Collins said that the millage rate rollback is basically the same. He explained that approving the BOE millage rate is just a formality. Even though the BOE is a recommending authority, there have been laws/court cases that say the recommendation has to be approved. He said even though it was a rollback, there was a slight increase.

Commissioner Barnard made a motion to accept the School Board's millage rate adjustment at 15.064. Commissioner Lucas 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.

B. Resolution 2023-26: Adopt Ware County Board of Commissioners FY24 Millage Rate

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

Commissioner Lucas made a motion to accept Resolution 2023-26 adopting and setting the Ware County Board of Commissioner's millage rate as set forth. 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-no.

C. Purchase Request – 2023 Pierce – Freightliner Pumper Truck

Chairman Thrift stated this was to replace the wrecked truck and an insurance claim check has been received in the amount of \$136,734. The new truck price is \$431,526 minus the insurance check will be \$294,792. He asked the County Manager if this information was correct. CM Moye stated that information was correct. He added that there was a \$1,000 deductible which would make the claim check value go down by that amount. The Chairman asked CM Moye how long before the firetruck could be delivered. CM Moye said if it could be ordered now, delivery should be in December or January. He asked Fire Chief Dee Meadows to give more information. Chief Meadows said if the truck is ordered in the next few days, it will go into production in October. It would be delivered in December, at the latest in January. He explained that this is a commercial, not a custom truck. He explained a that custom truck has a 36 month wait time for delivery. He said there are a few items to be added to this commercial truck, but that can be done by the dealer who is selling the truck. Commissioner Burse asked him if this would fit the needs the of the department. Chief Meadows said it would. Commissioner Burse said he understood the newest truck is a 2007 model. Chief Meadows said the volunteer trucks are 2009 models, but the truck in Station 1 is a 2007.

Commissioner Barnard said he thought the replacement truck would be a more standard model like the one that was wrecked. Chief Meadows said they are trying to replace a truck and put a new one in Station 1 which would be a first out truck. They would take a truck from Station 1 and put it at the volunteer station. Commissioner Barnard said he agrees with putting a new truck at Station 1, but he thought the new truck would be a two door like the old one instead of a four door. Chief Meadows said the truck at Station 1 is a crew cab (4 door). They want to keep a crew cab. Commissioner Barnard asked what truck would be sent to the Waresboro Station. Chief Meadows said truck 1101 would be sent to Waresboro.

The Chairman asked what kind of engine will be in the truck and was told by Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor that it will have a Cummings. Commissioner Burse asked about the five and a half percent (5.5%) discount listed on the Sourcewell paperwork. County Manager Moye explained that is a nationwide purchasing contract that the County is a member of, and it allows a discount on options for the truck. It is similar to a State contract.

Chairman Thrift asked where the funds would come from to pay for this truck. County Manager Moye said ARPA funds should be used. The last time he checked there was roughly \$4.3 million left in the fund.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to approve the purchase of the 2023 Pierce Freightliner Pumper Firetruck in the amount of \$431,526 minus the difference of the insurance claim check. Commissioner Lucas 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.

D. Right of Way Encroachment Request – City of Waycross Water Interconnection Project

Engineering staff member Gene Thomas reported that he had met with Satilla Water as instructed at the last meeting to get their input on a potential waterline going through the County parallel to their waterlines. If the County was to approve a waterline going through Industrial Park, Satilla would be more agreeable to the alternate route that was suggested at the last meeting. He said he had no discussions with representatives of the City since the August 14 meeting.

Chairman Thrift asked if ESG said they couldn't tie on to the alternate route. Mr. Thomas said that was the original statement. He had mentioned that there is a 10-inch water main and asked that they model it to see if it was a possibility, but he hasn't heard anything else from them.

Commissioner Pope asked him if he, the County Manager, or County Engineer had any contact with the City of Waycross or ESG before they made their design and presented it to the Commission. He wanted to know if they had asked for advice or input from the County. Mr. Thomas said there had been no meetings or discussions with the City or ESG before receiving the original plan to go down Cherokee and West Blackshear. Commissioner Pope clarified that the engineering design was completed before the County was contacted. Mr. Thomas said when he asked for a copy of it in March 2022 he was told the plans were not 100 % complete, but they had a fairly detailed draft put together. However, the County had not been consulted during the process.

Commissioner Pope said he understood that previous City Engineers have recommended putting in new wells to take care of the problems in town. He asked based on the projected cost, what the difference would be for running a new line compared to a new well. Using some rough estimates, he said the water line would cost approximately \$2.5-3 million. The well drilling would run about \$700,000. Adding the auxiliary equipment, pumps, etc. would increase the price by \$1-1.5 million. He said it appears that drilling a well would be half the cost of running the waterline.

Commissioner Pope asked if the City and ESG was aware of today's meeting. He was told by the Chairman and County Manager that they were. He said he wished they were present so a discussion

could be held between the two entities. He said he was uncertain of the number of wells and tanks that are available and working in Industrial Park. Mr. Thomas said there was talk of a tank being taken offline due to lack of consumption or to keep water fresher. Also there had been an issue with one of the wells. He said there are a lot of questions that the County staff would like to ask directly to get a better understanding of the needs vs wants and to determine if current supplies are being fully utilized.

Chairman Thrift reminded the Commission that the County doesn't own the water system. The City wants to work on its system and is asking to use the County ROW, not asking the County to pay for anything. After more discussion it was determined that the County needs more detailed information from the City. Commissioner Burse commented that all parties that would be involved (City of Waycross/ESG, Ware County, Satilla Regional Water and Sewer) will need to know the parameters of the project and how each party would be affected. He would like to have a clear understanding of the project and to have it in writing how the project would proceed.

Commissioner Barnard made a motion to refuse the City of Waycross access to W. Blackshear Avenue and Cherokee Avenue across railroad tracks and Ossia Davis Parkway. An alternate route will have to be found. Commissioner Pope seconded the motion.

Commissioners Burse and Pope said they want a meeting with the County Engineers, Satilla Regional Water Authority, ESG, and the City of Waycross to answer questions and have a discussion. There are legitimate questions and concerns regarding use of the right of way that need to be addressed.

The County Manager added that it can be bad business from a service delivery standpoint to have those lines in an unincorporated area of the County. There can be issues down the road. For example, how would 911 determine whose water line is leaking. In certain areas, it could be County or City. If a road has to be blocked, it would be a County job. If a County road is washed out by a City line break, would the Commission want the City to fix the County road. He acknowledged these could be rare occurrences, but they can happen. Commissioner Burse said that is why he thinks all players should be at the table to discuss these scenarios.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Pope-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye; Commissioner Steve Barnard-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-no.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Barnard remembered Recreation Department Supervisor Alton Cade who passed away a few days prior and offered prayers and assistance to his family. He also offered a thank you to the road department for getting the roads cleared after the storm as well as Georgia Power, Satilla REA, and the other line crews helping to restore power.

Chairman Thrift asked Public Works Director Michael Brooks to give an update on fixing the washouts. He responded there aren't many washouts, but rather the trees and power lines that are the issue. His department is having to wait on Georgia Power and the assisting power companies to clear the trees so that his crews can move them from the roadways. The Chairman asked if he needed additional help. He said he and the EMA director have discussing whether they need to activate the emergency plan. He thinks that needs to be seriously considered due the amount of

debris in people's yards, in the roads, and on the side of the roads. People are already calling wanting to know what to do with the debris, and there is no designated place for debris. Commissioner Pope mentioned that during the last storm, debris was piled at the old ballfield in Industrial Park. Director Brooks said that he had to get a special permit to do that. Then the County has to pay to grind up the debris and have it hauled off. The last time, it went to BioMass. If the County could get a Federal Disaster Declaration, FEMA would cover the costs of debris removal. EMA Director Jonathan Daniell explained that the Governor declared a state of emergency which releases assets to help local governments mitigate their situation. It doesn't offer reimbursement. That comes from a FEMA disaster declaration which Georgia is trying to get for the counties that were in the path of the hurricane. The expense of debris removal will be on the County unless there is a FEMA declaration. Director Brooks reiterated that FEMA will not reimburse the County for any debris picked up before a FEMA declaration. Directors Brooks and Daniell explained how the contract for debris removal works stating that company will hire local licensed contractors to help. They will also take care of grinding the debris and hauling it away.

Chairman Thrift asked Thomas Littlejohn of Paschall Road (who was in the audience) if his road had been fixed. He said he had not seen anything done. The Chairman asked County Engineer Brandon Wallace if he had an update on the road. He said he would try to be in contact with the property owner in the coming week. The Chairman asked Mr. Littlejohn about how long since his road had been graded. He said the weeds are growing up on the side about three feet now "so it has been some few days". Chairman Thrift asked Director Brooks if the road is on a regular schedule. Mr. Littlejohn interjected that it used to be graded every other week, but he chalks it up now that he's "in the doghouse for complaining about what we've been complaining about the last couple of months" He said it used to be every week or every other week or something, but "it ain't been happening lately". The Chairman said he lives down 2 miles of dirt road, and it doesn't get graded regular like it had been. He said he knows that is because of the rain and the storms. Director Brooks spoke up and told the Chairman that the same grader goes to his road and Paschall Road. The Chairman told Mr. Littlejohn that he believes the graders are running a little bit behind. Commissioner Barnard said he drove down Bennett Road the other day and saw grass growing on the edge of the road there. He acknowledged that it is running a bit behind right now.

Commissioner Lucas commented that the Recreation Department needs some new equipment. He thinks the mowers are as old as the building. He watched a mower push the grass down but not cut it. The contractor mows the big open areas not the small areas. The Chairman said that part should be given to the contractors. He compared it to the contractor mowing the right of ways but not getting the back of the ditch. He asked Public Works Director Brooks the name of the contractor who mows the ROWs. He said it is K & A Mowing. He spoke first to Commissioner Lucas. He said the only contractor that he is aware of is the sprayer. There is no contractor mowing at the Rec. Dept. The employees do the mowing there. He told the Chairman that K & A Mowing of Mershon mows the ROWs. He said if the Commission is dissatisfied with their work, he can stop the contract. Chairman Thrift then said that maybe they are dissatisfied, but just need to tell them what to do and enforce it. Commissioner Barnard said when the contract is up for rebid, let them bid on cleaning up the roads. The Chairman said mow to the back of the ROW 15 feet once a year. He asked if that would cover it. Director Brooks said it could be worded however the Commission wants to word it. Chairman Thrift asked the County Manager to check out the equipment at the Recreation Dept. He said this is the first he has heard of it, but it sounds like may be the blades needs sharpening. He will look into it.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT:

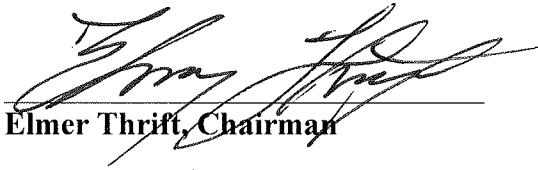
County Manager Moye extended his condolences to the family of Recreation Department Supervisor Alton Cade.

Commissioner Burse remembered a couple of citizens who have recently passed: Tim Cavagnaro and Carlton Fluker.

ADJOURN

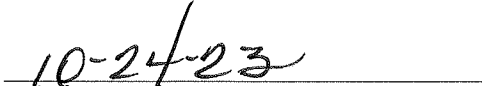
A motion was made by Commissioner Barnard to adjourn the Called Meeting at 10:52 a.m., with Commissioner Pope seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.

Date proposed to be approved: October 9, 2023


Elmer Thrift, Chairman

ATTEST:


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk


Date

[SEAL]

