

**MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2023
3:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, September 11, 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.

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

GUEST SPEAKER(S):

DEBRA GIDDENS

Mrs. Giddens spoke to the Commission about being in favor of not using the electronic voting machines. She gave information backing up her claims that paper ballots would be more accurate.

MARILYN BENNETT – DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DA Bennett introduced herself to the Commission and presented them with a PowerPoint printout (included with minutes) to show what her office has been doing. She explained that her main office is in Waycross, but she has a satellite office in Douglas. However, Coffee County manages the funding for that office. The numbers have been separated to reflect what the taxpayers' dollars covers in each county. She explained that the DA's office is the sole prosecutor for felony cases in Superior Court across the six county circuit. Because Brantley County does not have a State Court, the DA's office also handles the misdemeanor cases. Additionally, they handle delinquency cases and child in need cases with Juvenile Court as well as all cases with Georgia Court of Appeals and Georgia Supreme Court. They are mandated to comply with Victim Bill of Rights. They serve as legal advisor to the Grand Jury and represent the State of Georgia in all asset forfeiture (drug money situations). Child fatality reviews and conflict cases for other circuits are also handled by Mrs. Bennett's office. Currently there are 17 employees in the Waycross office: 6 fulltime ADAs, 1 part-

time ADA, 2 Victim Advocates, 2 fulltime clerical positions, 2 part-time clerical positions, 1 office manager, 1 administrative assistant. Douglas has 5 employees. Since January 1, 2023, the DA's office has received 1,469 new cases which does not include the cases that were rolled over/carried forward from the previous year.

245 cases have been assigned per attorney this year, not including the cases already assigned in 2022. She gave more numbers regarding caseloads, assignments, closures, etc. which is included in the PowerPoint.

DA Bennett also brought up the condition of the building where her office is located. She included photos of the interior condition of the building and described the deterioration of the different rooms. She also explained the updates that are taking place as well as the issues with the leaks, roof, foundation, etc. She finished by telling the Commission that she wanted to make them aware of the work that her office has to do and how the money that the County invests in that office is being spent. The Commission thanked Mrs. Bennett for her presentation.

Chairman Thrift asked County Manager Moye if the water issue is being investigated. CM Moye responded that the problem has been being worked on for months. He said the leaks are the cause of most of the problems, but the office needs some cosmetic work in addition to the repairs. The building has been neglected for several years and had only received Band-Aid style repairs. Where the DA's office and Magistrate office join has some rainwater leakage issues which Brantley Roofing is trying to fix.

Commissioner Barnard commented that the County should have bought the Georgia Power building when it came up for sale. CM Manager agreed that it was close to the court house. DA Bennett invited anyone to come look at the office space and the number of employees that occupy that space as that might be helpful.

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. MOU – City of Waycross Midnight Basketball League

County Manager Moye said this is a proposed MOU for the City of Waycross to conduct a Midnight Basketball League pilot program. The pilot program is for only three sessions. He advised the County Attorney's office assisted in the preparation of the MOU and wanted the Commission to review and advise if any change is change is necessary.

Chairman Thrift wanted to clarify that this is a trial program, and, if it works out, they can come back. CM Moye told him that was correct. He also said the dates and times listed on the MOU are the ones received from the City. Commissioner Barnard asked if the insurance binder had been received. CM Moye stated it had not been received at this point, but it would be received upon approval. Commissioner Burse asked if the Recreation Department is on board to provide one attendant, and the City will reimburse them. CM Moye said yes the attendant would a person who knows the facility and could address any issues. Commissioner Barnard asked what ratio of security would be provided per population. As in two officers per 100 participants. CM Moye said he did not have that level of detail. The issue is the location is in the County, and the Sheriff's Office does not have an abundance of off duty deputies to send. Commissioner Burse said he feels that there needs to be clarity on the security before the events take place. Commissioner Barnard said item 4 that states "...The City shall provide adequate

security...” should have wording that the security would have arrest powers, not just a security guard. It was noted that Item 6 allows for cancellation of contract if law enforcement is called, but law enforcement will already be there. It was clarified that it would take more than the 2 officers that would be on site if a disturbance were to occur.
Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

B. Discussion & Possible Action Concerning Recreation Programs in City Parks

County Manager Moye advised that this item needs to be pulled from the agenda because there is some information that needs to be reviewed further. This item will be put on a future agenda.

C. Resolution 2023-27: Approve MOU with the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association

CM Moye advised this is a continuation of a grant of \$23,000 received to provide this after school program. Commissioner Burse asked if it is held at Memorial Park. CM Moye stated he thinks it is held there and at Trembling Earth.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. Purchase Request – Mower Equipment: Mower Max Boom – Gen 3

Chairman Thrift advised that this mower was demonstrated and the cost is \$270,351.15. Commissioner Barnard asked for Public Works Director Michael Brooks to come explain how this equipment would be used. Director Brooks said this mower would be used to mow back on the ROWs, dirt roads, canals, and highways where there is overgrowth. It would supplement the other tractor that is currently in use. He said the Commissioners currently get a lot of calls about the overgrowth, and that’s what this mower is for. It has a one-year bumper to bumper warranty, 2 years/2,000-hour engine warranty, 5 years/3,000-hour DEF header assembly emission system warranty, and a 5 year limited tractor frame warranty.

Chairman Thrift asked Director Brooks if he has an employee to put on the tractor to run it full time. Mr. Brooks said he does. Commissioner Barnard asked if the drum mulcher could be mounted to the front of this machine. He wanted to know if the regular cutting head could cut down the overgrowth, then would drum mulcher be able to grind it up. Mr. Brooks said it would. He explained that the mulcher could be mounted to the boom arm or to the front of the tractor. He said there are other attachments made to be mounted to the front of the tractor that could be purchased in the future.

Commissioner Burse asked Director Brooks about the process for changing out the attachments. Mr. Brooks explained that the salesman showed that during the demonstration. The attachments can be changed out with one operator in about 5 minutes due to the quick connect hydraulic system. Commissioner Burse said he knows the overgrowth has been a thorn in their side, and this equipment could make the job of Public Works more efficient. He asked if Director Brooks had spoken with other counties who use this machine. Mr. Brooks said he had. Bulloch County has four of these tractors and highly recommend them. Appling County has two and recommended them. Camden County has two as well and has had good service out of them.

Commissioner Pope said to be successful with this machine, there will need to be a dedicated operator. He asked to clarify that Director Brooks said he has someone who

can run the machine, maintain it, be responsible for it, and keep it going. Mr. Brooks said he does. Commissioner Burse stated he liked the idea of having the same operator on this tractor. If there is ever an issue, you know who to ask about what is going on.

Commissioner Barnard asked if the operator would be on this tractor roughly 40 hours per week, not swapping out to a dump truck or road grader. Mr. Brooks said the operator would be on this tractor all day every day. Commissioner Lucas asked if the lb. weights would be needed. Mr. Brooks said they would.

Chairman Thrift asked Director Brooks how many mow trim mowers public works already has. He said there is a John Deere that is used every day. There is a New Holland with a sickle bar/saw blade head that is in bad shape and used on an as needed basis. The Chairman said the County might be better off to get two new machines and get rid of the old machines. The Chairman said he felt that the best move to make was to go all the way with the new equipment. Director Brooks said the visibility is much better with this tractor than the existing ones. The Chairman agreed that this is a much better machine.

Commissioner Lucas asked the Chairman if he was saying buy two machines and do away with the contract mowers. Chairman Thrift said no that the two existing mow trim tractors that the County has spent a lot of money on, and they still stay broken down all the time. He said this machine is designed for this type use, but the current tractors are not. They were retrofitted. Commissioner Barnard asked about putting the John Deere on GovDeals.com. Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor Barry Cox was in the audience and said the John Deere would probably bring around \$40-50,000 on GovDeals.com. Chairman Thrift said he knew that one tractor would not trim all of Ware County. He gets lots of calls about overgrowth and mowing ROWs. Commissioner Pope asked Director Brooks if he has an operator for a second mow trim. He said he would be looking. Commissioner Pope then asked how many people would have to go with the tractor. He said it depends on the area. If it goes to an area with a curvy area, there will be a person behind it flagging due to safety issues. If it's on a long straight paved road, they will put out mowing signs. He did point out that this tractor has more visibility signs with more lights. Commissioner Burse commented that the County has never had a true mow trim tractor for cutting overgrowth. Director Brooks and Chairman Thrift said that was correct.

Commissioner Lucas asked about the two different price quotes. Director Brooks told him the \$270k was the right quote. Chairman Thrift asked Director Brooks if he thought two machines would mow the County. He agreed. Commissioner Pope asked County Manager Moye if the Commission voted to buy two tractors would there be enough funds. CM Moye said yes and that he recommended using original TSPLOST discretionary funds. Commissioner Pope said he agreed. So did Commissioner Lucas. Commissioner Burse said to ask if there would be a discount for purchasing two tractors and asked if there was a 15 month waiting period. Director Brooks said the salesman had told him November 2023. He said he would call the salesman and find out before the meeting regarding a discount.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. Airport Hangar Lease Agreement

County Manager Moye asked Public Safety Training Center Director and former Airport Manager Jesse Jordan to speak on the lease and to introduce the new Airport Manager. Mr. Jordan advised that this is the standard \$150 per month lease for a hangar that has

been vacated. The lease is for Mr. Frank Bartanowitz who is the new Airport Manager. He stated that Mr. Bartanowitz spent over 20 years on an aircraft carrier and is very familiar with airplanes. He is doing a fantastic job.

Mr. Bartanowitz stepped up and introduced himself saying he has been working for the County for about 7 and a half months. He served in the U. S. Navy over 24 years. The hangar is lease is for him to house the plane he owns and is learning to fly. He said he has a good team doing a good job and with the Commission's continued support, he would like to make it better for the County and State. He said there is a lot of territory at the airport that is ripe for growth in the aviation community.

Commissioner Pope commented that the County is fortunate to have Mr. Bartanowitz and his experience. He understands that he is developing a scope of work for the airport so that it can be expanded as the Chairman has been wanting, so he feels the County has the right man for the job. The Chairman said he would like to see service from Waycross to Atlanta again although he doesn't know if it will ever happen or not. Mr. Bartanowitz said he is willing to discuss the expectations and see what can be done.

Commissioner Barnard asked Assistant County Attorney Herzog if there is anything to prevent a county employee from leasing a hangar. She responded that there are provisions to prevent (for example) a Commissioner from selling goods to the County. In this instance, he would pay for the use of the County property and have the same standard lease that every other person has. There would be no favoritism. It would be the normal course of business with the County Manager overseeing the lease.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:

County Manager Moye stated that the County had a Declaration of Disaster and we have a longstanding contract with CrowderGulf to do debris collection and disposal. That contract needs to be put into effect. He asked EMA Director Jonathan Daniell to come up and explain how this is a 2-part contract. Part 1 is the debris removal and Part 2 is the monitoring service which is from a separate company. Mr. Daniell explained that the County has to keep a contract in place for debris removal but have never activated that contract until now. There is a requirement to have an independent service to monitor the cubic yardage of debris collected and certify (for FEMA) that the numbers are correct. There is not a monitoring contract in place although a consulting company is being considered for a contract. Chairman Thrift asked if there is a location for the debris. Mr. Daniell said there is a location for the debris, and it has been permitted. The Chairman asked where. He was told it is the old Erin Johnson ballfield in Industrial Park. Mr. Daniel explained that debris will be picked up by CrowderGulf. Homeowners will not be able to bring debris. If citizens were to be allowed to bring debris, another location would have to be designated for that. The Chairman asked if there would be a number for the citizens to call to request pickup of debris if they put it out by the road. Mr. Daniell said that would be put on social media and that debris would have to be put on the right of way. There would be an initial pass through the County, and then another pass for those who missed the first run. Commissioner Barnard asked how would could things be fixed so that a resident could take debris to a location. Mr. Daniell deferred to Public

Works Director Michael Brooks who said he would have to apply for a permit for another location. He said once the contractor's trucks start with debris pickup, they can't have citizens and contractors coming and going at the same dump site for reasons of safety and liability. EMA Director Daniell explained that CrowderGulf would be doing debris pickup for all of Ware County, including residences inside the City. The City public works department will suspend pickup services while CrowderGulf is actively clearing debris from the hurricane.

Commissioner Pope asked if the company will use local contractors who have the proper equipment to help pick up debris. Mr. Daniel said the company would use subcontractors who meet the requirements. Commissioner Pope asked how long before this process will start. Mr. Daniell stated that a Notice to Proceed is done, the company has 48 hours to have 50% of its equipment on site. Within 96 hours, 100% of what is needed has to be on the ground ready to work. Mr. Daniell said he has to get another permit and approve a contract for a monitoring company. Once those two items are in place, the company can start hauling. It can be another couple of days. Public Works Director Brooks also pointed out that this contract will take care of the trees that are leaning or hanging into the road. He asked that the Commissioners let him know of any trees like this that need to be trimmed or cut down.


COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Chairman Thrift said he got a call from Marty Fullard and that his ditch was dug for only about 100 feet. He asked Public Works Director if he knew about that. Director Brooks said that they dug as far as they had an easement. He said it was between one-half and three-quarters of a mile. The Chairman said Mr. Fullard thought the easement ran the length of the road. Mr. Brooks said he didn't think so. County Manager Moye said there were about four or five easements that run through the properties along that road. The Chairman said he would notify the citizen that work was done the length of the easement.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnard to adjourn the Work Session, with Commissioner Pope seconding the motion at 4:37 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

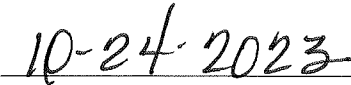
Date proposed to be approved: October 9, 2023



Elmer Thrift, Chairman



Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk



Date