

**MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2023
3:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, October 9, 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; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
PRESS	None
INVOCATION	The Invocation was given by Commissioner Barnard
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift

GUEST SPEAKER(S):

Berry Tanner – Okefenokee Miracle League: Thank you to Commission for partnership with Okefenokee Miracle League in getting field prepared so that it is accessible to all players including those with wheelchairs (even when wet). He invited all in attendance to come see the players who range in age from 5 to 75 years. This year has the highest number of participants ever (over 100), and Mr. Tanner believes it is due to the work that the Commission had done to the field. He wanted to give a shout out to the recreation department, especially Lance Adamson and Alton Cade (who he said would be missed), County Manager Scott Moye, and engineering staff Brandon Wallace and Gene Thomas.

Julie Highsmith – Nightclub in Jamestown: Advised that she is against having a nightclub in the neighborhood. She advised that she has a petition that she will pass around to any resident of Jamestown who is wanting to sign.

James Conoly – Nightclub in Jamestown: He advised that he is against having a nightclub in the community. He stated where there is a club, there is alcohol and drugs, there is violence.

Planning and Codes Director James Shubert said he has had a phone conversation with the new owner who was inquiring what he had to create an event center. Director Shubert

asked the owner if he would be applying for an alcohol license, but he said is not interested in getting an alcohol license at this time. He was to come in the following day, but he didn't show up. Commissioner Barnard asked if he could have an event with alcohol. Director Shubert said the only way he could have alcohol at an event is if he has a licensed caterer who has a valid County alcohol license to serve at that event. A special event license for Ware County without a licensed caterer is only allowed for a civic or non-profit organization. Commissioner Barnard asked if there are any licensed caterers in Ware County. Director Shubert stated he is not aware of any. Commissioner Pope asked if zoning in that area allows for this type of venue. Director Shubert said there is no zoning. Commissioner Barnard asked if anyone has filed for rezoning, but no one has.

Director Shubert said he has an amendment for License and Business Regulations on the Agenda for the October 23 meeting which puts in writing that new business will be inspected for life safety measures, not annual inspections.

Per the advice of the Assistant County Attorney and for the purpose of being reflected in these minutes, the Chairman asked for a show of hands of those in attendance who would be against a nightclub opening up at the location being discussed. Three-quarters of the people in attendance raised their hands. No one spoke in favor of a nightclub or event center serving alcohol.

Thomas Littlejohn: Paschall Road: On behalf of his wife and family, from 2009 to 2023, he has complained of overgrowth, drainage, flooding issues, and dangerous curves. He said he listens to the prayers and pledge and hears the final words justice for all. He said there are 12 taxpaying citizens who live on that road who are black, so he wants to know where the justice is.

County Engineer Brandon Wallace gave an update on Paschall Road. He is getting a surveyor in, so he can show the landowner (Mr. Kitchens) how small of an area is being negotiated for purchase on the first dangerous curve. The landowner has covered outfall ditches. Currently there is a 30' prescriptive easement.

(Item F was heard first due to having visitors in the audience)

A. GDOT Agreement – Indication of Roundabout Support & Lighting Project

County Manager said this is in conjunction with the bridge replacement over Kettle Creek on U.S. 1. There are plans to construct a roundabout north of the bridge. Part of that is for support of the roundabout and for the County to install lighting at the roundabout and pay for the maintenance and operation. He said it would be like the lighting situation at the Fulford Road and Hwy 82 intersection. He is trying to get more information, including number of lights. He checked out the one at Argyle and counted about a dozen street lights in and around that roundabout. He said that could be an indication of the number of lights that would be needed. He said Georgia Power would be involved. He keeps checking, but hasn't received an answer yet. Commissioner Pope asked how long it would take to replace the bridge. County Manager Moye said from he understands it would be about 1 - 1.5 years. County Engineer Wallace said he hasn't seen anything on this, but it would probably be around a year. CM Moye needs more information about this project, so this item will be carried over to the October 23rd meeting.

B. Purchasing Policy Update

Assistant County Attorney Herzog explained that this proposal is to update the manager's approved spending limits per state guidelines. Under state law there are two main rules that apply to County Commissions. There is the \$100,000 threshold for public works construction projects and \$200,000 for road construction. Once those thresholds are met, those items automatically have to be bid per state law. Outside of that, local policy states when cost estimates are needed, when bids must be obtained, or when the County Manager within his discretion can approve already budgeted items.

Commissioner Pope asked for the current spending limit for the County Manager. Assistant County Attorney Herzog stated that for budgeted capital expenditures, he authorized to spend up to \$50,000. Any amount over that would have to go before the Commission. Non-Budgeted expenditures can be authorized by the County Manager up to \$10,000. Any amount over that would go before the Commission. Commissioner Pope asked what the current local limit is. County Manager Moyer said it is at \$25,000. Commissioner Pope asked about the language including Chief Financial Officer since Ware County doesn't have a CFO or a Finance Director. Assistant County Attorney Herzog said the language can be revised. Commissioner Pope asked about the limit for department heads. CM Moyer said that any expenditure above \$1,000 requires his approval and signature. Assistant County Attorney said this is something that her firm is doing with all of the counties that they serve. She encouraged the Commissioners to read up on this and decide what they would like to do. This item was to be held until a later date.

C. Bid Award – 2023 Emergency Roadway Repairs

County Engineer Brandon Wallace explained that there were several needed repairs, so he got pictures of the roads and put together a bid package and reached out to four bidders. He only received a response from two of them. The Chairman asked about some spots on Swamp Road. Engineer Wallace said there were a bunch of spots there, but he had to keep the amount below \$200,000. He said they might could do another repair project just on Swamp Road because there are so many spots.

Sealed bids were opened October 5, 2023 for the 2023 Emergency Roadway Repairs Project at 10:00 a. m. Two companies submitted bids. The Scruggs Company for \$195,053.25 and Thrift Brothers for 200,870.00. The Scruggs Company was the apparent low bidder with a bid of \$195,053.25. The Regional TSPLOST Discretionary Fund is the recommended funding source.

Chairman Thrift asked Engineer Wallace if he recommended The Scruggs Company. Wallace said that was what was in line with what the County wanted to do price wise. Commissioner Lucas interjected that he thought that was part of a new law that just passed that says you have to go with the low bidder. Assistant County Attorney Herzog said that isn't a new law, but for a road project that is over \$200,000 you are required to bid it out. This project does not fall under that because of the threshold it's under and there are emergency exceptions to the normal rule. She said even in Ware County's policy, there are emergency exceptions. It is her understanding the company recommended here is the lowest bidder. Chairman Thrift asked if this would catch all of the hot spots. Engineer Wallace said it would, except for the places that the Chairman had mentioned earlier.

Commissioner Barnard asked what may be happening to these roads to cause these spots that need repairing. Engineer Wallace said they are finding gumbo and other suspicious material moisture gets in there. It has a sand, clay/gumbo base. Also with the increased weight limits on trucks, the roads are going to see more issues like this.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. Dixie Union Road & Telmore-Dixie Union Road Drainage Repairs Project

This is a proposal from Uretek, USA for drainage, structures, and roadway repairs at multiple locations on Dixie Union Road and Telmore – Dixie Union Road at a cost of \$126,618.00. Uretek has an existing contract with GDOT to perform this service at the same proposed price. This same process was successfully used on the Central Avenue drainage repair about six months ago. The Regional TSPLOST Discretionary Fund is the recommended funding source.

Engineer Wallace explained that this system will allow them to stabilize the soil and the headwalls without having to spend a lot of money replacing the headwalls. This has to be done before the paving project.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. Funding Request – Okefenokee Gateway Getaway Sponsorship

Jason Rubenbauer of Waycross Ware County Development Authority and Laura Dixon of the Downtown Waycross Development Authority presented the request for \$2,500 sponsorship of the Okefenokee Gateway Getaway. Mr. Rubenbauer said this is in coordination with Charlton and Clinch Counties to promote the Okefenokee Swamp as a whole instead of just one entrance in one of the counties. This event is a regional collaborative leading up to Georgia Florida weekend to attract the Georgia legislators to our region to show what South Georgia has to offer in the Okefenokee area. Charlton County is the host this year. Ware County will be the host in 2024, and Clinch in 2025. The benefit is getting the focus out of Atlanta and in Southeast Georgia.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

F. Discussion & Possible Action Concerning Georgia State Patrol – Post 22

Commissioner Lucas introduced State Patrol Post Commander Brandon Smith along with Master Troopers Gentry Mattox, Justin Jones, Merritt Meeks, Trooper Rigby, and Mrs. Alicia Jarrard to the Commission before presenting his thoughts on finding a new building for Post 22. Commissioner Lucas stated there are four law enforcement agencies in Ware County, including the Georgia State Patrol. He wants to keep their post here, but he knows that Pierce County is actively trying to find a location for them to relocate. One of the troopers stated there was a conversation last year with Pierce County Commission who was actively seeking to move the post over there. He brought up the fact the GSP is a revenue generator for the County. Compared to five local counties, the GSP brought in more revenue to Ware than to the others in the amount of a little more than \$700,000. He went on to say that the current building is too small and is in pretty bad shape as well as outdated. Participants in the FTO program are required to stay overnight at the post. Several share an office, so more space needs to be added. He feels that it would take more money to bring the current building up-to-date to meet the needs of the troopers than it would to provide a new building. He wants to relocate state patrol post near the airport to take advantage of the aeronautical equipment.

Chairman Thrift and Commissioner Pope voiced their support of seeing a new building for the State Patrol, but both agreed that funding is the issue. The Chairman stated that needed repairs could be done, but a new building would have to be a future project. Commissioner Barnard said he has been in touch with the facilities maintenance person for this area. That guy is getting a delegation together with Driver Services to evaluate the building to determine the needs of the local post. Commissioner Barnard has also been in touch with Driver Services. He said when they construct a new building, it's 4,000 square feet. He said a new GSP building may be 7-8,000 square feet and at a cost of \$200/sq. ft. the entire building would run about \$2 million. The City of Hazlehurst had to borrow money to pay for the \$2 million building constructed for GSP there. Chairman Thrift asked how old is the current building. He was told it was constructed in 1966. He asked about having some repairs done. County Manager Moye explained that repairs are currently happening. Commissioner Lucas talked about the pipes and said the plumber told him that he will have continue to repair the cast iron pipes. It will cost \$50-70,000 to replace the. H asked for permission to scout for a site for a new building and to find funding. Commissioner Pope stated he votes for Commissioners Lucas and Barnard to gather as much information as possible on getting a new building and location and bring back to the Commission.

County Engineer Wallace gave an update on the repairs that have been done on the building. Sewage water was coming into the building. Self-contained pump stations will help alleviate flooding during rainfall events which occurs due to City lift station not adequately handling the inflow of water. The plumber ran a video and cleaned out the lines. it was determined the high efficiency toilets need to be replaced with standard toilets to get the volume of water up in cast iron pipes to keep waste moving out of building. He stated the HVAC system was checked for air quality and mold. Air quality was okay, and there was no mold. The humidity level needs to be kept down. The water is being tested. So far everything is testing okay. The Commission thanked Engineer Wallace for his report.

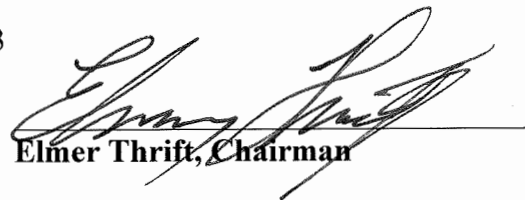
COUNTY MANAGER ITEMS: None

COMMISSIONER ITEMS: None

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Commissioner Pope to adjourn the Work Session, with Commissioner Barnard seconding the motion at 5:10 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Date proposed to be approved: November 13, 2023


Elmer Thrift, Chairman


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

11-14-2023
Date