

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

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

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	EJ Pond – WJH and Myra Thrift – Waycross Express
INVOCATION	The Invocation was given by Danny Bartlett
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift

GUEST SPEAKER(S):

Master Sergeant Drew Kearns and PSC Scott Eason of Georgia State Defense Force Volunteer Brigade

MSG Kearns explained they work as support to the Georgia National Guard forces (a component of Georgia Department of Defense). They work with FEMA and GEMA to assist Georgia communities. They are looking for a place to train, and Waycross seems to fall in the middle of their area. They have/will sign a standing order to mobilize. They requested use of a building for drills twice a month. There would be 30-50 soldiers bringing in double bunks. He stated they would need a classroom and two sleeping quarters to separate men and women as well as a shower area. They will provide all of their own supplies. Because they are a volunteer brigade, they do not have much of a budget.

Commissioner Pope asked what kind of drill exercises are performed. He said chain saw use, search and rescue, land navigation, learning to be a soldier, etc. He emphasized that they bring their own equipment and will leave any place they use or occupy better than they found it. Commissioner Pope suggested use of the Public Safety Training Center. He will look into this and be in touch.

Billy Carter, Chief Appraiser – Veteran’s Property Tax Exemption

Chief Appraiser Billy Carter explained to the Commission per O.C.G.A 48.5-48 any disabled veteran (defined as 100% disabled or less than 100% disabled but compensated at the 100% level due to individual unemployability) is granted a homestead exemption of up to \$50,000. He was unaware of this until a veteran brought in his letter showing his benefits. Chief Appraiser Carter said the citizen/veteran is due a refund because of this exemption. He stated he is laying the groundwork for the Commission to authorize Tax Commissioner Roger Collins to automatically refund up to three years of overpayment to a qualifying citizen per O.C.G.A 48-5-380. This would keep the Tax Assessor and Tax Commissioner from having to present every valid request to the Commission. It was acknowledged that any request to refund more than three years would be brought before the Commission. Chairman Thrift asked Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog to draft a resolution granting the delegation of authority for refunds of three years of tax overpayment and present to the Commission at the December meeting. She noted that the veteran's case in question has taxes due before that meeting, so she suggested putting his refund on the agenda for the meeting following this work session.

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. Resolution 2023-30: Award Bid for Asbestos Abatement Project

The resolution awards a bid to Sacal Environmental & Management of Macon, Georgia in the amount of \$15,980. The asbestos in the roofing material has to be removed by a licensed contractor. Commissioner Burse asked County Engineer Brandon Wallace if the bidder provided any references. Engineer Wallace said he was able to speak with five of the eight listed references. All were very complimentary and only had good things to say about the work done by this contractor.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

B. Resolution 2023-31: Authorize Annual Rate Adjustment for Solid Waste Collection and Disposal

County Manager Moye explained that the resolution authorizes an annual rate adjustment of 5.34% based on the CPI and will take effect January 1, 2024. Commissioner Lucas asked if Ware County is locked into a contract. County Manager Moye answered that the the original contract was for five years, and there are still three years left before the contract can be rebid.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

C. Resolution 2023-32: Approve Pay Increase for Ware County Volunteer Firefighters

County Manager Moye said he added this item to the agenda because there hasn't been a pay increase for the volunteers in a number of years. They are currently paid \$15 per call and \$15 per training session. The proposed amount is \$25 per call and \$5.00 per hour after the first hour and \$25 per training session. Commissioner Burse asked Fire Chief Dee Meadows how long this pay rate had been in effect. Chief Meadows said he wasn't sure, but he knew it went back to the days of Chief Brown. He stated he feels like this will help entice volunteers to come out. There are currently 35 active volunteers. They are paid once a year, but that is being changed to twice a year (July and December). Other enticements include: new truck coming in December, hosting training locally at the Public Safety Training Center, and volunteers can pay \$25 per month into the Georgia

Fire Pension Fund, and will be vested in 10 years.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. Resolution 2023-33: Approve Second Half Agreement for FY2024 Indigent Services

This item is to approve the second half of the contract for the FY2024 with the Georgia Public Defender council to provide a pro rata share of funding for the Public Defender Office in the Waycross Judicial Circuit. County Manager Moye explained that Ware County's caseload increased from 28.2% to 32.39%. He advised that there was increase in the budget to give the three county funded attorneys a \$5,000 increase to match the increase given to the state funded attorneys.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. Resolution 2023-34: Approve Employee Safety Incentive Pay

County Manager Moye told the Commission that the safety incentive payment gives \$125 to full time employees and \$65 to part-time employees. This includes constitutional officers and the Commissioners. The total payout, including taxes, is \$44,983.84. This money comes from the ACCG worker's comp refund. This year, the refund is only \$9,539. However, a premium credit dividend coming in January from ACCG will more than cover this amount.

Commissioner Barnard questioned elected officials receiving this payment. County Manager Moye said they have been paid previously. Commissioner Barnard said he could return his check.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

F. Ware County Purchasing Policy Revision

This is updated purchasing policy as discussed at October 9 work session. It would authorize the County Manager to procure and pay for budgeted capital items which cost up to \$50,000 and non-budgeted items which cost up to \$10,000. Any budgeted capital expenditure greater than \$50,000 or and non-budgeted expenditure greater than \$10,000 must go before the Board of Commissioners for approval. These items must be accompanied by three competitive estimates, unless otherwise unavailable.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

G. Cancellation of Lien for a Bond Issue

Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog explained to the Commission that this item is an issue of a bond forfeiture. A defendant's family posted a property bond. When he failed to show for court, a lien was placed on the property. Both the defendant and his parents (property owners) are now deceased. The remaining heirs are trying to sell the property. The Commission agreed several months ago to settle for \$1,500 instead of the \$15,000. She said the payment has been made, so now a cancellation of the lien needs to be filed. The Commission just needs to approve the cancellation now that the approved payment has been received.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

H. Discussion & Possible Action Concerning the 2024 GDOT LMIG Application

Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant letter was received announcing Ware County formula amount for FY2024 is \$1,101,971.94 with a required local match of 10%. County Engineer Brandon Wallace put together a list of possible projects. He said the grant amount is higher than normal. Commissioner Barnard mentioned that \$1 million wouldn't go far to complete the list. Engineer Wallace said there are additional SPLOST and Regional TSPLOST funds available to supplement the grant. Commissioner Burse asked if the money would come from 2014 SPLOST. Engineer Wallace said some could come from that as well as Regional TSPLOST.

While Engineer Wallace was at the podium, Commissioner Lucas pointed out to Thomas Littlejohn sitting in the audience and asked for an update on Paschall Road. Engineer Wallace said that Mr. Kitchen has requested the approved amount for his land, but wants to retain ownership of property and only give a maintenance easement. Commissioner Lucas questioned the easement transferring with ownership of the property because he had experience with a situation where someone hired a lawyer and took back an easement. Assistant County Attorney Herzog will have research the situation.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:

County Manager Moyer stated he left the airport leases off the agenda which need to be approved. They are standard leases, and he needs to know if Commission has made a decision about allowing him to sign leases instead of bringing each one before the board which causes a time lapse.

COMMISSIONER ITEMS:

Commissioner Lucas said he had received calls from citizens concerned because there is not a Mickey Katkavek bowl this year. Recreation Department Director Lance Adamson explained that unfortunately due to Hurricane Idalia causing a late start to the season and scheduling conflicts between class A, B, and C regions which are all in Ware County's district. Traditionally the Mickey Katkavek bowl is held the week of Thanksgiving and in the past would last several days. However, in recent years, the number of participants have been decreasing, and this event has become a one-day event. Director Adamson said the plan is to have the bowl again in 2024.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Commissioner Pope to adjourn the Work Session, with Commissioner Barnard seconding the motion at 5:03 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Date proposed to be approved: December 11, 2023


Elmer Thrift, Chairman


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

12-12-2023
Date

