

**MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024  
3:30 p.m.**

**The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, January 8, 2024 at 3:30 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 Jerry Pope, and Commissioner Timmy Lucas (via phone)
<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
<b>INVOCATION</b>	The Invocation was given by Commissioner Burse
<b>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</b>	The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift
<b>GUEST SPEAKER(S):</b>	None

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**A. Banking Services Proposal Acceptance**

Banking services proposals were sent out in November. Ware County is currently with Truist Bank. Ameris turned in the best RFP. In comparison to Truist, Ameris offers a slightly higher interest rate and lower monthly fees. Brad Morris, City President with Ameris Bank, spoke to the Commission. He was accompanied by Christen Landrum, Branch Market Manager and Kerry Huettnner, Regional Treasury Officer. They explained some of the services they offer and explained that the City of Waycross transferred all accounts to Ameris about 2-1/2 years ago, and everything went well. They noted that they offer local technical support, so no one has to call a support line. The local staff will work closely with the employees of the Commission office to train them ahead of the transfer and stay in close contact to ensure a smooth transition. (RFP included with minutes).

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**B. Resolution 2024-01: Establish 2024 Qualification Fees for Ware County Elected Officials**

The resolution establishes qualification fees for the 2024 elections. The amounts set are 3 % of the base salary. There are four Board of Education positions and three Board of Commissioner positions.

*Added to Regular Meeting Agenda*

**C. Resolution 2024-02: Support Mental Health Bill**

ACCG is encouraging every county to adopt the resolution urging the Governor and General Assembly to improve mental health services for Georgians. Over 120 counties have adopted this so far. Commissioner Pope said there need to be some changes made to the current bill before he can support it. Commissioner Lucas said he is in favor of waiting to see the final product before offering support. Deborah Giddens spoke to the Commission thanking them for postponing their support. She stated that several constituents have spoken against it because they feel the bill is overreaching.

*Added to Regular Meeting Agenda*

**D. Right of Way Deed Acceptance – LeJuene Road and Alton Circle**

Commissioner Burse stated he has not been in favor of a private road being turned over to the County for a variety of reasons. Ownership has been in question. The road has been private for over 15 years. The people who purchased homes on that road have come before the Commission to say they bought their homes because the road was private. The road was not built to County standards. He feels the Commission is at a crossroads. If they accept the road, they are accepting everything that goes with the road, including future maintenance. The County had no input during the construction of the road. He asked Assistant County Attorney if the Commission would be setting a precedent by accepting this road. She said the deed in hand regarding the road was prepared by Jim McGee’s office. Her office has not done any title work, and she is unsure about Mr. McGee’s office. In response to Commissioner Burse’s question, she said the County has set established standards in the past for roads. There could be an explanation as to why, but this would be outside of those standards.

Commissioner Lucas said the road is not up to standards. He purchased his home on that road as a private road. He feels the road should be repaired before it is accepted by the County.

Commissioner Pope asked County Engineer Wallace from an engineering standpoint what the results of the borings were. Engineer Wallace said there was 6” of base (concrete) and 1-1/2” of asphalt. He asked Planning and Codes Director to verify the requirements of the County. Director Shubert said a 6” base with 1-1/2” of asphalt is the requirement. Commissioner Pope asked if that road was built now, would it meet current standards. Engineer Wallace said it would. Director Shubert said the last thing to do is clean the concrete curbing.

Commissioner Burse asked Engineer Wallace about the current policy on accepting private roads. He wanted to make sure that it is to have them built to County standards. Engineer Wallace said that is current policy, and it helps to have the County staff

monitoring during construction. Otherwise taking bores is the best you can do. The Chairman asked if it was built to standards. Engineer Wallace said it was, per the bores that were taken. After the road was built, then it was just normal house construction traffic on the paved road. Commissioner Pope said he feels comfortable that the road was built to standards, he is just hesitant to accept it until the Commission is 100% sure of the ownership. Attorney Herzog noted that she isn't questioning Mr. McGee's paperwork, she just wanted the Commission to know that her office didn't prepare the deed. Commissioner Burse said he is all for development. When you are building a subdivision and roads, you know you are responsible. But to get down the road and expect an entity to take over isn't right. The County would be taking on a road that is not very new.

#### **Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

#### **E. Airport Hangar Lease Agreement Renewals**

Airport Manager Frank Bartanowitz presented the lease agreement renewals beginning January 1, 2024. The proposed increase would begin May 1, 2024. There are 24 "T" hangars, 2 corporate hangars, and a Quonset hut. It was an approximately 35% increase after almost 18 years at the same rate. There is a cover letter giving more than 90 days' notice of the increase. The two non-hangars have been paying \$100 per month (one for 6 years, one for 7 years), so that rent doubled to \$200 per month. Chairman Thrift asked if these prices are in line with other airports. Mr. Bartanowitz stated that these prices are still lower than most. The T hanger would rent for \$450 in Jacksonville. Commissioner asked about Douglas. He said Douglas is a little lower, but is in process of looking at increasing rates. They also are getting ready to build new hangars which will get premium rates. Alma charges \$750 for corporate hangars that are the same size as these.

Commissioner Barnard asked how things were coming on the other two hangars that are non-aviation leases. Mr. Bartanowitz stated that he has initiated the process, but he is awaiting further guidance as to whether follow through with removal or keep things as is.

Commissioner Lucas asked Mr. Bartanowitz why emails and calls had been made to the two entities who rent the non-aviation hangars when at the last meeting it was decided to halt that process until there another plan of action in place. Mr. Bartanowitz advised that the contact had been made prior to the last Commission meeting, and nothing had been done since that time.

Commissioner Pope stated that all rents need to be raised and kept up to date.

#### **Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

#### **F. Appointment – Waycross/Ware County Land Bank Authority**

Mr. Steve Strickland hold Post 6 of the Waycross/Ware County Land Bank Authority. His term expired December 31, 2023, and he must sit out one year. County Manager Moye advised that the person must be a County resident. No name had been nominated. Commissioner Barnard asked if anyone in the audience wanted to sit on the land board. He then asked Debra Giddens if she would like to serve. He then nominated her, and Commissioner Pope said he would second it.

#### **Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**G. Appointments – Ware County Board of Assessors**

Jacob Strickland and Bobby Wright sent letters requesting to be reappointed to the Board of Assessors. There are no term limits.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:**

He mentioned that he is planning for the Commissioner Retreat to be at the end of February. Rusty Hall of YMCA contacted him wanting to know what the County’s plans are for opening the Bailey Street pool because there are some things that YMCA will need to prepare for. This will be on the January 22<sup>nd</sup> agenda.

Assistant County Attorney Herzog spoke and said that on December 13, 2021, Commissioner Barnard made a motion to approve acceptance the LeJuene Road contingent on the road being deeded to the County by the legal owner, adequate core samples submitted to the County, and a cul-de-sac being constructed. That information was in the minutes, and she is waiting to hear from Mr. McGee’s office now. Commissioner Barnard asked if the motion carried, and it did. He then asked if the conditions had been met. County Engineer Wallace said Planning and Codes Director Shubert said the only thing they were aware of is some curbing needs to be cleaned.

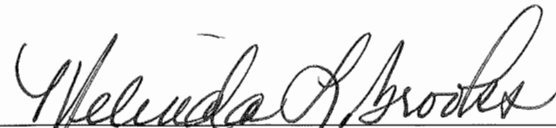
**COMMISSION COMMENTS: None**

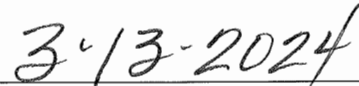
**ADJOURN:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Burse to adjourn the Work Session, with Commissioner Pope seconding the motion at 4:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Date proposed to be approved: March 11, 2024

  
Elmer Thrift, Chairman

  
Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

  
Date

