

**Lamar County Board of Commissioners
Regular Business Meeting
March 21st, 2023**

Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Thrash, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. The meeting was available via Zoom.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

Everyone said the Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Scott Weaver of the Lasting Impact Church gave the invocation.

III. Agenda Approval

Commissioner Fletcher made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Minutes Approval

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- i. Workshop Meeting-February 16th, 2023
- ii. Public Hearing-February 21st, 2023
- iii. Regular Business Meeting-February 21st, 2023

V. Proclamations

Commissioner Gilles presented the Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month Proclamation to the Division of Family Children Services (DFACS) Director Kelly Page and other members from DFACS.

Chairman Traylor presented the Gordon College-2022 National Club Football Association (NCFA) National Champions Proclamation to Gordon College President Dr. Kirk Nooks and his family.

Vice-Chair Thrash presented the Wrestling Championship to Clint Williamson for the GHSA State 1A Wrestling Championship title and noted his place in history as the first to win this distinguished title.

VI. Minutes Approval

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve the following three sets of minutes. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- i. Workshop Meeting 1-12-2023
- ii. Regular Business Meeting 1-17-2023
- iii. Special Called Meeting 1-19-2023
- iv. Lamar County Commissioners Planning Workshop & Retreat 1-26-1-27-2023

VII. Ordinance 2023-03 Rezoning from Agriculture-Residential to Highway Commercial (Tax Map 037 Parcel 010A)

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-03 Rezoning from Agriculture-Residential to Highway Commercial (Tax Map 037 Parcel 010A) subject to the following conditions:

- Leave existing undisturbed buffer along the back corner of the property
- Install privacy fence along rear property line from Country Kitchen Road to start of an existing tree buffer

Vice-Chair Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Ordinance 2023-04 Rezoning from Residential-1 to Agriculture-Residential (Tax Map 052, Parcel 015)

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-04 Rezoning from Residential-1 to Agriculture-Residential (Tax Map 052, Parcel 015) subject to the following conditions; No Manufactured Homes, No Local, State, or Federal Buildings, No publicly owned and operated park or recreation area, No commercial poultry house, No utility Substation, No private cemetery, No home business that is the base of operations for large equipment companies, No hunting/deer camps, No small scale Agritourism, No signs, Underground utilities north of the pipeline, if available through the utility company, A paved or concrete driveway that matches the length of the neighboring property owners, Curb cutout on the street, Landscaping north of the pipeline that is in line with neighboring property owners, 50' vegetative buffer along the north property line, No horse track. Vice-Chair Thrash seconded the motion. Commissioner Fletcher opposed the motion. The motion passed 3-1.

IX. CSRA Probation Contract

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the CSRA Probation Contract providing probation services and programs for the Superior Court of Lamar County, Georgia.

Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Owner-Consultant Agreement-Lamar County Master Services on Call EXP US Services, Inc.

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve the Owner-Consultant Agreement-Lamar County Master Services on Call EXP US Services, Inc. to retain the consultant to provide engineering, Planning and Design consulting services on an On-Call Basis with the stipulation that the late fee charge be renegotiated. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Surplus Vehicles for the Sheriff's Office

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve the following list of surplus vehicles for the Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- 1980 Chevrolet S6000 Bus Vin# 6237
- 2005 Ford Truck-Vin#1036
- 2007 Chevrolet Avalanche-Vin# 0798
- 2008 Dodge 4 Door Charger-Vin #9861
- 2008 Jeep Cherokee-Vin # 7315
- 2011 Ford F150 Vin # 3382
- 2014 Ford 4 Door Caprice Police-Vin#0473
- 2015 Dodge Charger-Vin #2733
- 2019 Dodge 4 Door Charger-1896

XII. Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend reported the following:

- i. Reported that revenues for February are at 9.48 % and the expenditures for February are at 13.41%.
- ii. Reported that the cash flow is below forecast because of prior year revenues.
- iii. Reported on the gym renovations and replacing toilets and countertops for the concession stand. The groundbreaking with the Commissioners should happen in April.
- iv. Reported that the repeater on the North end of the County had been down for around two weeks but is back up and running.
- v. Reported sheetrock and ceiling tiles were installed in the new Administration building.
- vi. Reported that the Animal Shelter groundbreaking had a large turnout.
- vii. Reported that he is working on an RFP for the roof repairs at the Courthouse and the Jail.
- viii. Reported that the Local Options Sales Tax (LOST) distribution for February was \$141,477.19.
- ix. Reported that the Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) distribution for February was \$242,407.59.
- x. Reported that the Transportation Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (TSPLOST) for February was \$217,824.81.

Vice-Chair Thrash said that on Facebook, there were comments about the Board of Commissioners building an Administration Building even though the citizens voted it down. Vice-Chair Thrash said they voted down a new Justice Center, not an Administration building. She said it would have cost the taxpayers 10 to 14 million dollars to build a new Administration building, but renovating the old Fred's building would only cost around 3 million dollars.

Chairman Traylor said that County Administrator Townsend and the staff do a wonderful job managing the expenses. He said it is exciting to see where the County is now as opposed to six years ago. He said that was at the Gym to vote today, and it looks fabulous and is looking forward to the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony soon.

X. Public Comments

Elaine Hallada of 131 Steeple Chase addressed the board. Mrs. Hallada congratulated the Board of Commissioners on the groundbreaking for the animal shelter. Her concerns were with the following:

- The developer failed to do what was promised in Magnolia Trace. She would like a penalty implemented for the developer or something to hold them accountable. She hopes that this does not happen in Redbone. Mrs. Hallada requested that the Commissioners look at this issue and do something about it.
- Mrs. Hallada said she attended the Planning Commission meeting regarding the R-1 to Agricultural zoning. She said there was a room of people who did not want the Agricultural zoning. Mrs. Hallada said this is not very democratic because if you had ten people and one was for it and nine opposed, where does the democracy come in with the decision? She said that the Commissioners need to consider the number of people opposed to something. The Board of Commissioners did not listen to the residents of Magnolia Trace that did not want the zoning to be changed from R-1 to Agricultural zoning.
- Mrs. Hallada said that at the last meeting, she talked about problems at the dump, and now they have another problem at the dump with people being overcharged.
- Concerns about campaign contributions from AmWaste for those that serve on the Solid Waste Authority Board because it is a conflict of interest. Mrs. Hallada asked each Commissioner if they received contributions from AmWaste.
 - a. Commissioner Fletcher responded that he did not
 - b. Commissioner Lovett responded that he did not.
 - c. Commissioner Gilles responded that she did not.
 - d. Chairman Traylor responded that he did receive a contribution.
 - e. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she was not going to answer that question.

Mrs. Hallada stated that Vice-Chair Thrash obviously did. Vice-Chair Thrash said she could not assume that she did or did not and she had no right to ask that question. Mrs. Hallada said that it was a public meeting. Chairman Traylor stated that Vice-Chair Thrash did not have to answer, but the question was public record, and Mrs. Hallada could have looked this up if she wanted to know. Mrs. Hallada inquired about the Commissioners that are on the Solid Waste Authority board. Chairman Traylor said that he serves on this board. Vice-Chair Thrash answered that she also serves on the board. Mrs. Hallada said that this was a conflict of interest and said that there needs to be another Commissioner on the board because they are obviously having trouble. Mrs. Hallada said that if you accept a campaign donation from any entity, you should not serve on that board that is associated with the entity. Chairman Traylor clarified that AmWaste is not a part of the Solid Waste Authority. They have a contract with AmWaste to do roadside garbage pickup and manage the facility, but AmWaste is not a part of the Solid Waste Authority. Mrs. Hallada said that the problem was with the administration of the facility. She said that citizens are going out there to dump, and they cannot dump, and they are turned away and charged when they should not have been charged. Mrs. Hallada said that they should address the issue of the dumping by making a public comment or on the County website about the rules.

Chairman Traylor stated that AmWaste and the Solid Waste Authority are different entities but meet together. AmWaste was not holding up to their end of the contract, so they met and the issue with dumping has been resolved.

James Hyde of 116 White Oak Drive, Jackson, Georgia, addressed the board. Mr. Hyde stated that he honors our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He said that all government originates with the people and public officers are servants to the people. Mr. Hyde recited the State of Georgia Codes as follows:

- Chapter 5, article 8, the power of the County governing authority to levy and has levying power to collect taxes for educational purposes.
- OCGA 48-5-400: the governing authority may levy and collect taxes for educational purposes in such amount as the county governing authority shall determine.
- Code Section 48-5-401: each County Board of Education shall annually recommend to the County Governing Authority the rate of levy to be made for taxes to support the education of the County.

Mr. Hyde said that the State law is very clear; the only body empowered to levy and collect taxes within the County is the County governing authorities which are the Commissioners. The School Board must recommend, but recommendations can be denied. Mr. Hyde said that taxes in Lamar County are out of control. For years they have said there is nothing they can do about the school taxes. As you have just learned, this is completely false, and the responsibility is solely on the Board of Commissioners. The Lamar County School system is failing, according to Mr. Hyde. According to Mr. Hyde, the State's website in 2015-2019 scored four C's and one D in the high school and the middle school scored one C, three D's, and an F, and the elementary school has two C's, two D's, and an F. Mr. Hyde insisted that the Board of Commissioners demand improvement from the schools before one single dollar of public money is appropriated to the School Board and a written plan of improvement with milestones affecting the Administrators' salaries. Mr. Hyde said this information is now exposed, and they can no longer pass along exuberant taxes claiming no responsibility. You must put your nose to the grindstone and do the hard work, and you must eliminate wasteful spending and prioritize all spending for the good of the whole as required by the Constitution. You must improve operational efficiency and demand the very same from every entity that draws from the public funds of Lamar County.

XI. Round Table

Commissioner Gilles said that zoning is one of the hardest things for the Commissioners, and she is a firm believer in property rights. She said that they do hear the people, and they hear Mrs. Hallada all the time, and she wants to work on a way to mitigate a plan where people are not coming to speak time after time on the same issues but acknowledged that there are issues. Commissioner Gilles said that at the same time, where do the issues and the property rights balance out, and what does the State say they can do?

Vice-Chair Thrash said that she has been fighting the truck weight increase bill before the State Legislature, and she appreciated the Board of Commissioners for backing her on this. She said that logging is a big industry in the community. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the taxpayers paid \$360,000.00 to pave Silver Dollar Road, and almost a year later, Silver Dollar

Road was destroyed by logging trucks. She understands that logging contributes to Georgia Finance, but at what point do you stop putting your hands into the taxpayers' pockets with no concern for them? Vice-Chair Thrash said that the bill has no provisions for the taxpayers. If it passes out of committee, it will go over to the Senate, and they will continue to fight it in all the districts. Vice-Chair Thrash said that a \$5,000.00 attached to the bond that the loggers put up will not touch \$136,000.00 a mile to pave a road. Vice-Chair Thrash asked the citizens to contact Senator Marty Harbin, requesting they refrain from raising the truck weights on the local County roads.

Chairman Traylor said that education is important and should be at the forefront of everyone's mind whether their child attends public or private school. He said that education is important because these people will be taking care of them as they continue to age and live and move throughout the community. Chairman Traylor thanked Mrs. Hallada for speaking on the Solid Waste Authority because some people might need to learn that those procedures were done incorrectly. He thanked all those that went out and voted. Chairman Traylor thanked all those that came out to the animal shelter groundbreaking. They are excited about the facility because it will be State of the Art and one of the nicest animal shelters in the area. Chairman Traylor said that it is always nice when people come to the community to see things going on, and he feels that other people will be coming to see what they can do to improve or build their animal shelter. Chairman Traylor thanked those that donated to the boy scouts. He thanked those who showed up to the ceremony where he received the Golden Eagle award and said that it was a wonderful experience and will go down in his heart forever. Chairman Traylor said that a tragedy happened in Lamar County and sent his condolences to the family that lost a loved one. He said that anytime something happens in the community, it affects the whole community, and life is bigger than what was ever imagined.

Vice-Chair Thrash said she misspoke when she told Mrs. Hallada that she couldn't ask her a question and that she is absolutely right that she can ask her that question. Vice-Chair Thrash encouraged people to request their financial disclosures that the Commissioner's file with Elections. She said they have to list who they receive campaign donations from and if they are a part of any businesses.

XII. Adjournment

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to adjourn the Regular Business meeting at approximately 8:02 p.m. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Nancy Thrash, Vice-Chair

Jarrold Fletcher, Commissioner

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk