

**APPLING COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AGENDA
CALLED MEETING
APPLING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13th, 2023 @ 6:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INVOCATION/PLEDGE

The Appling County Board of Commissioners held a called meeting on February 13, 2023 at 6:00 pm at the Courthouse. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Leslie Burch. County Manager Al Meadows welcomed all those present for the meeting. Mr. Linton DeLoach, County Fire Chief gave the invocation and Vice Chairman Charlie Leggett led the group in the pledge. Present were Chairman Leslie Burch, Vice Chairman Charlie Leggett, Commissioners Daryl Edwards, Doug Harris, Randy Sellers and Theodore Wilkerson. Also present were County Attorney, Tracy Brown, County Manager Al Meadows, County Clerk Robyn Evans, and Administrative Assistant LaFonda Solomon.

This meeting was called in regards to questions from the public about the 2024 SPLOST Budget, recently approved by the Board of Commissioners and on the ballot for March 2023 election. Present as representatives from their respective departments were: City Manager Keri Orvin; Sheriff Mark Melton; Appling County Hospital Authority Chief Executive Officer Andrea Graham, Chief Operating Officer Robin Crosby, Chief Financial Officer Tony O'Steen; Fire Chief Linton DeLoach; Clerk of Court Marsha Thomas; Tax Assessor Myrna Taylor; and Road Dept. Director Brooks Johnson.

COUNTY MANAGERS REPORT

The following statement was read by County Manager, Al Meadows.

"Good evening. It's great to see each and every one of you. Tonight, we get to celebrate being an American. We live in a society where it is okay for a citizen to question a decision made by the government. As Americans, we can voice our opinion and even debate the merits of an issue. Our Constitution, specifically our 1st Amendment, guarantees this. Many of you have fought for this privilege and your names are on the black marble monument on the north side of the courthouse, along with mine. As Americans we hold this privilege as the foundation of a free society.

*Tonight, we are making history. Never has the City and County had councilmembers sitting with commissioners in solidarity. Tonight, you will receive an information briefing concerning the 2024 **Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)**. We may reference previous SPLOST budgets in order to bring context to an issue but will focus our discussion on the 2024 SPLOST.*

I previously asked for all questions to be sent to the county clerk no later than 5:00 pm on February 9th, 2023. We received 19 questions. Some were duplicated or very close. Prior to addressing these questions, I have assembled a panel of local officials who agreed to appear tonight and give you an overview of how they will use the SPLOST funds. This information will help everyone understand how they contend the funds will strengthen Appling County or weaken it, if you have such an opinion. When they have completed their presentations, we will address the emailed questions.

Before I introduce the panel, I want to clear the air concerning some information that just isn't true.

-There are no plans to tear down the City Gym or any of the structures such as Called to Love, the Food Bank, or the City Tennis Courts.

I want to remind everyone that this meeting is no different than a regular BOC meeting that you may attend in the Annex. The Chairman will control all actions and will have the final say. As I mentioned in my opening, this is an Information Briefing, not a Debate. We are at the point in this process that not even a single word on the Resolution or ballot can be changed or altered. We will receive information from the panel, then I will read your questions and provide answers. Please remember, the panel members are here as guests and are not bound or required to answer questions. I ask that all are treated with dignity and respect. Their reports are valuable and key in understanding the broadness of the SPLOST and the importance for Appling County. When this is complete and you are still unsure of an issue, please ask or call your commissioner for clarity. Tonight's purpose is to provide detailed information so you can be a more informed voter."

CITY OF BAXLEY

City Manager, Keri Orvin, spoke regarding the City's request for SPLOST funds, discussing three (3) projects: Public Infrastructure (streets, storm drainage, water/sewer); Public Safety) Police Dept. housing; and Public Amenities – water tower tank needs to be relocated and enhancements such to Water Park such as splash pad and room for family gatherings.

APPLING SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Sheriff Mark Melton spoke next in regards to their needs for SPLOST funds. He discussed that vehicles and equipment adaptations to same were expensive - \$200,000 a year for six years = \$1.2 million. He stated that the Sheriff's Dept. needs a facility behind their office for investigators to move into when the Police Dept. takes over the space where they're currently housed. He then spoke on the need for a new Courthouse Complex – siting numerous space and security issues with trials, etc. held at the old Courthouse. The courtrooms and extra offices are all being used for multiple court (City, County, Superior, and Federal) and Probate Court. Sheriff Melton also mentioned that there were also health concerns due to mold and moisture on exterior walls.

APPLING HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

Chief Financial Officer, Tony O'Steen, with Appling Hospital Authority was next – speaking in regards to projected costs and how they've increased 5% since 2018. He stated the air handler is over 25 years old and needs to be replaced; the plumbing is under the building and original to when the hospital was first built. CFO O'Steen also reminded everyone of the services they offer to the county and get nothing in return like indigent care.

Mr. Linton DeLoach, Appling Fire Chief stated that Fire Departments for the county desperately need new fire suits – they expire after ten (10) years. He also stated they've staggered purchases so they don't have to replace them all at once. However, he mentioned that the costs for those 145 fire suits have almost doubled since 2018.

Q & A

Questions received by email to county clerk are listed below, along with the responses given at the meeting by the county manager.

2024 SPLOST PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

- **Most people believe if they vote “NO” on SPLOST, then their taxes are going to increase to cover the special purpose list of expenditures. Can you simply explain if this is true or not and how that process works?** *Myrna*

- **What will be the impact to the remainder of 2023 & next year’s general fund budgets, if SPLOST is rejected by majority vote?**

If the SPLOST is not passed it will need to be determined if the LISTED projects are to be started or not. If a 2024 SPLOST project is deemed to be necessary then funding will come from the general fund. An alternate plan is none of the 2024 SPLOST projects are started.

- **Will a tax increase be required to finance next year’s general fund for Hospital, Fire, Recreation, Sherriff or Roads & Bridges priority needs?**

While the county’s financial position is strong, the organizations mentioned will not see any growth or expansion of services other than what is already outlined in their respective budgets.

- **If SPLOST is rejected by Majority Vote, will a re-evaluated SPLOST referendum be on the “2024” Ballot?**

The State of Georgia Election Code governs the available dates a referendum may be voted on. If the public fails to approve the SPLOST proposal, a subsequent SPLOST election cannot occur for 12 months following the month in which the SPLOST referendum failed. In this case if our SPLOST were to not pass then we could not vote again until May 2024 for a 2025 SPLOST that would begin on 01 Jan 2025.

- **Can Administration and Management of SPLOST be made more transparent, and frequently report progress in Commissioners meetings?**

The County Manager will provide a quarterly SPLOST report to the public at a monthly BOC meeting. Prior to December 31 of each year, the county and each municipality receiving SPLOST funds must publish a non-technical report in a local newspaper of general circulation and in a prominent location on the local government website. Additionally, an audit of SPLOST funds is conducted annually and will be available upon completion.

- **Is there a Comprehensive plan for the 2024 SPLOST?**

The Resolution is the comprehensive plan. Each organization has begun preliminary planning and research on how to best use the SPLOST funds if approved. An estimated cost of each project has been advertised in the local newspaper and distributed at the BOC meeting. Without having the funding secured no action such as purchase orders, drawings or plans, surveys, or any work associated with the projects can begin. With this in mind, an accurate completion date is impractical to publish.

- **Has the breakdown of how much money for each project been listed in the legal organ of the county? If not, why has it not been made available to the public?**

Yes. The overall amount and the SPLOST funds that are to be allocated for each project were listed in the Baxley News Banner in the January 18th edition.

- **If the 2024 SPLOST passes and a project goes over, can the amount of money that was listed on the paper be adjusted by the commissioners without it being brought back to the taxpayers for a vote?**

Since project costs are estimates, each local government receiving SPLOST revenues may shift funds between their approved projects (as long as all projects are completed).

However, past practices have been that any overages on a project will come out of the general fund in order to preserve the integrity of the other SPLOST projects.

When do the commissioners anticipate the county shop being built and the open air covered agricultural arena from the 2018 SPLOST?

The concrete pad has been poured for the new County Shop. From 2020-2022 the COVID pandemic caused all materials, to include steel and other building materials, to become considerably more expensive. The commissioners made the decision to not proceed until the costs returned to more manageable factor. In the meantime, the BOC focused on our infrastructure and some recreation projects such as the Aquatic Center and ball fields.

Discussions concerning closing in the open-air area at the Ag Center and adding a concrete floor and a HVAC system took place in a BOC Work Session on Jan 15 2019. It was decided then that a large enclosed room would better suit the needs of the entire community. The room has been used for many meetings and functions and even hosted a hog show this past weekend that included guests from across the state.

COURTHOUSE COMPLEX

- **Why was the Court Room Complex added to the SPLOST proposal AFTER the SPLOST “committee” completed & submitted their recommendations, and not presented in committee?**

On 30 Nov 2021 the Appling County Board of Commissioners selected a panel of 12 citizens based on their community involvement and willingness to serve. They were asked to represent all citizens of Appling County and to compile a project list to be presented to the Commissioners concerning the 2024 SPLOST referendum.

Over the next year they met and heard from various officials from the County, City, Hospital and other organizations on projects that would benefit Appling County. The panel was asked to review all of the projects presented and formulate a project list utilizing the anticipated revenue. The panel did so and presented their recommendations to the BOC. On 19 July 2022 the BOC determined that the current courthouse was in bad repair and did not meet the current needs of the public. The BOC began considering making changes to the SPLOST list in order to accommodate new court facilities. No definitive plan was voted on just the need for funding to complete a project. These funds were contingent upon additional funds from grants being made available. If additional funds are not available the funding for this project may become infeasible and the funds allocated will revert back to roads and bridges.

Our courthouse is a landmark for our community. It was constructed in 1907 and met the needs for our county for many years but is now in need of repair. There are funds listed in the 2024 SPLOST to help preserve the building. The need for secure facilities has come a long way since 1907 specifically a secure courtroom. A courthouse must be secure from all threats in order for justice to prevail especially in the conduct of a jury trial. You have heard from the Sheriff on the complex issue of securing this building.

- **What are the details on a new courthouse or courtrooms - design, location, costs?**
There are no details on the design or location of a new courthouse nor has one been voted on. The Sheriff does have a concept of a single courtroom with required additional rooms to accommodate a jury, judge's chamber, and support functions. The exact location for this facility has not been selected.

COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- **What specifically is Item 7 (Appling Co Infrastructure Projects) on the SPLOST list? Why was this not presented & vetted thru the SPLOST committee? Why do we need a new Courthouse?**
Item 7 (Appling Co Infrastructure Projects) is 2.3% of the SPLOST. The BOC added this in order to be able to cover unanticipated costs and to be able to respond to emerging needs.

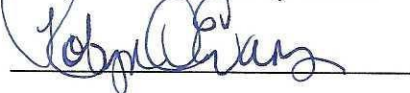
CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Burch addressed those present and apologized the meeting was not as originally planned, in reference to it being open forum where citizens would ask questions and receive responses. He stated that County Attorney Tracy Brown did advise against this format because the responses could be perceived as trying to "sway" the public's opinion toward or against a vote. Chairman Burch thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated he'd be available in the parking lot if anyone had questions.

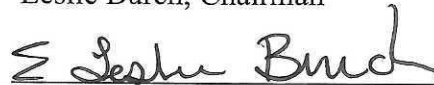
ADJOURN

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Robyn Evans, County Clerk



Leslie Burch, Chairman



ATTEST



APPLING COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

APPLING COUNTY ANNEX

TUESDAY – FEBRUARY 7, 2023 AT 5:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/PLEDGE/INVOCATION

The Appling County Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on February 7, 2023 at 5:30 pm at the Courthouse Annex. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Leslie Burch. Chairman Burch welcomed all those present for the meeting. Commissioner Daryl Edwards gave the invocation and Chairman Leslie Burch led the group in the pledge. Present were Commissioners Daryl Edwards, Charlie Leggett, Doug Harris, Randy Sellers and Theodore Wilkerson. Also present were County Attorney, Tracy Brown, Al Meadows, County Manager and Yvonne Sellers, Personnel Clerk.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion made by Commissioner Harris to approve the agenda for February 7, 2023 regular meeting, seconded by Commissioner Edwards. The agenda was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 10, 2023 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Doug Harris made clarity under new business item A. the motion in favor of the 2024 SPLOST to read: Commissioner Wilkerson, Leggett, Edwards and Harris in favor of the motion. A motion made by Commissioner Leggett, seconded by Commissioner Sellers to approve the minutes of January 10, 2023 with the clarification noted. All in approval of the minutes with clarification noted.

B. January 24, 2023 Called Meeting

On a motion made by Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Sellers to approve the minutes of January 24, 2023. Unanimously approval.

RESOLUTION

In Honor and Memory of Honorable Judge Diane Hallman.

A motion was made by Commissioner Edwards, seconded by Commissioner Leggett, unanimously approval of the Board to approve the Resolution honoring Judge Diane Hallman.

Wm. Terry Turner read the Resolution Honoring Judge Diane Hallman. He expressed his thanks to the Chairman and Board of Commissioner for the honor to read and present this resolution. A resolution was presented to her children: Holly Hallman, Paula Herrin and Shelby Hallman. Ms. Holly Hallman was present to receive these resolutions.

PRESENTATION

Kale Harris of Harris & Co. P.C. gave an audit review for FY 2021 Audit (09.30.2021). He also gave each member a copy of the audit along with the Management Letter. Mr. Harris stated the county is in good financial standing. The FY2022 is prepped and ready to be presented to the state and should be delivered within a few months.

PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. Dedre Hewitt gave her concerns in reference to the 2024 SPLOST and the 2018 SPLOST. Chairman Burch thanked Ms. Hewitt for her concerns. At this time County Manager said there will be a Called Meeting on February 13, 2023 at 6:00- 8:00 pm to be held at the Appling County Ag Center with the public invited to attend for any concerns or questions on the 2024 SPLOST.

A motion was made by Commissioner Edwards, seconded by Commissioner Harris to hold a called meeting on February 13, 2023 for the 2024 SPLOST, unanimously approval of the board.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no items for old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Appointment of Vice Chairman.

Commissioner Charlie Leggett, District V was appointed Vice Chairman for 2023 on a motion made by Commissioner Randy Sellers, seconded by Commissioner Doug Harris, unanimously approved.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

Sheriff Mark Melton gave comments that they will interviewing for an Investigator and a Deputy. February 14, 2023 they will be doing a countywide community project, "Help Your Neighbor", approximately 140 meals will be delivered to residents at their homes. Also, the employee quarterly luncheon will be on February 15, 2023 at noon at the Sherriff's Office and the Commissioners and staff are invited to attend.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Athletic Director, Tim McGuirt gave his report on recreation activities. He stated the Grand Opening of the Aquatic Center went very well with a good turnout of citizens. The Aquatic Center hours are 8:00 am to 11:00 am and 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm for open swim Monday through Friday. Swim passes are \$2.00/day or \$120.00 for a yearly pass. Basketball is currently going on. He also gave updates on the upcoming activities such as softball, adult softball, swim teams, and T-ball. He also reported on the lakes, river landings and RV Park. All facilities are checked twice weekly and he has plans for Lake Tara. His goal is to make all facilities much cleaner and safer. He also stated he is down two employees and moving forward he met with his staff discussing what is working well and how to make the programs better. He commended his staff for their willingness and hard work they are doing. A structural engineer, Robert's Engineering,

inspected the Max Deen Pool, which is structural sound but needs a few repairs, which will take several days to complete. Chairman Burch thanked Mr. McGuirt and his staff for all the hard work they are doing. Commissioner Doug Harris asked if he had reached out to the schools if the Recreation Dept. could use their gyms/facilities for activities. Mr. McGuirt stated he has not and that would probably happen next year. Commissioner Leggett asked how the concessions are working with all the activities going on. He stated all is working well with the concessions.

ROAD DEPARTMENT REPORT

Brooks Johnson stated that Lake Tara is complete and going well. The project was budgeted for \$50,000 and the cost came under budget at \$13,529. The road updates they are getting some temporary easements for drainage issues especially on Lightsey Boyette and Bryant Boyette roads. Pipes were installed to correct the drainage problems. Several roads around the county are on a list to correct drainage issues in the upcoming month. One motorgrader is down and being repaired for the Fourth District area. Commissioner Edwards asked for update on Clay Circle, the pipe is laid. Commissioner Harris asked update on the Grad-All machine, it is working. Commissioner Leggett asked if Lake Mayers would be drained this year. Brooks has not had any information on the draining of the lake. Commissioner Wilkerson asked the update on Old Field Cemetery Road right of ways. Brooks said they are waiting for two signatures. That concluded this report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Edwards to go into executive session to discuss personnel, seconded by Commissioner Harris, unanimously approval.

A motion was made by Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Edwards to close executive session and re-enter regular session.

At this time Al Meadows recommended to hire Michael Lynn as Athletic Coordinator at a salaried position in the amount of \$53,560 annually.

Motion made by Commissioner Leggett, seconded by Commissioner Harris, unanimously approval of the board.

COUNTY'S MANAGER'S REPORT

Old Business

A structural engineer from Roberts Engineering has inspected the infrastructure of the Max Deen Pool. This inspection included concrete slabs, walls, roof, and the pump house. All were found to be structurally sound but in need of minor repairs and paint. The next step will be to drain and clean the pool and inspect the walls and floors. This evolution will take several days to complete however, the pool cannot be empty for more than 48 hours or damage may occur to the structure. Next we will fill the pool with fresh water and operate all pumps to include the filtration system.

Called Meeting

A Called Meeting will be held on February 13, 2023 at the Appling County Ag Center from 6:00 – 8:00 pm to discuss the 2024 SPLOST. All citizens with a question concerning the 2024 SPLOST may email the question, with your name, to the email address on the back of the agenda. Those without a printed agenda can find the email information on our Appling County Commissioners Facebook page no later than 12 noon Wednesday, February 8, 2023. We ask that you limit it to one question and attend this Called Meeting. All questions must be received by Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 5:00 pm. An agenda will be compiled by topic and an individual from each topic will be asked to present the question. We look forward to seeing each of you there.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT'S

Chairman Burch thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned.

Yvonne Sellers, Personnel Clerk

Leslie Burch, Chairman


ATTEST



