

**APPLING COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CALLED MEETING MINUTES
October 17, 2023 @ 10:00 A.M.**

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INVOCATION/PLEDGE

The Appling County Board of Commissioners held a called meeting on Thursday, October 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM at the Courthouse Annex to set the county millage rate. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Leslie Burch and he welcomed all those in attendance. Commissioner Harris gave the invocation and County Attorney Tracy Brown led the group in the pledge. Present were Chairman Leslie Burch; Commissioners Randy Sellers, Theodore Wilkerson, Daryl Edwards, Doug Harris and Charlie Leggett. Also present were County Manager Al Meadows, County Attorney Tracy Brown and County Clerk Robyn Evans.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Harris made a motion to approve the agenda; Commissioner Edwards seconded; unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Set Millage Rate & Re-sign Resolutions for Tax Levies 2024 (County, Fire & Rescue, School)

Explanation was previously given in regards to print dates for running these notices in the legal organ not being accurate, and the need to re-run publication and wait correct number of days before this meeting, then resign. Resolutions were presented and approved as follows:

County Maintenance Millage 11.924 mills Total Levy \$15,056,408

Commissioner Wilkerson made a motion to approve this resolution; Commissioner Harris seconded; unanimously approved.

County Wide School Maintenance 12.243 mills Total Levy \$15,497,681

Commissioner Edwards made a motion to approve this resolution; Commissioner Harris seconded; unanimously approved.

Fire & Rescue Tax 0.47 mills Total Levy \$593,468

Commissioner Sellers made a motion to approve this resolution; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; Unanimously approved.

2024 LMIG Bid Award (Pat Lewis Road, Lamar Crosby Road, & Old Surrency Road)

County Manager Meadows shared with the Board, "The 2024 LMIG consists of 8.8 miles of patching, leveling, and resurfacing on Pat Lewis Road, Lamar Crosby Road, and Old Surrency Road. The bid opening was held on October 9, 2023. We received four (4) bids and low bidder was Scruggs Asphalt at \$1,808,503.96. The next lowest bidder was GA Asphalt Producers at \$1,850,817.53. The difference is \$42,314 or 2.3% in overall costs. I would like to recommend to consider awarding the bid to a local company, GA Asphalt. With such a small difference in overall costs, it makes sense to keep the money in Appling County. GA Asphalt employees 150 workers, most from Appling County. I would like to recommend a vote to accept the bid of \$1,850,817.53 from GA Asphalt to satisfy the paving requirements outlined in our 2024 LMIG.

Commissioner Harris questioned if we had a policy for local preference if higher bid. After discussion, Commissioner Leggett made a motion to table this item until after executive session, in which County Attorney Brown would get more clarification regarding local preference. Commissioner Harris seconded; unanimously approved.

Aquatic Center Parking Bid Award

County Manager Meadows spoke, "Roberts Engineering initiated a Quick Response Bid request for the paving of the Aquatic Center parking lot. Three paving companies responded with the low bidder being GA Asphalt Producers at \$168,366.10. Once approved the work is anticipated to begin as soon as the first week of November with a target completion date of the end of December 2023. Mr. Chairman, I would like to recommend a vote to accept the bid of \$168,366.10 from GA Asphalt Producers to pave the Aquatic Center Parking Lot." Commissioner Leggett asked if this was previously bid and why a second time; County Manager Meadows replied that there was a proposed estimate, not a bid; three (3) contractors were sent the request for proposal and only two (2) submitted quotes. Commissioner Harris made a motion to approve GA Asphalt Producers; Commissioner Edwards seconded; unanimously approved.

Sale of Pineland Building Bid Award

County Manager Meadows stated, "The Board of Commissioners previously voted to sale the county owned property known as the Pineland Behavioral Health Building located at 755 South Main Street in Baxley. The property was advertised in three (3) editions of the Baxley News Banner and bids were accepted on the 5th of October 2023. One bid was received from Southern Healthcare Collaboration INC for the amount of \$501,523.73. Mr. Chairman, I would like to recommend a vote to approve the bid from the sole bidder for the sale of the Pineland Behavioral Health Building." County Manager Meadows then shared that this bid was withdrawn and the board would need to approve a "No Sale". Commissioner Harris made a motion for "No Sale"; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved.

Appointment to Workforce Investment Opportunity Act Board

County Manager Meadows shared the following information, "The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014. This act is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Appling County's WIOA board members are Roger Branch and Doug Rooks, Mr. Rooks is up for reappointment and Mr. Branch wishes not to be reappointed. Roger represented the business sector and Doug represents Workforce Development. I understand that Keith Miles, a local businessman has agreed, at the pleasure of the BOC, to serve on this board and assume Roger Branch's position. Mr. Chairman, I would like to recommend a vote to reappoint Doug Rooks and appoint Keith Miles for the Appling County WIOA Board Members positions." Commissioner Harris officially nominated Keith Miles to fill this position; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved. Commissioner Wilkerson made a motion to reappoint Doug Rooks; Commissioner Sellers seconded; unanimously approved.

Appling Co. Board of Education Sales Ratio Arbitration Results

The Appling County Board of Education voiced their concerns and recommendations of the 2022 Department of Audits Equalization Study in the form of an appeal to the Department of Audits and Accounts in Atlanta. As a result, the overall ratio remained the same at **33.61**. The BOE requested this matter to be forwarded to arbitration. The result of the arbitration is that the sales ratio was raised to **34.65%**, which is 1.04 % higher. While exact estimates are not complete, this will provide for the County and Board of Education to receive slightly more revenue from the utilities.

Community Development Block Grant 2024 Proposed Projects

County Manager Meadows shared with the Board, “The **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program** is a federally funded block grant that focuses on benefiting low to moderate-income areas. The Heart of GA Regional Commission aids the county in procuring these grants. Millions of dollars are distributed annually through grants and are used to support a variety of mission-driven initiatives such as infrastructure enhancements. Our Heart of GA representative is Christopher Lowe. He and I have looked at the areas indicated in your packet and he agrees that they appear to meet the qualifications to be considered for a grant. The CDBG proposal in your packets is only a start to a lengthy process. If Board approved, I will forward the packet to the Heart of Georgia Regional Commission and to Roberts Engineering Services as a grant proposal. Heart of Georgia Regional Commission will conduct a feasibility study to ensure the areas meet the qualifications and Roberts Engineering Services will assist in the preparation and construction phase of the project. Mr. Chairman, I would like to recommend a vote to allow the grant proposal to be forwarded to the Heart of Georgia Regional Commission for assessment and approval.” Discussion was had amongst Commissioners; Commissioner Harris suggested the application be submitted with inclusion of Surrency roads, IF they agree to be included. Commissioner Wilkerson motioned to approve; Commissioner Edwards seconded; unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Reforestation of County Land

County Manager presented to the Board, “The County owns 230 acres of woodlands in the area of the old National Guard Armory. The trees on this land were harvested earlier this year. In consultation with GA Forestry Commission, the decision was made to let the land sit and begin site preparation in the fall. We have received 2 bids to conduct site preparation and replant the 230-acre tract of land.

Rowland Land Clearing is the low bidder that offers the following service;

- 1. Chopping with Roller Chopper, Spot Piling, and Savannah Bedding on 12’ Centers
\$200. Per acre. 230 AC x 200 = \$46,000
- 2. Furnish and Machine Plant ArborGen OP Elite Slash Seedlings
\$135. Per Acre. 230 AC x 135 = \$31,050
- Total \$77,050

(Timber proceeds = \$950,000)

Mr. Chairman, I would like to recommend a vote to accept the bid from Roland Land Clearing and begin the reforestation of the 230 acres of County land located on US#1 South.” Commissioner Harris motioned to approve; Commissioner Edwards seconded; unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioner Sellers made a motion to close regular meeting session and open executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved.

Commissioner Harris made a motion to close executive session and re-open regular session; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved.

County Manager Meadows stated the Board will vote to award the 2024 LMIG project to the local vendor, GA Asphalt Producers in the amount of \$1,850,817.53 to satisfy the paving requirements outlined in our 2024 LMIG. Commissioner Leggett made a motion to award the bid; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved.

County Attorney Tracy Brown stated, "The Employment Contract for County Manager expires December 31, 2023 and we have received notification from Mr. Al Meadows that he wishes to retain his position as County Manager. Contract requires a vote of confidence by the Board on or before November 1, 2023, before a new contract can be negotiated. The Board has voted confidence to retain Mr. Al Meadows as our County Manager for Fiscal Year 2024. The timeline now requires the Board to advise what conditions they want in the new contract and provided to me to negotiate with Mr. Al Meadows. Projected negotiations should be completed and the contract is to be finalized at the December board meeting and made available to the public at that time. Commissioner Harris motioned for a vote of confidence; Commissioner Sellers seconded; Commissioner Wilkerson voted in confidence; Commissioners Edwards and Leggett were opposed.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

McClendon Enterprises placed roadwork signs for our upcoming TIA projects on Ten Mile Road and Nails Ferry Rd. Weather permitting, they plan on mobilizing and begin paving on October 24, 2023.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Mr. Burch thanked everyone for coming.

ADJOURN

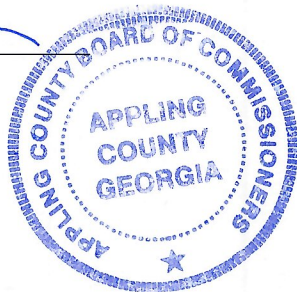
There being no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Robyn Evans, County Clerk

Leslie Burch, Chairman


ATTEST





**APPLING COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023 @ 5:30 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

The Appling County Board of Commissioners held their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023 at 5:30pm at the Courthouse Annex. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Leslie Burch. Present were Commissioners: Daryl Edwards, Doug Harris, Charlie Leggett, Randy Sellers, and Theodore Wilkerson. Also present were Chairman Burch, County Manager Al Meadows, County Attorney Tracy Brown and County Clerk Robyn Evans.

WELCOME

Chairman Leslie Burch welcomed all those in attendance and reminded everyone to silence their cellular devices.

INVOCATION

Vice Chairman Charlie Leggett gave the invocation.

PLEDGE

Mr. Steve Aycock led the group in the pledge.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Harris made a motion to approve the agenda as written; Commissioner Sellers seconded; unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Monthly Meeting 9/12/2023

Commissioner Harris made a motion to approve the September 12, 2023 meeting minutes; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Appling Co. Board of Education – Sales Ratio Appeal

County Manager Meadows shared, “Appling County Board of Education voiced their concerns and recommendations of the 2022 Department of Audits Equalization Study in the form of an appeal to the Department of Audits and Accounts in Atlanta. As a result, the overall ratio remained the same at 33.61. The Board of Education has requested this matter to be forwarded to arbitration.”

B. Aquatic Center Parking

County Manager Meadows expressed to the Board that Roberts Engineering initiated a Quick Response Bid request for the paving of the Aquatic Center parking lot. The bid deadline is October 13, 2023 at 10 AM. The proposed plan has 29 parking spaces, a ramp for handicap and bus entrance, and a concrete ramp for chemical delivery. Once approved, the work is anticipated to begin as soon as possible, with a target completion date of the end of December 2023.

PUBLIC INPUT – Part 1

Patsy Buchannon – Against School Taxes

Ms. Buchannon shared that she was a retired teacher and 72 years of age. She stated that she never had biological children of her own in the AC School System but also never had a problem paying school taxes. She did share with the Board, her concerns for the school taxes being increased. “Why is a 92-year-old citizen paying school taxes?” “Why are only land owners paying taxes?” Ms. Buchannon shared that Wayne County allows citizens seventy (70) and over to be exempt from paying school taxes. She then asked that the Board consider letting the citizens decide about who pays school taxes with an official vote.

Russell Beecher – Against School Taxes

Mr. Beecher addressed the Board and stated he’d graduated from Appling County High School in 1953 and shared a story about a plumber – he said the county doesn’t have a leak problem; they just don’t have enough buckets to catch water. He doesn’t think he should have to pay school taxes at his age and asked that the Board consider senior citizens not paying those.

Pete Aycock – Against School Taxes

Mr. Aycock stated he was a basketball coach, pastor for 27 years and recently moved back to Appling County. He requested the Board allow citizens to vote on removing the requirement to pay school taxes for citizens aged 65/70 and no taxes for 1-3 acres of land. He stated it’s the American way to allow people to speak through voting. This population has paid their dues and more than their share throughout their years. He stated it’s now our responsibility to take care of the elders. He requested for this item to be put on a ballot and allow citizens to vote.

Appling Co. Board of Education – In defense of School Taxes

Ms. Adrienne Taylor spoke on behalf of the Board of Education stating there are two (2) current tax exemptions for school taxes (one for ages 62 and over and a separate one for ages 65 and over). She stated the 2024 School Millage rate rolled back the tax rates from 12.837 to 12.243 and gave the following local counties’ School Tax rates: Wayne 15.9; Pierce 15.894; Toombs 14.37; Bacon 14.253; Jeff Davis 14 – stating that Appling County is lower than surrounding counties. Ms. Taylor also stated that the Board of Education’s budget has increased over the last 5 years but so has employer health costs, salaries, maintenance, fuel costs, etc. She also mentioned that the State legislation voted on salary increases for staff, which is mandated by the state.

Commissioner Edwards personally apologized to the Board of Education and their members present during the meeting, stating that this issue was just made known to himself and some of the other commissioners. He stated that research has yet to be completed to determine effects of reducing or eliminating school taxes in certain populations. He stated they are not aware yet of the number of citizens that would be affected, the dollar amount that would decrease funds to the board, etc. He would like to discuss this item in more detail, gather data, etc. and come back to present the information to the public.

Commissioner Sellers shared that he “100% agreed in a resolution to allow this item to be sent to legislation for the democratic process to take place. He won’t apologize for stating we are overtaxed and S.P.L.O.S.T. wasn’t discussed before it was voted on, I don’t see the reason this has to be.”

Commissioner Harris commented that the presenters had valid questions and the answers are unknown at this time. Studies need to be completed, so the information is on the ballot and available for citizens to make an informed vote. He stated he’s not against putting this item on a ballot but more information is needed before anyone can make informed decisions.

Commissioner Leggett noted that he was not against this item either. However, he believed that exempting school taxes for the elderly would just put the burden on the next generation and “there’s not a person here that hasn’t said they want their children to do better than they did.”

Commissioner Wilkerson also stated that he didn’t oppose the item, it just hasn’t been discussed and he needs more information before it’s presented to the public.

Chairman Burch mentioned that there is a current \$18,000 tax credit from the state that will make the tax bills look better and he hopes everyone is using their homestead exemptions.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) Board Member Appointments

County Manager Meadows informed the board of the following, “The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014. This act is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Appling County’s WIOA Board members are Roger Branch and Doug Rooks, both of which are up for reappointment. Roger represents the business sector and Doug represents Workforce Development. This program is under the Heart of Ga Altamaha Regional Commission and meet every other month in Vidalia, GA. Mr. Chairman, I found out this afternoon that Mr. Roger Branch does not wish to be re-appointed. I have spoken with the Heart of GA Regional Commission in order to understand the timeline that these positions must be filled. The Commission has agreed that nominations can be made at our next meeting.” County Manager Meadows then recommended the two (2) appointments for the Appling County WIOA Board Members, be tabled until the next board meeting. Commissioner Harris made a motion to table this item; Commissioner Wilkerson seconded; unanimously approved.

B. ACCG Request to Adopt Mental Health Model Resolution

County Manager Meadows read from an ACCG memo: “Counties are the closest constitutional form of government to their constituents and are often on the frontline of addressing pressing community issues such as mental health. Within recent years, Georgia has made significant strides regarding mental health reform, and ACCG and Georgia’s counties have played a critical role in spearheading those efforts. As the mental health crisis persists, it is incumbent upon Georgia’s county officials to continue to help lead efforts with state officials to devise solutions for all who call the Peach State home. There is strength in the collective and unified voice of Georgia’s 159 counties. ACCG is strongly encouraging every county in the state to adopt a resolution urging the Governor and General Assembly to continue efforts to reform and improve mental health services for the citizens of Georgia.” County Manager Meadows recommended a vote to adopt the resolution included in the Commissioners’ board packets, that urges the Governor and General Assembly of Georgia to continue efforts to reform and improve mental health services for the citizens of Georgia. Commissioner Wilkerson made a motion to adopt the resolution; Commissioner Edwards seconded; unanimously approved.

C. 4-H Week & Updates- Julie Bacon, 4-H Agent

Ms. Julie Bacon and Ms. Becky Collins passed out small tokens to the Board in celebration of 4-H week. Ms. Bacon then gave a short presentation regarding the 4-H program and current projects. She thanked the board for their support of the Extension Services and 4-H programs.

PUBLIC INPUT – Part 2

Emanuel Williams - Pickleball Updates/Information

Mr. Williams shared updates regarding a recent pickleball tournament in which Chairman Burch and Commissioner Wilkerson participated. He commented that pickleball is the fastest growing sport for the last three (3) years with over 36.5 million players in the United States; the largest age bracket is 18–34-year-olds and participation is very diverse with regards to age, race and sex. Mr. Williams requested that two (2) of the tennis courts at Max Deen Park be turned into 6 dedicated pickleball courts and resurfaced.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

There was no report at this time.

RECREATION DEPT. – Timmy McGuirt

Mr. McGuirt gave updates for the Recreation Department – football and cheerleading is currently happening, with plans for an Allstars Jamboree with adjacent counties participating and district games to be held, as well. Applying middle school and high school will be utilizing the Aquatic Center beginning next week. Recreation Department will be hosting the county trick-or-treat event this year to be held at the Aquatic Center on October 31st, 2023. Commissioner Harris questioned why the area in grass and trees by fields near Ag Center have yet to have lighting installed. He asked that Mr. McGuirt check on this and report back.

ROADS & BRIDGES – Brooks Johnson

Mr. Johnson gave updates for the Road Department. He stated they were working with City of Baxley and found serious dams made in canals and other areas and have begun to clear those out and tons of water is moving out now which will dramatically help with drainage areas.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioner Leggett made a motion to close regular board session to enter into executive session for the discussion of personnel and sale of real estate. Commissioner Wilkerson seconded the motion; unanimously approved.

Commissioner Harris made a motion to close executive session and re-enter regular session; seconded by Commissioner Leggett; unanimously approved.

County Manager Meadows shared that the board discussed an intergovernmental agreement made with City of Baxley and Debra Carter, Tax Commissioner

County Attorney Tracy Brown shared that during executive session, discussion was held in relation to salaries of department heads and FLSA overtime exemption qualifications and the previous requests from Board of Elections and Board of Tax Assessor in relation to increased salaries of respective department heads. In accordance with FLSA guidelines, the following changes will be made immediately upon approval:

AC Board of Elections Supervisor

Shonda Carter – reclassified as exempt and new annual salary \$55,068

Commissioner Harris made a motion to approve these changes; Commissioner Leggett seconded; unanimously approved.

AC Tax Assessor

Myrna Taylor – reclassified as exempt per the same standards and receive a \$2000/year raise

All other exempt staff will also receive a \$2000 raise in salary.

Commissioner Wilkerson made a motion to approve these changes; Commissioner Edwards seconded; unanimously approved.

County Attorney Brown also shared that the Board was in the process of evaluating the County Manager as per his employment contract. The performance evaluation is due no earlier than November 1, 2023 and no later than December 1, 2023. Further details will be discussed during executive session at the called meeting on October 17, 2023.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

On Sept 11, County Manager Meadows received confirmation that Appling County was added to the list of 24 counties in South GA, that qualified for a Major Disaster Declaration for Public Assistance. Brent Carter, Assistant EMA Director, is coordinating with GEMA and FEMA regarding Appling County's response, which is due on Oct 9th, 2023. Appling County was assigned a GEMA Grant Specialist and he and Brent will begin reviewing the county's case. This process is estimated to take several months to complete.

Road bed preparation continues on Crosby Chapel Road and Sunshine Drive. Weather permitting these projects should be paved and completed by December 31, 2023.

The Board of Commissioners has scheduled a Called Meeting on October 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM. The purpose of this meeting is to approve the resolutions and set the Millage Rate again. This task was previously completed but when submitted to GA Department of Audits, the dates were off by one calendar day on the timeline. The local newspaper is normally published on Tuesdays but is dated for the next day, Wednesday. The Department of Revenue uses the date on the publication as the official date to count the number of days an ad has been in circulation. As a result, the advertisement of the 5-year Tax History will be published for an additional two weeks and approval of the resolutions and setting the Millage Rates will be completed on October 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Burch mentioned that Commissioner Wilkerson was spotted assisting at the local Community Garden clean-up day, and thanked him for volunteering.

ADJOURN

There being no further business or discussion the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Robyn Evans, County Clerk

Leslie Burch, Chairman

ATTEST



Leslie Burch