

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON FEBRUARY 05, 2019 AT 6:00 PM IN THE
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Steve Taylor	Chairman
Hope Harmon	Vice-Chair
Bennie Calloway	Commissioner
Daniel Cowan	Commissioner
Michael Dinnerman	County Manager
Donna Prather	County Clerk

Commissioner John Mooney was absent.

Call to Order

Chairman called the meeting to order.

Pastor Terry Cole gave the invocation.

Everyone gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Acceptance of Prior Minutes

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting minutes held on January 08, 2019. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to approve the Workshop Meeting minutes held on January 24, 2019. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Constitutional Officer: NONE

Department Head Reports: NONE

County Board Reports: NONE

County Manager's Report:

Mr. Dinnerman thanked Chief Finance Officer Darlow Maxwell has worked 99% of expenditures for 2018 and it looks like we will end the year in the black around \$250,000.

Mr. Dinnerman stated our cash position is \$1,613,000.

Mr. Dinnerman reported the work continues on E911. They will go live on the new equipment on February 20th.

Mr. Dinnerman stated Road Superintendent Tim Kegebein and employees has been working hard cleaning up the Road Department.

Mr. Dinnerman expressed he is excited about the direction of the County and we are making a lot of progress.

Annexation Request: NONE

Rezoning Application: NONE

Alcohol Application: NONE

Consent Items: NONE

Appointments:

Sheriff Lee Cone thanked the Commissioners for their support of the Sheriff Office. He stated their relationship have come a long way and feels they are going in a positive direction. He thanked the Chairman Steve Taylor and County Manager Michael Dinnerman for help building their relationship.

Sheriff Cone asked the Commissioners about switching roles with him and Deputy EMA Director. He stated Mr. Fletcher has the certifications and experience to be the EMA Director and he would like to be appointed the Deputy EMA Director.

County Manager Michael Dinnerman stated the Commissioners need to make a motion to submit Deputy EMA Director Brandon Fletcher by letter to GEMA to get their approval.

Department of Leisure Service Chairman John Luckie stated he came to inform the Commissioners of the direction the Department of Leisure Service Board has voted to take regarding the 2011 SPLOST project administrative building and swimming pool. Mr. Luckie stated it would cost \$1.52 million to build and maintain a new pool however they don't have the money to do so. Their board voted to build the administration building for \$775,000 at Paulk Park along with the dressing rooms for the pool that would be used as storage until the pool is built. The access funds will be used to upgrade the pool at the Legion Park to make it nice and they are going to add the swimming pool project on the next SPLOST.

Old Business: NONE

New Business:

EMA Director

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to submit a letter to GEMA requesting Deputy Director Brandon Fletcher to be the EMA Director for Ben Hill County. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Third Party Operator Agreement/Addendum

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve Amendment 1 to the Third Party Operator Agreement between Ben Hill County Transit System, Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners and RMS by creating a "Fee for Service" line item to the FY19 budget and draw funds down from this line item. The budget will remain the same. Funds will be transferred from another line item within the budget. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Lease Purchase Agreement/Ratify

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to ratify the fact that the Commissioners gave Chairman Steve Taylor permission to sign a lease purchase agreement for a 2018 Peterbilt garbage truck in the amount of \$232,900 for 48 months with a 4.83% interest rate. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Tax Anticipation Note

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to authorize County Manager Michael Dinnerman and Chairman Steve Taylor to obtain bids for a \$4,000,000 Tax Anticipation Note and to negotiate the interest rate. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Open Record Custodian Resolution

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to adopt the Open Record Custodian Resolution naming Donna R. Prather as the Open Record Officer and Pamela Turner is designated as the alternate Open Record Officer. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon all voting for the motion.

Surplus Property Resolution

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to adopt the Surplus Property Resolution for the Road Department miscellaneous property. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Lease Purchase Agreement Authorization Resolution/E911 Operations

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the Lease Purchase Agreement Authorization Resolution for E911 equipment with the exception the lease cannot exceed \$600,000 with ACCG and BB& T Bank. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion. Commissioner Daniel Cowan opposed the motion.

Budget Amendments

2018 Budget Amendment

Chief Finance Officer Darlow Maxwell stated the purpose of the budget amendment is to ensure as closely as possible that departments are within their budget as amended and will encompass significantly fewer expenditure line item adjustments.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to adopt the 2018 Budget Amendment Resolution. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

2019 Budget Amendment

County Manager Michael Dinnerman stated the Sheriff Department was not given the 2% pay increase at the first of the year. After meeting with Sheriff Lee Cone, they decided to give the Sheriff Department the 2% pay increase. Mr. Dinnerman stated the budget would stay the same. The \$17,982 will be moved from repairs & maintenance and gasoline line items within the Sheriff's budget.

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to adopt the 2019 Budget Amendment for the Sheriff Department salaries. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Revolving Loan Fund/OD Netter & Derek Wilson

Development Authority Director OD Netter stated Derek Wilson has a loan with the Revolving Loan Fund and would like to swap some of his collateral.

Derek Wilson, the owner of Twisted X Farms, stated he no longer use the van trailers that he used as collateral because has changed to flatbed trailers. He doesn't deliver pine straw to Walmart, Home Depot, and Lowes anymore because they send drivers to pick up the loads with their own van trailers.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to approve the collateral swap of 10 van trailers and a bailer for a John Deere 3140 (4x4), John Deere 5075E, Mascar-Corsa 320, and a Mascar-Corsa 350 on Derek Wilson Revolving Loan Fund Loan and authorize the Chairman to sign all documents. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Department of Family & Children Services Board

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to appoint Mark White to the Department of Family & Children Services Board. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Bennie Calloway all voting for the motion.

Agenda Changes and/or add on:

Legislative Report:

Commissioner Hope Harmon reported the following:

ACCG & GMA Capitol Connection

ACCG will host a joint Capitol Connection with GMA on February 28, 2019 in Atlanta. This joint event is headed by Executive Director Dave Wallis to help build relationships with municipalities throughout the State. Governor Brian Kemp, Lt. Governor Geoff Duncan and House Speaker David Ralston have all been confirmed to speak at the Joint Legislative Breakfast.

New Voting Equipment Debate

The debates have been rather spirited concerning new voting equipment to be purchased in Georgia. The General Assembly is deciding between ballot marking devices- which is similar to what we currently have in Ben Hill County and hand marked paper ballots. The Georgia SAFE Commissioner, ACCG's policy council, and a majority of the elected officials across the state are in favor of ballot marking devices. Hand marked ballots are a great concern because of anticipated costs, administrative feasibility, and some of the testimony of election officials to the General Assembly- especially the testimony of Richmond Counties Election Supervisor who has over 25 years of experience. We are encouraged to reach out to our representative to let them know the system we would prefer for our county, if the state decides to give each county the money and allow them to choose which system they want- which would bring up the debates once again about the uniformity in voting across the state but we are thankful for the state funding the cost of the machines.

ACCG Georgia Counties Facebook Page

Legislative Updates with Clint and Todd are on ACCG Georgia Counties Facebook Page each Friday from 8:30- 9:00 a.m. and they also send out a summary of issues weekly to our email.

Public Comments:

Samantha Graham addressed the Commissioners regarding group homes. She wanted to know has the Commissioners considered having group homes in the County.

Chairman Steve Taylor told Ms. Graham the Commissioners are discussing group homes.

Executive Session**Commissioner's Remarks:**

Chairman Steve Taylor read and invitation regarding the Ben Hill-Irwin Forestry Units 20th Annual Landowner Appreciation Supper to be held February 11th at Wiregrass in the Charles Harris Learning Center at 5:30 pm.

County Manager Michael Dinnerman and Chairman Steve Taylor congratulated County Clerk Donna Prather for receiving her County Clerk Certification through the Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

Commissioner Hope Harmon thanked Sheriff Lee Cone and staff. Ms. Harmon stated the Commissioners were not trying to demoralize the employees at the Sheriff's Office by not giving them the 2% pay increase.

Chairman Steve Taylor State of the County:

Fellow citizens of Ben Hill County, please allow me to share the following few sentences from the 2018 State of the County Address: "I speak on behalf of the Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners when I say we are honored to have the opportunity to serve the Ben Hill Community, and we look forward to a vastly improved government through operations, fiscal management, and relationships in 2018. The ultimate goal is for Ben Hill County to be known as an entity of relationships, responsibility, and respect."

Be assured your county government has worked hard toward obtaining the objectives established in the above statement. I am appreciative to report Ben Hill County is financially solid and improving in a positive position. The 2018 preliminary numbers show the county with a year-end fund balance of approximately \$1 million bringing the reserve to approximately \$1.4 million.

A sound financial best practice policy includes a strong reserve. A reserve is necessary to offset an unforeseen or catastrophic event, thereby protecting our county. This reserve is possible because of decisions made by the commission, strong management, securing a financial director, the Constitutional Officers, elected Judges, department heads, and each and every dedicated county employee.

Fiscal management continues to be a primary focus for the Commission and management. We consider it essential to take our responsibility as stewards of your tax dollars seriously. Therefore, 2018 actual expenditures reported as \$250,000 less than the actual budgeted expenses confirm our commitment for a strong financially healthy Ben Hill County. Purchase and spending procedures implemented during 2018 have contributed to this expenditure reduction. Financial Director, Darlow Maxwell, has reformed the financial structure to provide necessary current and accurate reports to assist in sound financial decisions. He has implemented software for accounting and reporting purposes. Also, all voucher transactions are now scanned and saved in a searchable format. It should also be noted, that because of our improved financial position, the county was able to reduce the amount of money borrowed in 2018 which in turn reduced interest expense by approximately \$25,000.

Overall government operation has also improved. Under the direction of County Manager Michael Dinnerman, we have witnessed many positive changes in system development, policy implementation, grant applications, capital improvements, intergovernmental relations, and the future direction of county government. Communications with department heads, Constitutional Officers, employees, the City of Fitzgerald, and the community have improved because of the resolute effort of Mr. Dinnerman. However, he along with the commissioners refuses to be content with our current position, and we continue to explore ways to improve our services, assets, and resources for Ben Hill County.

Some highlights from 2018 include:

- Upgrading the Sheriff Department fleet of vehicles and equipment by utilizing grants and SPLOST dollars. We were able to secure Community Orientated Policing Services (COPS) grant awards (\$372,986) in federal funds over a two-year award period. These funds go toward improving the security of our local schools including equipment and training. Ben Hill County also received approximately \$17,500 in bulletproof vests. This hasn't happened in many years. This is the first time in the history of the Sheriff Department that all jailers are equipped with stab protection

vests. The Sheriff Department also received a USDA grant for \$21,000 to assist in purchasing 16 in-car camera systems. According to Sheriff Cone, the vehicle fleet is in the best condition it has been in years.

- The passing of the Regional T-SPLOST which will provide an estimated \$21,800,000 in paving and benefits to the City of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County over a ten year period.
- Tax Commissioner Barry Foster's tax collections should total approximately ninety-five (95) percent for 2018 when final adjustments are made.
- Hiring a Chief Financial Officer
- The commission approved moving forward with E911 upgrades. We are excited about the reorganization, renovation, and remodeling of our E911 department, facility, and equipment.
- Our competent, dedicated, and committed county employees. The commission and management realize the value of the county's greatest asset.

The most exciting achievement to share is the relationships that were fostered, established, and improved in 2018 with Constitutional Officers, Department Heads and other government entities. I am thankful for the relationship with Mayor Puckett and his administration. During his State of the City remarks, he mentioned the billboard of City and County leadership with the slogan "Working together for You". He and I realize we serve one community and we challenge each other to share ideas and plans to better this community.

An immensely valuable victory for our community in 2018 resulted from relationships. The Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (T-SPLOST) was passed in the region which includes Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County. This special regional sales tax is estimated to bring in over \$21 million in funds to be used for transportation/roads in our community over the next 10 years. It is my opinion that this special tax would not have passed in our region if not for the work of Mike Dinnerman, Cam Jordan, and Jason Dunn. These gentlemen worked on developing and securing funds for marketing material as well as educating members of our region regarding the T-SPLOST. If they had not worked together, I feel our community would have missed out on these funds.

Ben Hill County is fortunate to have qualified and committed Constitutional Officers, department heads, and employees to serve our community. Sheriff Lee Cone continues to provide the highest public safety to our community and is willing to work with county management to provide these services in the most effective and efficient way possible. Tax Commissioner Barry Foster continues to tirelessly work toward improving collections and operations of the tax office. Clerk of Court Betty Lynn Johnson continues to operate her office at a highly professional level while experiencing a significant volume of court cases. Probate Judge David Hobby continues to be proficient in serving our community through the Probate Court. Judge Lisa McCard operates a professional and honorable Magistrate Court, and we are fortunate to have her serving our citizens. County Clerk Donna Prather does an excellent job as custodian of records for the Commission and other county boards. Road Superintendent Tim Kegebein is one of the hardest working men in the county. When the weather allows, he strives to maintain and repair your roads and right of ways. Tax Assessor Joyce Merritt continues to keep up with current changes and provides an acceptable tax digest for the Georgia Department of Revenue. Elections Supervisor Cindi Dunlap oversees a successful, professional and fair elections department. Cathy Posey

passionately supervises services and activities at the Senior Citizens Center. The EMA Department stands committed to face potential emergencies that threaten our community. Once again, under the supervision of Brandon Fletcher and Sheriff Cone, the EMA service was prepared to coordinate all necessary entities when Hurricane Michael hit our area. Coroner Johnny Burch continues to provide professional services as coroner of Ben Hill County. And finally, O.D. Netter oversees the Ben Hill County Development Authority and Revolving Loan Fund as a service to our citizens.

Operations, fiscal management, and relationships are all important to grow our community and promote an improved quality of life. By focusing on these areas we assist in the opportunity of economic growth. We realize our workforce is our greatest asset. As we progress and improve, we will complement Jason Dunn and the Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Development Authority. We may be able to assist in improving on the 2018 economic highlights: \$25 million in private capital projects, new industrial construction totaling 180 thousand square feet, and a continued decrease in unemployment in our area. Mr. Dunn does an excellent job with promoting our community and searching for the industry or business that is the right fit for Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention your Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners. Everywhere I go throughout the state, I claim that I have the best commission in the state of Georgia! We are fortunate to have these individuals as our public servants. They are committed as demonstrated in their love for the community and their eagerness to participate in doing what is best for Ben Hill County; they are cooperative in that they are willing to listen to new ideas and explore opportunities that will advance this community forward; they are compassionate about the citizens of this community. I am honored to be a part of this commission, and I am honored to be a commissioner for the great people of this community.

God Bless our community and God Bless America

Steve Taylor
Chairman
Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners

Meeting adjourned

_____ Steve Taylor, Chairman

_____ Donna R. Prather, County Clerk