



Jackson County Board of Commissioners
Planning Session Minutes

Monday, June 26, 2023 • 1:00 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met on Monday, June 26, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. at the Jackson County Agricultural Facility, 1869 County Farm Road, Jefferson, GA.

Commissioners Present: Tom Crow, Chairman
Jim Hix, Commissioner District 1
Chas Hardy, Commissioner District 2
Chad Bingham, Commissioner District 3
Marty Seagraves, Commissioner District 4
Marty Clark, Commissioner District 5

Staff Present: Kevin Poe, County Manager
Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager
Jamie Dove, Public Development Director
Alisha Gamble, Finance Director
Ericka Johnson, Deputy Clerk

Press: Mike Buffington, Jackson Herald/Mainstreet News

I. **CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Tom Crow called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. **NEW BUSINESS:**

1) **FY2022 Audit Report from auditors (Virtual Presentation)**

Josh Carroll with Mauldin & Jenkins gave a virtual presentation on the audit results as of December 31, 2022. He issued an unmodified or "clean" opinion on the basic financial statements and noted there were no accounting problems. The General Fund ratio of Fund Balance was 50%. However, there was two (2) findings. One was regarding the accounting practices of the fire districts. They operated on a cash basis which was not considered Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for government entities. Secondly, the Jackson County Tax Commissioner had approximately \$4,114,300 in deposits that were not properly collateralized in accordance with O.C.G.A. 45-8-12(c).

Kevin Poe, County Manager, gave a brief update on the budget. The Local Option Sales Tax was slightly lower. He anticipated to receive the Insurance Premium Tax payment in October. He estimated a \$1.3 million dollars surplus for this budget year.

2) Unified Development Code (UDC) Text Amendment Discussion

Jamie Dove, Public Development Director, presented several proposed text amendments to the Unified Development Code. There were six proposed amendments she reviewed.

a) Combination Plats with Multiple Jurisdictions

Ms. Dove explained there was a development in Dry Pond on a parcel split between the County and the City of Jefferson. Due to an annexation, a part of it was left unincorporated in order not to create an island. Jefferson accepted the remainder of the property and purchased other parcels for a proposed development. Ms. Dove informed the board the County did not have any reference in the Code for staff to sign a plat in order to put multiple jurisdictions together.

She also reported the County Attorney recommended to add a small disclaimer within the Code that the County does not allow for combination plats with multiple jurisdictions. There was a consensus of the board to proceed.

b) Mandatory Generators for Assisted Living and/or Nursing Homes

Ms. Dove explained several assisted living and/or nursing homes had a few emergency situations with their power and needed generators. The homes always relied on Emergency Management for a quick solution. She recommended an addition to the Code that these facilities have must have their own generators. Currently, there was no state law requiring generators. There was a consensus for staff to present to the board for review.

c) Communication Towers/Infrastructure for Sizeable Commercial/Industrial Buildings

Ms. Dove said there were some significant issues in making or receiving emergency calls in several large commercial and industrial buildings. She explained putting a tower on the building could help with the calls and allow incoming and outgoing calls in the event of an emergency. She stated this could be added as a small paragraph to the Code. There was a consensus of the board to proceed.

d) Institutionalized Living within MH (Manufactured Home) District

Ms. Dove informed the board that institutionalized living within MH district was allowed per the Code. There were expressed concerns regarding safety. Ms. Dove suggested removing this from the Code. She further stated institutionalized living should be in stick-built structure for safety. There was a consensus of the board to proceed.

e) Manufactured Homes: Dwelling vs. Storage

Ms. Dove said there was an increase number of requests to use a manufactured home, that was no long livable, for storage. It was recommended to add a clause in the Code that manufactured homes could not be used for storage. There was a consensus of the board to proceed.

f) Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development within MS4 Districts (EPD)

Ms. Dove advised there were three (3) areas of the County in the Municipal Storm Septic Sewer System (MS4) district. According to Ms. Dove, Jackson County had moved from its infancy in the MS4 district to become a large program. One of the primary comments from the annual audit was the emphasis on Green Infrastructure/Low-Impact Development. She also explained EPD was moving

away from detention bonds, grey infrastructure, such as catch-basins and ponds. She reported EPD wanted to see more natural affects, for example urban planters and dry swells. Ms. Dove reiterated this was an EPD requirement and must be completed. Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, said it was a requirement to have options available within the Code. There was a consensus to proceed.

3) Impact Fee Update

Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, reported the total of collections from August 2022 to today was \$1,009,925. She said one of the annual tasks was to submit the Capital Improvement Element (CIE) to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. There were no questions from the board.

4) Update on Current Capital Projects

Kevin Poe, County Manager, gave a brief overview of current capital projects.

- EMS Station 3
Mr. Poe was pleased to announce the completion of the expansion project. He suggested hosting an EMS Day to open the station for public tours.
- Tanner Park
Mr. Poe announced a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 9, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. He said this will be a great asset to the community. It was the county's first passive park.
- North Oconee Park
Mr. Poe noted a design firm was approved and work will begin after the July 4th holiday. He hoped to get a schedule and final design developed.
- Gordon Street Elections Center
Mr. Poe said the renovation project went well. The remaining work to be completed was to install a canopy, which was expected soon. Staff will also have an Open House and offer available tours.
- Senior Center
Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, advised the County had received final approval for the grant requirement. Plans are to expand the multi-purpose room, add an IT room, a screened-in porch, a fitness area, and a room for storage. The work will go out for bids in July.
- Public System Radio System:
Mr. Poe said the system was currently being tested. A go-live date was set for August 9, 2023.
- Transfer Station
Mr. Poe reminded the board of the approval of a construction manager for the project. They were currently working on the 50% plans. The Construction Manager will develop their first cost estimate soon. He thought work may begin in the fall.

- Animal Control

Ms. Roy said both the Senior Center and Animal Control will go out for bid simultaneously. She expected to break ground on the expansion project by the end of the year or the first of 2024.

- Skelton Road/Hwy 124

Mr. Poe advised the project was under construction. Original plans were for a decel lane only; however, there will be a left turn-lane in both directions on Hwy. 124 and a right-turn lane off of Hwy. 124 onto Skelton Road and a right-turn lane off of Skelton Road onto Hwy. 124. Mr. Poe confirmed there will not be a traffic signal in the area. Mr. Poe estimated the work to take 60-60 days to complete, weather permitting.

- Hwy. 124/332

Mr. Poe advised staff was working with the Georgia Department of Transportation for a planned roundabout. Volkert, an engineering firm, was currently working on the project. Plans are to have the engineering completed by September.

- Fund Balance

With the extra Fund Balance, Mr. Poe said there were three options. The funds could be set aside, used to reduce the millage rate, or used for capital projects. He noted commitments slated for next year to include the football field and track at the Empower Center, an additional EMS station in Pendergrass, the relocation of the Administration Building, Senior Center renovation and Animal Control expansion. He reported the Admin Building completion date was July 29, 2024.

5) 2023 Millage Rate Discussion

Kevin Poe, County Manager, presented estimates on a possible rollback rate. He reviewed possible scenarios with various home values. The commission was in favor of a millage rollback.

6) Discuss Possible Change to Homestead Exemptions

Kevin Poe, County Manager, reviewed the current exemptions. He mentioned there was an option and the county could add a local exemption. However, any change would have to go through local legislation. After a discussion, there was a consensus of the board to explore this option. Mr. Poe said staff would develop a few scenarios to increase the local standard home exemption.

Fire Department:

Chairman Tom introduced Parker Griffith, Arcade Fire Chief and Mark Duke, Jefferson Fire Chief to give presentation on a request. Chairman Crow said when the Fire Training Center was developed, a covered training shelter and a controlled LP Gas tower. Both were to be included as part of the project; however, they were not included. Mr. Duke and Mr. Griffith shared how both were beneficial and were desperately needed. They said the facility was frequently utilized by many jurisdictions. There was a consensus of the board to obtain price estimates.

7) Mid-Year Pay Adjustment Proposal

Kevin Poe, County Manager, presented a proposed mid-year pay adjustment for county employees. He felt this was needed to retain employees and to remain competitive. He recommended a 2.5% increase for public safety employees and a 1.5% increase for other

employees. The cost of the pay adjustment for 2023 was less than \$300,000. Mr. Poe said he would request approval at the next BOC meeting to be effective at the first payroll in August.

8) Economic Development Bond Fund Projects

Kevin Poe, reminded members the board had approved the list of projects, which included the following:

- Gateway Road for the City of Jefferson- - \$1 million dollars.
- Roundabout at Ridgeway Church Road/Steve Reynolds Industrial - \$500,000
- Bill Wright Road Relocation off of Valentine Industrial Pkwy - \$2 million dollars
- Project Chardonnay Trace Connector - \$2 million dollars
- Airport Sewer Line Extension - \$1 million dollars

He asked for feedback from the board to prioritize the projects. Mr. Poe said he would come back before the board for authorization to develop a concept plan and to authorize engineering. There was a consensus of the board to proceed with the Airport Sewer Line Project and Ridgeway Church Road. The board also asked Mr. Poe to contact Braselton and surrounding landowners regarding the Chardonnay Trace project.

9) Review List of Proposed New Projects

Kevin Poe, County Manager reviewed a list of proposed new projects for the board's consideration.

- New Fleet Maintenance Facility
Mr. Poe said the current Fleet Maintenance Facility was approximately 60 years old. He said there was a critical need for a new facility in order to be safe and to accommodate the large equipment. Staff identified a need for a facility with ten (10) bays (5 for light duty and 5 for heavy duty) and to include office space and a parts warehouse. According to space needs, a 27,000 square foot facility would accommodate the department. Mr. Poe estimated the cost at \$6 million dollars. The initial plan was to locate the new facility between the current Fleet Maintenance facility and Transfer Station. There was a consensus of the board to move forward with planning.
- Historic Courthouse
Mr. Poe said the building needed some work and the estimated cost to complete it was \$1 million dollars.
- Sam Freeman Road Upgrade
Mr. Poe said upgrades were needed to Sam Freeman Road. He estimated completion of the work within one (1) year and completed with SPLOST funds. Mr. Poe wanted to include this upgrade projects with the new roundabout project planned for Hwy. 124 and Hwy. 60. The road will be a standard 2-lane road. It was noted this project was included in the Capital Improvement Element of the Comprehensive Plan and Impact Fee Capital Improvement Element.
- Village of Hope
Commissioner Marty Clark informed the board Jeff Grant, with iServe Ministries, had approached him regarding a Village of Hope, a project to supply transitional housing to working families that were in the community. Mr. Grant had asked for a donation of property. Plans are to build ten (10) 2-bedroom, 2 bath, 800 square

foot cottages. The community will have a 10,000 square foot community center. Mr. Grant had obtained several large corporate sponsors. There was a brief discussion about possible location. There was general support of the request. Commissioner Clark will contact Mr. Grant to possible look and visit the county's available acreage.

III. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Tom Crow declared the meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

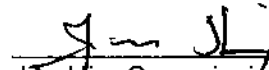
All printed material/documentation presented is filed in Board Minute Addendum Book No. 13-Q and hereby becomes a part of the official minutes.

Minutes Approved: Monday, July 17, 2023.

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

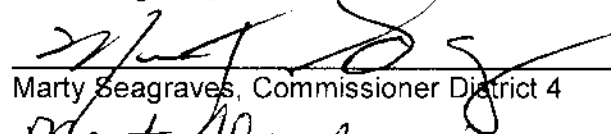


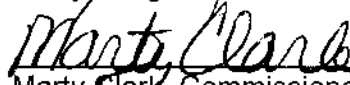

Tom Crow, Chairman

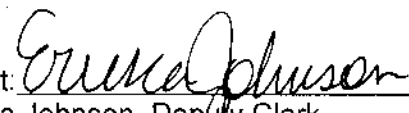

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Attest: 
Ericka Johnson, Deputy Clerk