



**Jackson County Board of Commissioners**  
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 29, 2021 • 9:00 A.M.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. in the Administrative Auditorium, 67 Athens Street, Jefferson, Georgia.

Commissioners Present: Tom Crow, Chairman  
Jim Hix, Commissioner District 1  
Chas Hardy, Commissioner District 2  
Ralph Richardson, Jr., Commissioner District 3  
Marty Seagraves, Commissioner District 4

Staff Present: Kevin Poe, County Manager  
Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager  
Trey Wood, Finance Director  
Ericka Johnson, Deputy Clerk

Press: Mike Buffington, Jackson Herald/Mainstreet News

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Tom Crow called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. **REVIEW OF AGENDA:**

The group reviewed the agenda as presented and there were no amendments.

3. **FY 2020 PRELIMINARY AUDIT RESULTS:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, acknowledged receipt of the preliminary audit. The auditors will make the audit presentation at the July 19<sup>th</sup> board meeting. He said the County ended last year in a good position. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$5.7 million dollars. The unassigned fund balance for 2020 was 32%. Mr. Poe said he would provide options to the board to consider due to the County's healthy financial status. One option was to roll over funds to the Capital Projects Fund. Other options included providing a tax relief or designating money for paving. Staff had begun preparing for next year's budget. Department heads were to submit their budgets in July. Budget hearings will be held in August and the board will set the millage rate on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

4. **YEAR-TO-DATE REVIEW OF FY 2021 BUDGET:**

Mr. Poe also reviewed the monthly financial report. It was noted the inmate subsidy was below budget because the inmate population was below 150 capacity. Funding from the state was provided to the County based on the actual number of inmates housed at the facility each month.

5. **DISCUSS USE OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDS:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, advised the County was designated to receive \$14.2 million dollars for the American Rescue Plan. Currently, 50% of the total funds had been transferred and were maintained in a separate account. Poe asked the board to consider potential uses for the funds which included: reimbursing payroll costs for public safety staff responding to COVID-19, provide funding for the County NPDES Stormwater Management, reimburse for COVID-19 vaccination site costs, fund mental health and substance abuse services through Advantage Behavioral Health Systems, provide aid to County's nonprofit organizations, provide funding for job training through Lanier Tech, provide funds for Water and Infrastructure projects or to reimburse administrative costs to account for and audit ARP Fund expenditures. Commissioner Seagraves added he would like to apply some of the money for the new radio system project.

6. **DISCUSS JACKSON COUNTY TRANSIT PROGRAM:**

Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, led the discussion on the Transit Program. Currently, the County was under the Section 5311 for rural funds and she advised funds will start decreasing. The County currently received \$63,000 per year to operate the Transit Program. The program operated three GDOT buses and two County owned busses. There was a discussion on keeping the program in the rural designation and not switch to an urban designation. Under an urban classification, the County would be required to have designated, fixed routes. It was determined this would not be beneficial to the citizens since the majority of the program's customers were unable to get to fixed routes. The Transit Program's operational hours were from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There was a consensus of the board to keep operating under the Section 5311 Program for rural transportation.

7. **DISCUSS PLANS TO UPDATE/EXPAND TRANSFER STATION FACILITIES AND TO ADDRESS ISSUE WITH CLOSED LANDFILL:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, informed the board in 2016 the transfer station collected an average of 2,600 tons per month, totaling 33,000 tons for the year. In 2021, the department had collected an average of 6,400 tons per month. Collections through May 2021 totaled 32,466 tons, almost surpassing the total collections for 2016. There were a number of items to address to include staffing and traffic flow. Due to the increase in volume of waste and traffic, Mr. Poe advised there was a great deal of wear and tear on the building. He reviewed a couple of options for the board's consideration. The group discussed the need for another building and to consider options on changing the entrance to a remote site and change traffic flow. A major problem for the department was the mixture of residential and commercial customers and getting them in and out of the facility in an efficient and safe manner.

Mr. Poe presented a proposal to work with Atlantic Coast Consulting (ACC) on a concept plan for a design, build program to include architect and engineering fees. He estimated the cost at approximately \$2 million dollars. Commissioner Richardson suggested a drive through concept. Chairman Crow suggested staff give consideration to a separate entrance for commercial trucks and a second set of electronic scales. There was brief discussion on the department's operating costs and possible need to increase the fee schedule. There were no objections from the board. There was a consensus to move forward to develop a new layout to improve services.

Mr. Poe gave an update on the closed landfill. He reported there were no major issues with groundwater monitoring wells. However, there were instances regarding of methane in the wells. He said staff was working to vent the methane out of the wells to prevent it from migrating off-site. He added it would benefit the County, if it could get another 200' buffer around the landfill. This would potentially include the purchase of additional property. If this was not option, Mr. Poe told the board the County could be faced to spend a significant amount of money to mediate the methane issue.

8. **DISCUSS PURCHASE OF GORDON STREET FACILITY FOR VOTER REGISTRATION & ELECTIONS:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, advised the Elections & Registration Office needed more areas to operate in and was in desperate need of extra space. The County leases the current office space from the Jackson County Board of Education (BOE). He advised the BOE wanted to sell the Gordon Street Center property, identified as Map/Parcel 068 061 and 068 062. He reviewed plans to expand the Elections & Registration Office. The Board of Education submitted two proposals, should the BOC desire the purchase the land. One was for the purchase price of \$830,000 if the transaction was paid in one lump sum and closed by December 30, 2021. Another option included the purchase price of \$1,037,500 and paid in equal quarterly installments over a 3-year period of time.

Mr. Poe reported the County was also in need of a records retention center. He thought the Gordon Street Center would be a great location. He proposed modifying the grass area out front to have a separate entrance from the Parks & Recreation's Office. There was minimal renovation work to be conducted throughout the facility. However, he estimated a cost of \$1.5 million dollars for exterior renovations, to modify the entrance, and parking

Mr. Poe suggested pursuing the acquisition of the Gordon Street Center and convert it to a Voter Registration & Elections Center for the County. He recommended considering purchasing the facility at the cost of \$830,000. The purchase will include the two acres. There was a consensus of the board to move forward. Mr. Poe will continue with negotiations and bring this request to the board.

9. **DISCUSS ADDING A QUICK RESPONSE VEHICLE TO EMS OPERATIONS:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, presented a proposal to implement two (2) Quick Response Vehicles (QRV) on the east and west sides of the County. This was primarily due to an increase of calls for service. Jason Baker, EMS Director, explained oftentimes med-units were detained and left unable to respond to other emergencies calls. He explained QRV's were able to respond to general sickness calls. The Ford F-150 with a camper was the recommended vehicle. Mr. Poe shared this was a tremendous need for this type of vehicle.

He reviewed the estimated cost for implementation. The Capital Cost was \$137,800 for two QRV's. There was a need to hire two positions per QVR to operate 12 hours/day, seven days per week. The hours of operation were 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Staffing costs were \$54,000 for the four positions totaling \$216,000 + benefits.

Mr. Poe noted there was one negative to QRV vehicles. They were not available for transport; thus, no revenue would be generated. Mr. Baker, EMS confirmed the QRV's would be stationed. There was a consensus of the board to move forward.

10. **UPDATE ON SKELTON ROAD IMPROVEMENTS:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, reviewed an original concept plan prepared by Kennedy Engineering & Associates Group, LLC for improvements to Skelton Road. He gave an overview of a redesigned plan to put in new road out to Hwy. 332. Mr. Poe said plans were to redesign the entrance and begin work in the fall so it will be ready for the next school year. He also shared Georgia DOT had committed to provide additional LMIG funding for improvements on Skelton Road/Hwy. 332 and Skelton Road/Hwy. 124.

Improvements to Skelton Road included the installation of sidewalks and a stripped crosswalk at the entrance of Charlotte Estates Subdivision and across from Braselton Falls Subdivision. Additionally, six speed tables will be placed at strategic points to slow down the traffic on a portion of the roadway. Mr. Poe estimated the cost for all the work, to include utilities, right-of-way acquisition, signage and striping, at Hwy. 124 and Hwy. 332 at \$3 million dollars. Mr. Poe suggested to set aside funding for this project.

11. **UPDATE ON ANIMAL SHELTER EXPANSION PROJECT:**

Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, reminded members at last year's retreat there was a consensus of the board to budget for an expansion of the facility. Staff worked with an architect and developed a design that would fit on the property and meet the Georgia Department of Agricultural standards. The proposed facility will have a more visitor-friendly, adoption office and expanded kennels in the rear. Bids were received for the project in May. The County had budgeted \$1.5 million dollars for the project; however, the bids ranged from \$2.9 million dollars to \$3.6 million dollars. Ms. Roy recommended to complete the project in phases to see if construction prices will decrease. The group discussed expanding the front area, parking lot, and the expanding of the kennel space and cat rooms. Staff recommended to move forward with the phased project and wait until next year to see if construction costs decreased. Mr. Poe advised the facility will be under normal operations while work was underway. There was a consensus of the board to move forward with the needed repairs.

12. **UPDATE ON SENIOR CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT:**

Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, reported the County has submitted a full application to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The grant was \$750,000; however, the County had allotted a budget of \$800,000 as a match. The grant application was under review. Ms. Roy anticipated a response by October. The matching component was for more audio-visual equipment, a sun porch addition, the expansion of the dining hall, and the addition of a divided, multi-purpose room. The overall budget was \$1.6 million.

13. **RECREATION/PARK FACILITIES UPDATE (GUM SPRINGS, POCKET ROAD, HURRICANE SHOALS OPERATION) CHARGING PARKING FEE AT H.S.P., KAYAK TRAIL, PAUL HILL PROPERTY:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, gave an update on several projects for Parks & Recreation.

- Gum Springs:  
Work was underway at Gum Springs to provide another access into the parking lot and school. All field lighting was installed and work will begin on the basketball courts.
- Pocket Road:  
A Phase 1 Environmental Study, boundary survey, and title search were completed. There were no issues. Mr. Poe advised a public hearing on the matter will be held at the next meeting. The acquisition of the project will be closed at the end of July.
- Hurricane Shoals Park:  
Mr. Poe reported attendance was high at the park with record crowds. Staff was preparing for the annual Art in the Park event. He added a number of capital projects were planned to be funded next year. These projects were the repair/replacement of the pedestrian bridge and the grist mill. He further said with increased attendance more than 70% of the attendees were out of county. Staff recommended implementing a parking fee to maintain and operate the park. It was estimated charging a \$5 parking fee for weekends and holidays would generate approximately \$40,000/year.

With the increased attendance, Mr. Poe reported there was a need for a part-time park attendant. He estimated the cost to repair the bridge at \$250,000. There was a consensus of the board that staff look into considering an annual pass or other fee for parking to help generate additional revenue for the continued maintenance and operation of the park

- Paul Hill Property (River Glen Park):  
Mr. Poe reported this property (approximately 23 acres) was located off of Cabin Creek Road. The property had historic significance as it contained Indian stone mounds. Mr. Poe noted Mr. Hill had signed a contract in the amount of \$340,000 for 17.73 acres and \$100,000 for 5.52 acres which will be considered for registration on National Register of Historic Places. The group reviewed the concept plan for the park, which included a pavilion and an amphitheater. Mr. Poe added grant funds may be available because of its cultural significance. There was a consensus of the board to move forward with the purchase to expand the County's parks and recreation. Mr. Poe said the board could approve the agreement at the next meeting. Earnest money in the amount of \$10,000 was needed. He also reported a Phase 1 environmental, boundary survey, and title search will be required. It was estimated the transaction would close in ninety days.
- Kayak Launch:  
Mr. Poe acknowledged a request from group for a kayak trail on the Middle Oconee River near the Barrow and Jackson County line. He estimated it to cost approximately \$100,000; however, he suggested to not consider it at this time.

14. **SPLOST 7 (SPECIAL PURPOSE LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX):**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, reported SPLOST 6 will expire on June 30, 2023. He asked the board to consider another 6-year SPLOST 7 extending the one cent sales tax. The new SPLOST will begin on July 1, 2023. If consideration was given to have the vote on the General Election in 2022, staff would need to begin negotiations with the cities to develop an intergovernmental agreement and pass a resolution in order to hold the referendum.

The proposed SPLOST 7 was expected to generate \$100 million dollars total, \$60 million specifically for the County. Mr. Poe reviewed possible uses for the funding which included a new Administrative Building, Capital Improvements for the Jail, Roads, Streets, and Bridges, Public Safety facilities/equipment, Parks & Recreation, and Airport Improvements. There was a consensus of the board to move forward.

15. **LOST (LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX):**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, reported staff will need to renegotiate the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) in 2022. The agreement will expire on December 31, 2022. Currently, the County received 60% of the LOST. In the previous agreement, the County received 62.3%. The LOST was primarily based on population.

16. **REDISTRICTING:**

Kevin Poe, County Manager, advised the redistricting process will begin soon. Joel Logan, GIS Manager, was awaiting the final results from the Census. After receiving this information, Mr. Logan will produce maps for the board's consideration.

17. **DISCUSS PLANS TO PARTNER WITH CITIES ON GATEWAY SIGNS AT INTERSTATE 85:**

Gina Roy, Assistant County Manager, reported the County was partnering with the Town of Braselton on Gateway signs along I-85 traveling into Braselton/Jackson County. The County's portion of the cost with two standard signs with adequate landscaping was estimated at \$75,000. Additionally, the City of Jefferson was working on a similar program. Ms. Roy said it was very important to ensure all signs were consistent.

17a. **Health Department:**

Chairman Tom Crow led a brief discussion concerning the Health Department and why the office was always closed which was inconvenient for citizens. He asked Mr. Poe to check with the state for a possible explanation.

18. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Chairman Tom Crow declared the meeting adjourned at 1:19 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.

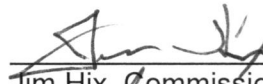
Minutes Approved: Monday, July 19, 2021.

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

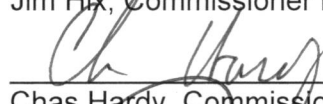




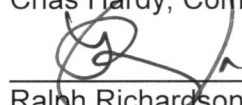
Tom Crow, Chairman



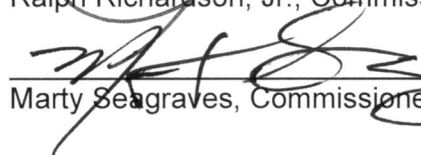
Jim Hix, Commissioner District 1



Chas Hardy, Commissioner District 2



Ralph Richardson, Jr., Commissioner District 3



Marty Seagraves, Commissioner District 4

Attest:

  
Ericka Johnson, Deputy Clerk

