

MINUTES
BIBB COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
August 21, 2007
(The meeting was held immediately following the Public Hearing)

The regular meeting of the Bibb County Board of Commissioners was held in the Commission Boardroom on Tuesday, August 21, 2007 beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Board Members present: Chairman Charles W. Bishop, Commissioner Bert Bivins, III, Commissioner Elmo A. Richardson Jr. and Commissioner Joe O. Allen.

Staff present: Mr. Steve Layson, Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Virgil Adams, County Attorney; Mr. Doug Furney, Director of Lake Tobesofkee; Mr. Tony Rousey, Director of Information & Technology Services; Ms. Deborah Martin, Finance Director; Mr. Ken Sheets, County Engineer; Mrs. Barbara Wood, Public Affairs Officer; Mrs. Shelia Thurmond, Clerk of the Board; Mrs. Janice Ross, Board of Commissioners and Ms. Charlene Maynard, Human Resources.

News Media:

Keich Whicker, The Telegraph

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Not Applicable.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Bishop announced that Town Hall meetings have been held in various communities in Bibb County where they invite input as well as questions from the citizens. The next meeting will be held on Monday, August 27th at 7:00 p.m. at Burghard School located at 6020 Bloomfield Road.

Chairman Bishop added that these were community meetings but there are some people who are following these meetings throughout the community. He stated that the commission meeting was the place to come for public comment. He stated that they are trying to get input from citizens in each particular area because what may be a problem in Lizella with a ditch being clogged may not be the same problem downtown at the Capitol Theatre. He stated that they'd like to give the people the opportunity to give them input into their problems. He added that they don't need people following the meetings to get up and make speeches about what they feel about their particular neighborhood because then, other people are not given the opportunity to respond. He added that County staff attends these meetings on their own time and to have them to do so for people who just follow the meetings around just defeats the purpose. He further stated that if anybody does that they can expect him to be short. In other words, Chairman Bishop stated that the meetings are intended to be Town Hall Neighborhood meetings.

Chairman Bishop then announced other Town Hall meetings to be held on Thursday, August 30th at Claystone Pavilion at Lake Tobesofkee and Thursday, September 13th at the Capitol Theatre on Second Street. All meetings are held at 7:00 p.m.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Chairman Bishop recognized and welcomed the following visitors:

Visitors:

Donald H. Richardson, Jr.	Reverend Lonzy Edwards	Hazel Giddens
Johnnie Mae Dawkins	Nettie Thomas	Yvette Cabey
Clifford Johnson	Joyce Reynolds	Fernella Cabey
Dora Wilson	Carol Lystlund	

Ms. Carol Lystlund addressed the Board with the following comments:

“Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Commissioners. And this time I’m actually not going to speak on Forest Hill Road, okay. So, I thought I’d get that out of the way right away. I’m here to thank you, actually. I was out of town and I was only able to go to one of those town meetings and I’m here to thank you for that. Due to my work schedule and because I don’t take the Macon Telegraph, I heard about it and I went to the first one I knew about, and it might not have been in my area but I went there anyway. And I really want to thank you because it gave us an opportunity to, in a very informal format, and I have said for a long time I wish we could get county leaders to sit with us around a roundtable and our city leaders separately to sit with us and let us talk about some of the things that are really on our mind. We’ve got such a beautiful area in which we live here in middle Georgia, and it’s a shame for us to get discouraged just because things happen that we really don’t understand. And so, I truly appreciate that and I personally feel a lot less intimidated when I’m in that informal setting than I am when I come into this beautiful courthouse and this awesome room. It’s just more intimidating for me. So that makes it more comfortable and I feel like that I’m not the only one that feels that way, and that perhaps the other people in the community feel more relaxed in that setting. And so, I’m here just to encourage you. I was impressed with each of you as well as your staff, Mrs. Thurmond and the others that were there at that meeting and for allowing us to talk about whatever it was that was on our minds. And I wanted to also thank Mr. Sheets, who was so prompt in calling me back with one of the questions that I had asked. He found out the information folks and he called me back immediately and told me maybe not what I wanted to hear but he called and told me the truth. So, I appreciate that. Again, I’m just here to thank you sir Chairman and Commissioner Bivins, Commissioner Richardson and Commissioner Allen for allowing us to do that. And to Mr. Hart and Mr. Adams and Mr. Layson and the other people that represented the County: the Sheriff’s Department, the Fire Department and so forth. And I’d like to encourage anyone who has not been to a town meeting to go with the understanding that it’s an opportunity to speak about the things that are on your heart and on your mind and to get some answers and to have some people respond back to you about that. And I hope that you’re not going to be discouraged because maybe it was new and maybe there were some emotions running high, and I don’t want to discourage you from wanting to do that again. In fact, I’m here to encourage you, please be open to the citizens. Let us feel comfortable with you, not like you’re sitting up there with a straight face and not smiling at me. And I really want to encourage you to have some rapport with the folks that are in the audience and to sincerely

accept-- what's important to me might not be important to anybody else but if it's important to me I have a right to voice that opinion. And so, again, thank you very much for allowing me to be here and to make that clear, and I may show up for some more meetings and I may have something to say, and it'll be on a different topic. I will assure you of that, but right now, before I'm hit by any eggs or rotten tomatoes, I'm going to run like crazy."

Chairman Bishop thanked Ms. Lystlund for her comments and stated that it made him feel good that he accomplished what he set out to do and what the Board set out to do which is to allow the public to speak in an informal setting. He added that there hasn't been any media present except for the first meeting which he thinks is really good because it took the showboating out and allowed them to sit in an informal setting and talk to the citizens and answer their questions. He stated that he has not had one bad comment, except for the editorial in the newspaper. He added that he doesn't like it when people are being critical when they're trying to do something good for the community.

Ms. Lystlund further commented the following: "I hope when you as a group and your committee evaluate this process that you will look at it and say this is the beginning of something that is good for Macon and Bibb County and you will continue doing it. And again, I want to encourage all of you to go to one. How many of you have been to one? Then, we probably went to different ones. We probably were not at the same one, but thank you."

Commissioner Allen asked if the Board could use County monies to send notices to all registered voters to advise them of these town hall meetings.

Chairman Bishop responded that's the reason he agreed to have as many meetings as possible. He added that it was up to the media to do public service announcements. He stated that The Telegraph has been putting it in the newspaper. He also stated that he had found out when the group is smaller, you have the opportunity for everybody to talk. He continued that when they went to the first meeting, there were about 30-40 people there and in the beginning only one person wanted to speak, but it ended up that every person there spoke because it was encouraged. He added that to have an editorial in the newspaper saying the Board's not listening was really a disservice to the commissioners because the newspaper hadn't been out there. He stated that they let one person write in and it just destroyed the credibility of the meetings where if I was out there and wanted to come, I wouldn't come because they're thinking the Board won't listen.

Commissioner Allen then asked if it was not only a disservice to the people that did not know. He stated that there were a lot of people out there that he's talked to that didn't know they were having a meeting. He added that the Chairman's idea of going to the senior citizens is fantastic but there are a lot of people out there that don't know about them and would like to come and he was just hoping they could use some money and try and get the word out to the people that are sitting at home and saying, "I don't know anything about a meeting."

Chairman Bishop added that you know how frugal I am with the taxpayers' money.

Commissioner Allen responded that it's letting the taxpayer know that they're having meetings for them.

Chairman Bishop responded that it has been in the newspaper and I'm sure it'll be in there again.

Commissioner Bivins added that no matter what they do, they have to accept the fact that people are going to come to every one of them if they want to, people are going to say things we don't necessarily want to hear. And if you have the meetings, you have to accept that.

Chairman Bishop responded again that he doesn't mind them saying it, but it's just a disservice for the people in that neighborhood for them to dominate the meeting. He added that people don't want to stay until 9 or 10:00 at night and listen to three people repeat the same thing over and over because it's a listening session. He also stated that they were trying to have neighborhood meetings and again, he's told some of them to come back to the next meeting if their question wasn't answered. He further stated that he doesn't know of anybody that hasn't had a chance to talk and thinks that they haven't listened.

Commissioner Bivins added again that when people want to say something, you have to allow it.

Chairman Bishop responded that's right, but he was going to correct it if he thinks it's wrong.

Commissioner Bivins added if they are going to say what they want to say, they say what they want to say.

Chairman Bishop responded that it doesn't mean he going to sit there with stupid written on his head and let somebody wear him out when he knows it's not true. We'll move on now.

The next person to address the Board was Mr. Clifford Johnson. Mr. Johnson's comments are as follows:

"This is something that I spoke on a couple of years ago. I believe I approached this commission in the year 2005 about how dark ---all the way from Second Street to Emery Highway, all the way out to Ocmulgee East Boulevard ---how dark that road is at night. We have had several incidents. Even me, myself, have almost hit several pedestrians at night because I couldn't see them and I thank God that I did see them in time. And my concern is that I am always wondering why it seems that before something is done a tragedy has to occur. And I want to bring your mind back two or three years ago, on Highway 49 at the intersection where you turn off into Lake Arrowhead at that church. One rainy night, a pedestrian was struck by several cars and killed on his way to the store, from what the media said. And I noticed shortly after that incident happened it got lit up all the way from Shurling Drive to the County Line. In a sense, that disturbs me because a tragedy had to occur for something to be done. And we, as voters, citizens and taxpayers come down here and voice our opinions to county commission or whoever we can talk to and we let the public know that we are concerned about this. I'm concerned about human life; I don't like to see any killed. Another incident occurred shortly after they finished the new Wal Mart off Gray Highway. There at the red light, I believe it was raining that night. This person was a senior citizen who lived in the apartments across the street and it was very dark. I can't remember the person was killed but the person was struck, and shortly after that happened, they put up lights so that they could see better. And this is all I'm asking ---I brought this proposal to the commission in the year 2005. I can't remember what meeting it was or what day it was but I haven't heard anything about it. I haven't heard whether ya'll took it into

consideration of trying to raise funds to light up from Second Street out to Ocmulgee East Boulevard because that is a very dangerous road at night. I know because I live in that area and have done so for over 29 years.”

Chairman Bishop responded that some of that roadway is located inside the City limits.

Ken Sheets stated that he would look at it and that the Commission can light major intersections on a State Route.

Chairman Bishop reiterated that Ken Sheets would look at it and if it’s an intersection that’s in our power, they’ll do what they can and if not, pass it on to the State which is what may have been done last time.

Chairman Bishop thanked Mr. Johnson for his comments.

The next speaker was Ms. Yvette Cabey. Her comments were as follows:

“Basically, it takes a lot for me to come in front of a crowd or come in front of the Commission to ask about the \$2.5 million. That’s basically my question. What is going to happen at the Tax Assessors Office? Are they going to receive this money; or they going to hire CLT? I mean, \$2.5 million like I said in the beginning, is a lot of money. I mean, they already receive a \$1 million. Now, why do they need another \$2.5 million? And how is that going to be broken down? That’s basically my question – I need to know. I pay taxes as well.”

Chairman Bishop responded that he thought they had answered that.

Ms. Cabey replied, “you did not answer it and that’s one of the problems.”

Chairman Bishop responded, “didn’t we tell you to go down and ask the Board of Tax Assessors what their recommendation was?”

Ms. Cabey replied, “Well, I asked you to find out because you are the commissioners and basically, you’re giving the money to them and it doesn’t seem to be any concern from the commissioners about what is going to happen with this \$2.5 million, and why the people on fixed incomes, who can barely afford what they’re already paying, have to pay more. Of course, nobody likes a tax increase, but to throw another, you know...You said that you’re trying to save money but then you’re going to throw some more money to them. So, I basically wanted to know why do they need this money and why do they need another consultant?”

Commissioner Richardson responded that, “number one - we have not received any recommendation from the Board of Tax Assessors. Number two – we have never appropriated \$2.5 million to the Board of Tax Assessors. That has not been appropriated; it’s not in the budget to give them \$2.5 million. We are waiting on a recommendation from the Board of Tax Assessors before we consider anything and until that time, there’s not anything on the table. And what you’re asking – it’s not there.”

Chairman Bishop stated that he has not and will not try to influence the Board of Tax Assessors. He stated that they are an appointed body and they have autonomy and it’s for them to make recommendations, and all the commission does is put the funding out there.

Commissioner Bivins stated that it was his understanding that it's kind of a foregone conclusion that they'll be requesting the money and he thought it was a consensus of the Board that they'll get \$2 to \$2.5 million or whatever it costs, and that's the estimate.

Commissioner Richardson stated that he thinks the only thing they asked the Board of Tax Assessors to do is do a Request For Proposals (RFP) to do a revaluation.

Commissioner Bivins replied, "That's where the money comes in."

Commissioner Richardson continued that they have not received anything back from them.

Commissioner Allen stated, "there was only one bid to come in. Is that right, Mr. Richardson?"

Commissioner Richardson stated that was what he understands but that he hasn't seen it.

Commissioner Allen then responded that, "we've only received one bid as of yet. And the Chairman's right, we won't know until they come to us with it. We're like the banker and once they come to us, we can give you that information, but right now, we don't have the information to give you because it has not been given to us."

Ms. Cabey then asked, "So, they've received one bid from who – CLT?"

Commissioner Allen responded, "Exactly."

Ms. Cabey responded, "thank you."

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of Commissioner Richardson, seconded by Commissioner Bivins and carried, the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 7, 2007 and the two Public Hearings on August 7, 2007 regarding the proposed tax increase were approved as written.

Chairman Bishop called on the Clerk of the Board for the reading of the Board Agenda.

REFERRALS:

The following items were referred to the **Engineering/Public Works Committee:**

1. Correspondence from Attorney Wendell Bowden, Martin Snow, LLP, Attorneys at Law, requesting that the County abandon to Southern Pine Plantations that portion of Lamar Road adjacent to property of Southern Pines which has been closed by the relocation of Lamar Road which ties into Plantation Way and Peake Road North.

2. Correspondence from residents of Waterford Place, located in Wesleyan Woods Subdivision, requesting assistance from Bibb County in correcting a drainage problem attributed to a new project to be located at 5075 Rivoli Drive.

RECORD AND INFORMATION:

1. Monthly departmental reports and agency activities received for record; Clerk of State Court.

ACTION:

1. Ratification of Resolution paying tribute to the Class of 1957 of Ballard Hudson Senior High School on the occasion of its 50th Class Reunion.

On motion of Commissioner Allen and seconded by Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned resolution was ratified.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

ENGINEERING/PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE – Committee Chairman Bivins reported the following:

1. The Committee recommends that the attached list of 32 County roads consisting of 18.31 miles be submitted to the Georgia Department of Transportation as Bibb County's request for resurfacing under the FY2009 LARP.

On motion of Commissioner Bivins and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

LICENSE & TAX COMMITTEE – No Report:

MACON WATER AUTHORITY – No Report.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT – No Report.

LAND BANK AUTHORITY – No Report.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE – Committee Chairman Richardson reported the following:

1. The Human Resources and Information Services Committee recommends approval for an additional temporary employee in the Custodial Services Department for a period not to exceed 90 days. The cost for the temporary will be utilized from vacant position.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

FINANCE, TAX AND REVENUE COMMITTEE – Committee Chairman Richardson reported the following:

1. The Committee recommends approval of a supplemental appropriation to the FY 2007 General Fund budget in the amount of \$35,601.00 to cover interest expense on the Bass Pro Shops bonds.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

2. The Committee recommends approval of a supplemental appropriation to the FY 2008 General Fund budget in the amount of \$17,500.00 for the Macon Transit Authority. This is contingent upon the Mayor's signature committing to payment of the City's portion of the cost and review of the numbers by the Finance Office.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

3. The Finance Committee recommends approval of authorization for Chairman Bishop to sign a MOA with DCA Sub-recipients New Town Macon and The Mentor's Project of Bibb County for Local Assistance Grants.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

4. The Committee recommends approval of authorization for Chairman Bishop to sign the agreement between Bibb County and the Convention and Visitors Bureau for the payment of Health Care Cost.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and seconded, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented by a three to one (3-1) vote. Commissioner Allen cast the dissenting vote.

5. The Committee recommends awarding the bid for a Copier for Engineering to MBG Office Systems in the amount of \$416.60 per month for a 60-month term.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

6. The Committee recommends approval of a supplemental appropriation to the FY2008 General Fund budget in the amount of \$199,573.00, the FY2008 Tobesofkee Fund budget in the amount of \$349,980.00 and the FY2008 Fire Fund budget in the amount of \$18,870.00 to cover budget rollovers from FY2007.

On motion of Commissioner Richardson and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – No Report.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE – No Report.

TOBESOFKEE COMMITTEE – Committee Chairman Allen reported the following:

1. The Tobesofkee Committee recommends that Section 13-37 of Article II, Division 2, of the Code of Bibb County entitled “Tobesofkee Recreation Area” be amended to read: Effective August 21, 2007, no private boat launching facilities and/or community boat docks will be permitted at Lake Tobesofkee. Those boat launching facilities and community boat docks approved prior to the effective date of this section shall not be affected hereby. Public boat launching facilities are available.

County Attorney stated that the ordinance should be read by caption. Commissioner Allen read the caption as follows:

“AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BIBB COUNTY, GEORGIA TO AMEND SECTION 13-37 OF ARTICLE II, DIVISION 2 OF THE CODE OF BIBB COUNTY ENTITLED “TOBESOFKEE RECREATION AREA; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.”

On motion of Commissioner Allen and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was approved as presented.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE – No Report:

COUNTY ATTORNEY – No Report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None.

NEW BUSINESS – Chairman Bishop stated that he was contacted by Commissioner Ned Sanders, Chairman of the Houston County Board of Commissioners, who said that he has been contacted by someone that was interested in building a bridge across Echeeconnie Creek. Chairman Bishop then asked if anyone knew who it was.

Commissioner Allen responded that a commissioner from Houston County had contacted him and before he brought it to the Board, he was trying to get as much information he could to bring to the Chairman.

Chairman Bishop stated that the reason he asked that was because Mr. Sanders was asking him.

Commissioner Allen stated that he merely had a conversation with a commissioner in Houston County.

Chairman Bishop then asked Commissioner Allen if he minded identifying that commissioner.

Commissioner Allen responded, “not at this time, but he will in the future. He added that, right now, it should not be available to the public exactly what his discussion was with him. He added that it was a private conversation at that particular time, but as soon as he gets the information and get an okay from the Houston County Commissioner, he will talk to him about it.

Chairman Bishop then explained that the reason he asked that is because he knew they had some problems in that area with somebody that they had to caution about ...He then called on Ken Sheets to explain exactly what went on with that complaint.

Mr. Sheets responded that they found a developer or individual filling in the floodplain of Echeeconnie Creek on the Bibb County side. He said that they stopped him about the third week June or first week in July.

Commissioner Allen added that this took place within the last seven days – the contact that he had. He stated that he sat and talked with him about it.

Commissioner Allen continued as follows:

“I had been involved in this back in the 80s, as you know, Ken, but prior to you coming here. Matter of fact, I think you were here when we did have this conversation. A certain commissioner at that particular time decided he didn’t want anything to do with Houston County because they didn’t need any of Houston County people working in Bibb County. And so, sitting down and talking with him as a Bibb County Commissioner, I did not want to open this up for any dialogue or discussion prior to having all of the information where he could bring to the Chairman and let the Chairman turn it over to Engineering and Public Works. And that’s the reason I’m not talking anymore about it. Thank you.”

Chairman Bishop added that the only thing he wants to bring up is that one of the parts of the Code of Ethics is for no county commissioner to make a private contract. Thank you.

Commissioner Allen then asked the Chairman if he thinks he violated the Code of Ethics.

Chairman Bishop responded that he didn't say he had.

Commissioner Richardson made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion.

There being no further business and on motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Shelia Thurmond, Clerk of the Board