

MINUTES
BIBB COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
November 21, 2006
6:00 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Bibb County Board of Commissioners was held in the Commission Boardroom on Tuesday, November 21, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.

Board Members present: Chairman Charles W. Bishop, Vice Chairman Samuel F. Hart, Sr., 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. Ken Sheets, County Engineer; Mr. Doug Furney, Director of Lake Tobesofkee; Mr. Barry Smallwood, Purchasing Agent; Mr. Sam Kitchens, Director of Buildings & Properties; Mr. Tony Rousey, Director, Information & Technology Services; Mrs. Shelia Thurmond, Clerk of the Board; Mrs. Janice Ross, Board of Commissioners; Mrs. Barbara Wood, Public Affairs and Mrs. Bel Wall, Human Resources.

News Media: Mr. Chace Ambrose, FOX 24.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Chairman Bishop recognized and welcomed Dr. Luther Strickland, Day Star Church of God, for the Prayer for the Day.

Everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Bishop announced that the Courthouse will be closed Thursday and Friday of this week for Thanksgiving holidays. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Chairman Bishop also announced that the Commission voted today to grant an additional holiday to employees on the Friday before Christmas (December 22, 2006).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of Commissioner Richardson, seconded by Commissioner Hart and carried, the Minutes of the Regular meeting of November 7, 2006 and Called Emergency meeting of November 10, 2006 were approved as written.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Chairman Bishop recognized and welcomed the following visitors: Mr. Jarrell Strickland, Mr. John Hiscox, Lee and Susan Martin, Ms. Carol Lystlund, Ms. Mary H. Jones, Ms. Hazel Giddens, Ms. Cynthia W. Patterson, Ms. Johnnie Mae Dawkins, Ms. Nettie Thomas, Mr. Keith Moffett and Mr. Ed Cutchen.

Chairman Bishop recognized Ms. Mary H. Jones for comments. Ms. Jones stated that she lives at 947 Hill Place and that she represents the Forest Hill Road neighborhood. She stated copies of their petitions which consisted of 43 pages were sent to the Commissioners asking for their reconsideration of the widening of Forest Hill Road. Other comments from Ms. Jones came from a handout, a copy of which was provided to each member of the Board and the Clerk.

Chairman Bishop responded to Ms. Jones' comments. An excerpt of his comments is as follows: "The Forest Hill Road project is one of the first projects that was identified and the County's only part in that was to pay for the design. We've overspent \$1 million in the design project itself and it's been downsized since I've been here. The project was originally supposed to be a four-lane road with sidewalk and it's been downsized at least three times and then, after all of the design money has been spent, they had some money in there, not for the acquisition of property but for the doing the work of identifying the property. Once that money is gone, there's no money available for any redesign or anything else because all of the money now, the State actually pays the part for the acquisition of property. So, it's been put out to the public that there's money that can be moved from this project somewhere else when, in fact, there's no money that's left to be moved to another project. The other thing I'd like to point out is when the guy came up here and did the thing on the Roundabouts. What he said was that the Roundabouts would be at your intersections; however, between your intersections, the width of the road would remain like it is in the design with three lanes in between the Roundabouts which would make a bigger footprint. He sent back a letter thanking the Commission for allowing him to come make the presentation, but in his letter, he said that it would call for better flow of traffic but it did not downsize the footprint and would not have decreased the size of the road. My understanding is that the trees that have been identified out there are not necessarily going to be all clear cut. And I think they made that known a couple of times that they've identified all of the trees that will be in the landscaped area plus some of them that would have to be cut. If you'll notice, they've identified trees that are off that road and down the road on some other areas which definitely won't be in the widening of the road. I haven't actually seen the landscaping concept and I really can't tell you how many trees are subject to be cut, but I think there has been some misconception about the width of the road. To let you know exactly where we stand, if we overspent \$1 million on design to come and to be asked to do redesign, we don't have any money. We don't even have money to do the other projects that the people voted for. And when they voted for the sales tax, we have to use the money according to those design projects. We're required by law to put a report in the newspaper and I wish the Finance Director was here tonight to tell how that money was spent. If we change a project, we stand to lose up to \$200 million of the Department of Transportation money trying to stop doing one project. Once a project is started like this and we've spent over \$1 million on design and redesign. And not just what we spent but we spent \$1 million more than what we had appropriated for that. DOT has agreed to put that much back in because we were going to use that to acquire right-of-way and they're going to acquire right-of-way. So, it's a matter of everybody living on that road saying something needs to be done and people voted early on, way before I became a Commissioner, to do something with that road. From our standpoint, we've got to look at what the people voted for and when they vote for it, we have to do what they say."

Next, Chairman Bishop recognized Ms. Carol Lystlund for comments. An excerpt of her comments is as follows: "I have my comments written down and I would like to address what I have to say from my comments so I can cover as much material as possible in a

short amount of time. We were among the first residents to build and to move there from the inner city. We saw the potential for growth in that area and chose to build our home there, thinking that it would one day be a highly desirable area of town and one in which our family could live for many generations to come. I have the third generation of our family in that very home. In order to take advantage of the gorgeous forest trees and lovely setting, our home was built far enough off the road to allow us to have a gorgeous front and back view from any window in our home. Also, the beautiful trees between our home and the road created a superior buffer for us from regular street noises, even at that time. It is very painful for the residents in our neighborhood and for me, especially, to face the fact that what we have loved in our neighborhood now faces major, major changes. We have tried to work with this process for well over ten years. I would also like to extend a *thank you* to Caution Macon and all the individuals who have tried to help us save our forest because it was a forest when we moved there. It is Wimbish Woods; It is Forest Hill Road. I have three points or suggestions that I would like to address. Those are the five foot sidewalks on each side of the road; the blue markings on the trees and street drainage and utility installation; however, I will only address the blue markings on the trees at this time. One day, I came home from work and to my great surprise found all those markings on my trees and I counted at least 27 as it was approaching dark. All I could think of was – these were marked because they are to be cut down and then one half of my buffer zone would be gone, meaning more and more street noise filtering down to our home, but most of all, the beauty of the trees would also be gone. After inquiring, I have since learned that is not necessarily the full story. It's my understanding that was an inventory of the current trees for landscaping and cutting purposes and did not mean that every tree within the blue paint area would be removed. I trust that is correct; however, please note that I also trusted that the SPLOST which was passed years ago was with the understanding that the one cent additional sales tax would be spent on road improvements. In my mind, that sounded like a great use for tax money. In my mind, that sounded like pot holes, stop lights, directional signs and other signage to improve driving conditions in Macon and additional lighting to help make our neighborhood safer for our families. So much to my regret, I voted for the tax increase, so I feel like I have a right to make comments about how I feel about this, especially since it is impacting me greatly. I feel that my vote has not come down to haunt me. I regret that decision and it will be extremely difficult for me to ever vote to approve another SPLOST."

Next, Chairman Bishop recognized Mrs. Susan Martin for comments. An excerpt of her comments is as follows: "I just want to say a few things. Voters didn't vote for this project. It was billed to the public as *Pennies for Pot Holes* and there has always been steadfast opposition to it. The markings on the trees are the markings of the construction easement and 99% of them are going to be gone. We could shift the money to Houston Avenue. That is a project we need to do and is vital for the future of our community. In the 2030 traffic projections, the traffic counts have actually decreased from what they were before, so the need for this project has changed over time. We don't have money for maintenance into the future. That's a huge cost that we never talk about and we're going to be facing problems with drainage and that problem has not been solved yet. The last thing I want to say is that I don't know if ya'll are aware, but every single person I've talked to on Forest Hill Road, their property value has decreased. Everybody on Forest Hill - their property was devalued. This is going to harm the community. Thank you."

Next, Chairman Bishop recognized Mr. John Hiscox, Executive Director, Macon Housing Authority, for a check presentation. Mr. Hiscox stated that the check was for \$26,859.81. He stated that by Federal law, public housing is tax exempt, but they make a payment in lieu of taxes in the amount of 10% of shelter rent. He stated that it's a lot less than they would pay if they were paying the full real estate value. He stated that if compare the amount that his residents pay, 10% of their shelter rent which is based on 30% of their income. He added that they are paying 3% of their income in local payment in lieu of taxes. He further stated that as a percentage of their income, it's a serious contribution on the part of his residents. He stated that he wanted to come and thank the Commissioners for the services they render to his residents and for treating his residents as citizens of this County and ensure that the residents get the services they are entitled.

On another note, Mr. Hiscox stated that they have developed quite a few and have processed quite a few more affordable housing developments that are being done outside the traditional public housing program. He stated that 63 of the 97 units at Tattnell Place development pay full local real estate taxes. Additionally, he stated that at Baltic Park, an 80-unit senior development, they've just finished pays local real estate taxes. He also that Anthony Arms and Kingston Gardens are in the process of rehabilitation and they will pay local real estate taxes. And they have just gotten funded an acquisition and got rehab of Colony West and as noted in the newspaper last Saturday, Pearl Stephens school. He stated that that development will not only be an asset to the community and provide 61 units of badly needed senior housing, but will also pay full local real estate taxes. He stated that all of this together adds up to more than \$65 million in hard dollar development that will be paid in real estate taxes. And he also stated that all of this is Infill and is not out in a soy bean field at the edge of the County line; it's being developed in neighborhoods that do not require the extension of expensive infrastructure at public expense which should be a net profit for local government.

Mr. Hiscox also mentioned that they have subsidiary not for profit called Infill Housing that has, so far, built and sold more than 50 single family houses to first time home buyers. He stated that every one of those houses goes on the local tax rolls. He thanked the Commission for its role in that. He stated that most of the lots that those houses were built on were sold to the Macon Housing Authority by the Land Bank Authority. Mr. Hiscox thanked the Commission for the County services it renders to his residents and for their support for additional affordable public housing.

Commissioner Allen asked Mr. Hiscox if there was any development on the east side of town which he added is greatly needed. Mr. Hiscox stated that he agrees and that they have recently done something in East Macon. He stated that they did Grove Park Village on Old Clinton Road, a 40-unit development, and they are very proud of that. He stated that he has received some flack recently from residents of East Macon who asked why more wasn't being done there. He stated that the answer is that he really wasn't asked to do more there. Commissioner Allen added that East Macon has been stepchild of this community for a long time and they really need to push development over there as well as industry over there. Mr. Hiscox stated that they are on the verge of rolling out new single family programs, some of which will be done in cooperation with City government and some will be free standing on their own. He added that it will greatly multiply the resources that they have available to induce single family development, mainly by bringing in outside money that they don't have now. He further stated that their intent is

to be able to increase the total number of houses they can do by roughly a factor of about three which should let them expand to go to other neighborhoods.

Finally, Mr. Hiscox stated that the Macon Housing Authority is, by a country mile, the leader in the state of Georgia and one of the ten or so most advanced in the country.

Next, Chairman Bishop recognized Deputy Robert Floyd and presented him with a Retirement Resolution and Watch for rendering more than 12 years of service with the Bibb County Sheriff's Office.

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

REFERRALS: None

RECORD AND INFORMATION: None

ACTION:

1. Ratification of Resolution of the Board of Commissioners acknowledging November 11, 2006 as Veterans' Day in Bibb County.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: Chairman Bishop reported the following:

1. The Committee of the Whole recommends that Chairman of the Board of Commissioners be authorized to request in writing the resignations of such members of the Board of Tax Assessors and that the resignations be received by the Chairman no later than 12:00 noon on Wednesday, November 29th. Unless the resignations are received by that time, a hearing will be held on December 13, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. to determine whether such assessors should be removed for cause. The Chairman will notify such assessors, in writing, of the hearing.

On motion of Commissioner Hart and seconded by Commissioner Allen and carried, the before mentioned recommendation was ratified unanimously.

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

1. The Committee recommends extending the term contract with Kone, Inc. for Elevator Preventive Maintenance at the existing unit prices and covering the term of January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007.

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

2. The Committee recommends extending the term contract with Sizemore Security Services for security Guard Services at the existing hourly prices and covering the term of January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007.

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

3. The Committee recommends approval of authorization of a supplemental Appropriation in the amount of \$7,208.00 to the FY 2007 special Sanitation fund for payment to the RDC for assistance in the development of a joint solid waste management plan.

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

4. The Committee recommends approval of a supplemental appropriation to the FY 2007 General Fund budget in the amount of \$43,498.00 for the Bibb County Sports complex.

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

RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – No Report.

LICENSE & TAX COMMITTEE – Committee Chairman Bivins reported the following:

1. The Committee recommends amending Section 3-143 (Paragraph a) of the code of Bibb County respecting “When Sales Permitted.”

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

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

1. The Committee recommends that the petitions for the registration of Apple Valley Road, Holly Bluff Road, Crabapple Place and Apple Blossom Way be approved and that said roads be placed on the Official Road Register for maintenance by Bibb County Forces.

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

2. The Committee recommends that the request of Dr. Ronald Conners, MAD Development Associates, LLC that the road and cul-de-sac through the Arboretum at Lake Tobesofkee Subdivision be gated and remain a private road be approved, provided that the road is built in accordance with County specifications.

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

3. The Committee recommends approval of the ordinance to fix the maximum speed limit on Greenview Terrace, Misty Ridge and Barrington Point at 25 miles per hour.

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

4. The Committee recommends approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between Bibb County, the City of Macon, Macon-Bibb County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Macon Tennis Association and that the Chairman be authorized to sign said Memorandum.

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

5. The Committee recommends utilizing the interest on the Trust Fund for Beautification to purchase property (south end of MLK, Jr., Blvd & Riverside Dr.) from Norfolk-Southern Corporation as indicated on property map attached to sales contract in the amount of \$75,550 (\$7,500 earnest money) and to negotiate with NewTown Macon to participate in joining this project along with repaving the exterior sidewalk and parking area on MLK, Jr., Blvd. adjacent to the site of the former Trailways Building as requested by Janice Marshall and Theresa Robinson, Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau in the letter dated November 16, 2006. The Committee further recommends authorizing the survey & legal description of property at south end of MLK, Jr. Blvd. at Riverside Drive to be completed before December 19, 2006.

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

MACON WATER AUTHORITY - Commissioner Bivins stated that there was some discussion at the last meeting about the Special Tax Districts. He stated that they were still trying to work that out and as a result, he would like for the matter to be assigned to the appropriate agenda for discussion on December 5th. Chairman Bishop instructed the Clerk to put the matter on the License & Tax Committee agenda.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT – Commissioner Bivins stated that he would like to have a meeting of the Board of Commissioners, members of City Council and Emergency

Management to discuss the pandemic flu. He stated that he would get with the CAO to coordinate the meeting.

Chairman Bishop added that Commissioner Bivins has spent a lot of his time working on this issue and that he appreciates all his efforts.

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

1. The Committee recommends the approval for implementation of a Clerical Internship Program with Central Georgia Technical College (*at no cost to the county*) and authorization for the Chairman to sign a contract should the situation warrant.

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

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE – No Report.

TOBESOFKEE COMMITTEE – No Report.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE – No Report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – None

At this time, Chairman Bishop asked if there were anymore visitors who desired to address the Board. Mr. Jarrell Strickland welcomed the opportunity and an excerpt of his comments is as follows:

“I’m just here to applaud the Board on the action they took today concerning the Board of Tax Assessors. I addressed this Board several months ago and expressed some concerns over the poor management of the office of the Tax Assessors and their staff, and I feel your action today was outstanding; there’s been poor management, actually gross mismanagement, in my opinion, and arrogance and justifiable cause to remove each and every one of those members. Anyone that didn’t think that there would be an avalanche of appeals when you raised people’s property by 50-60% is either incompetent or not telling the truth. And they have absolutely wasted a full year at that office. So, I assure you, the Digest for 2006 will not get approved. There are too many things wrong with it; it’ll never make it to the State. They ought to scrap that and start on ’07. I believe the new chief appraiser will do it, if that Board is gone. The Board will not do that. That old Board will do everything they can to make 2006 work. All it’s going to do is cost us more money. They’ve already wasted probably over \$1 million this year with outside advisers, penalties to the State, lost revenue for all of those employees. They accomplished nothing this year – absolutely nothing. It’s all wasted, gone. They

might as well junk it and get on with business, but what do we get out of the chairman of that board, *I want to fight the State because it's wrong, it treats us unfairly; it damages our reputation.* Take blame for your action. You have a dysfunctional board. Now, there may be one, possibly two members on that board, who are reasonable; however, they don't seem to have any power to point the Board in the right direction because the ones that are unreasonable control it. So, I think this will probably go beyond just calling for their resignation. I believe you'll have to drag at least two of them out of there. There is one who may be reasonable enough to resign before the deadline before the end of this month; at least two of them that you'll have to drag out of there are already threatening a lawsuit. And they will probably try one. With as little as I know about it, the guy doesn't have a leg to stand on because the office is definitely dysfunctional in anyone's definition. So, I applaud your actions today; I believe you have the conviction to follow this through and get someone in there that will collect the money. A large part of the budget for this County has to come from property taxes and you can't entrust that much revenue to incompetent people. So, I'm glad to see your actions and I believe you will follow through and get the job done."

Chairman Bishop thanked all of the visitors for attending the meeting tonight and stated that he appreciates their concerns.

There being no further business and on motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Shelia Thurmond
Clerk of the Board