

November 7, 2023

The Walton County Board of Commissioners held its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 7, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Historic Walton County Courthouse. Those participating in the meeting included Chairman David Thompson, Commissioners Bo Warren, Mark Banks, Timmy Shelnett, Lee Bradford, Jeremy Adams and Kirklyn Dixon, County Clerk Rhonda Hawk, Planning Director Charna Parker, Facilities Director Hank Shirley, Public Works Director John Allman, County Manager John Ward and County Attorney Chip Ferguson. A list of employees and citizens in attendance at the meeting is on file in the auxiliary file under this meeting date.

MEETING OPENING

Chairman Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Shelnett gave the invocation.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

***Motion:** Commissioner Adams made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dixon to adopt the Agenda. All voted in favor.*

PROCLAMATIONS

National Adoption Month

Retired Educators Day

Poppy Day

Chairman Thompson proclaimed November as National Adoption Month, November 5th as Retired Educators Day and November 11th as Poppy Day in Walton County.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Director Charna Parker presented the Planning Commission recommendations.

Denial of CU23070023 - Conditional Use for church fellowship hall & AZ23080017 to change entrance to Escoe Dr. - Applicant: Southern Elite Contracting, Inc. - Owner: Knanaya Catholic Association of GA, Inc. - Property located at 6493 Escoe Dr. & Rosebud Rd. - Map/Parcel C0020007 - District 2

Chairman Thompson opened the public hearing on the matter. Members of the Knanaya Catholic Association of Georgia presented their requests. Frederick Green, a member of the community, spoke in favor stating they had been there for 10 years with no problems. William Daniel, Wayne Cannon and Jack Johnson spoke in opposition citing noise and traffic concerns. Chairman Thompson closed the public hearing.

Motion: Commissioner Banks made a motion to approve the conditional use as presented. Commissioner Shelnett seconded the motion. Commissioner Banks stated they had been in the community a long time and that the church should have the right to worship and fellowship. No other church fellowship halls have restrictions and he would not put any on this one. Commissioners Banks, Shelnett, Bradford, Adams and Dixon voted in favor. Commissioner Warren opposed the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of CU23080024 with conditions - Conditional Use for an event venue - Applicant: Marcklin Almonord - Owners: Marckline Almonord & Wilner Almonord - Property located at 5241 Guthrie Cemetery Rd. & Hwy. 138 - Map/Parcel C0530034 - District 3

Chairman Thompson opened the public hearing on the matter. Olivia Price spoke in favor of the conditional use. There was no opposition present. Chairman Thompson closed the public hearing.

Motion: Commissioner Shelnett made a motion to approve per the Planning Commission recommendations but provide a turn lane at Hwy. 138. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion; voted and carried unanimously.

Approval of LU23080015 and Z23080016 - Land Use Change from Neighborhood Residential to Suburban and Rezone 2.70 acres from B2 to A1 for residential - Applicant: Zhenrong Zhang - Owners: Chungang Guo & Zhenrong Zhang - Property located on Hwy. 138 - Map/Parcel C0760018A00 - District 3

Chairman Thompson opened the public hearing on the matter. Zhenrong Zhang spoke in favor of the land use change and rezone. There was no opposition present. Chairman Thompson closed the public hearing on the matter.

Motion: Commissioner Shelnett made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Adams. All voted in favor.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of October 3, 2023 Meeting Minutes
2. Contracts & Budgeted Purchases of \$25000 or Greater
3. Declaration of Surplus
4. Acceptance of Bullet Proof Vest Grant – Sheriff’s Office
5. VOCA Grant Renewal – District Attorney’s Office - \$89,964.00
6. Government Window – Credit Card Services – Water Dept.
7. 2024 Qualifying Fees
8. CivicPlus Community Development Software – Planning & Development
9. Numi Financial Agreement – Prepaid Mastercards - Jail

Motion: Commissioner Dixon made a motion to approve the Administrative Consent Agenda. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion; voted and carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS

Reform and Improve Mental Health Services for the Citizens of Georgia

Co. Manager John Ward presented a request from ACCG to adopt a resolution concerning reform and improvement of mental health services in Georgia.

Motion: *Commissioner Adams made a motion to adopt the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Bradford. All voted in favor.*

Project Length Budget and FY24 Budget Amendment - Pickleball Courts

Facilities Director Hank Shirley presented a resolution to adopt a project length budget and budget amendment for design fees for Pickleball Courts.

Motion: *Commissioner Adams made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Banks to adopt the resolution. All voted in favor.*

Project Length Budget and FY24 Budget Amendment - Annex III Renovations

Facilities Director Hank Shirley presented a resolution to adopt a project length budget and budget amendment for renovating Annex III. The renovations will be to house Finance and possibly Human Resources.

Motion: *Commissioner Warren made a motion to adopt the resolution. Commissioner Banks seconded the motion; voted and carried unanimously.*

Project Length Budget and FY24 Budget Amendment - SPLOST IV Resurfacing

Public Works Director John Allman presented a resolution and budget amendment for resurfacing roads in the City of Jersey as part of SPLOST IV.

Motion: *Commissioner Bradford made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Shelnett seconded the motion and all voted in favor.*

Project Length Budget and FY24 Budget Amendment - Resurfacing Subdivision Streets

Public Works Director John Allman presented a resolution and budget amendment for the resurfacing of 21 roads in subdivisions needing a final asphalt topping.

Motion: *Commissioner Adams made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bradford to adopt the resolution. All voted in favor.*

HUMAN RESOURCES

Proposed 5% COLA

Motion: *Chairman Thompson made a motion to give a 5% across the board COLA to all county*

employees. The annual cost would be \$2,492,270.80. The raise would take effect the first full pay period in December and the cost for this budget year would be approximately 1.2 million. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CONTRACTS

Intergovernmental Agreement - Funding and Building of a New Azalea Regional Library inside the City Limits of Loganville

Motion: Commissioner Banks made a motion to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement for funding the new library in the city limits of Loganville. Commissioner Shelnuttt seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Commissioner Warren recognized State Representative Ray Martinez for the state's leadership in granting \$3,000,000 toward the funding.

ACCEPTANCE OF BIDS/PROPOSALS

Resurfacing of Subdivision Streets - Sunbelt Asphalt - \$753,750 (for the record)

Motion: Commissioner Warren made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dixon to accept the bid; voted and carried unanimously.

APPOINTMENTS

Walton Co. DFACS Board

Motion: Commissioner Dixon made a motion to appoint Tracy Hanson to the Walton County DFACS Board. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

DISCUSSION

County Manager's Report/Update

County Manager John Ward gave an update and report on county matters to the Board. He also recognized the Finance Department for being awarded GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

Naming of the Walton County Public Safety Complex

Motion: Commissioner Banks stated that Franklin Thornton had served as Sheriff from 1969 until his death in 1996 for 28 years and that Joe Chapman will have served as Sheriff for 20 years at the end of this term. Commissioner Banks then made a motion to name the Walton County Public Safety Complex the Joe Chapman, Franklin Thornton Public Safety Complex. Commissioner Shelnuttt seconded the motion. Chairman Thompson, Commissioners Banks, Shelnuttt, Warren, Adams and Bradford voted in favor. Commissioner Dixon abstained. The motion carried 6-1.

Defined Benefits

Chairman Thompson read the following statement for the record:

“In conducting a review of the Actuarial Report for the Walton County Defined Benefit Plan, I have observed that there are significant unfunded liabilities that we need to start addressing; now and in our future annual budgets. This situation resulted from a Board decision to adopt a plan change to the Defined Benefit Plan on November 6, 2018. This plan change effective 1/1/2019, resulted in a significant increase to the County’s unfunded liability as well as their annual payment. This was two years before I took office. This plan guarantees a 7% return on invested assets including unfunded liabilities. It’s now my fiscal duty to announce this to the public and how we plan to address it. Our recommended payment this year is \$3,032,789. We plan to add \$2,667,211 for an additional unfunded liability payment. The total will be \$5,700,000. Then, we will budget additional unfunded liability payments, above the recommended payments, in the future until these unfunded liability balances become manageable. I am still looking into the details of this plan change. I’m deeply concerned that the Board of Commissioners appeared not to be fully informed as to the financial impact of this action. There will be more to come.”

Commissioner Banks said he’d like to voice his opinion and stated that the Board members are part-time and depend on the Chairman, Department Heads and Co. Manager to give them information that they vote on. He said he was shocked and hurt that the Administration and Department Heads that he had confidence in, would flagrantly mislead the Board. He is embarrassed, disappointed and mad and everybody on the Board should be. He would like for the County Manager to start an investigation into this tomorrow and if there is criminal intent, let them serve time. Commissioner Adams said he agreed with Commissioner Banks’ statement. Commissioner Warren said he would never have supported this had he known it was going to put the County in this financial situation. Commissioner Banks said ACCG, which was supposed to be representing us had two representatives on the front row when this was presented. He further stated that Commissioner Dixon had asked how much it was going to cost and they said 200,000-400,000 and now it is way over that amount and ACCG sat there and kept their mouth shut. Chairman Thompson asked Commissioner Banks if he was making a motion. Commissioner Banks made a motion to direct Co. Manager John Ward to involve whatever authorities he needs to investigate. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion. The Chairman and all Commissioners voted in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Thompson announced that the old bank building would be auctioned on the front steps of the Historic Courthouse at 11:00 a.m. on November 15th.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

***Motion:** At 7:36 p.m., Commissioner Dixon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shelnett to enter into Executive Session to discuss real estate matters. All voted in favor.*

***Motion:** At 7:54 p.m. Commissioner Dixon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Adams to return to regular session. All voted in favor.*

Chairman Thompson stated that he was going to make a motion to replace a motion from a previous meeting.

Motion: Chairman Thompson made a motion to acquire in lieu of condemnation, the Atlantic Coast Conservancy's Conservation Easement in the remaining 112.3+ acres previously owned by Jack's Creek Reserve, LLC which is adjacent to the new Public Safety Complex for road right of way and future government buildings and purposes based upon an appraised value of \$1,575,000, which is \$14,025 per acre. Commissioner Shelnett seconded the motion. Chairman Thompson, Commissioners Warren, Banks, Shelnett, Bradford and Adams voting in favor with Commissioner Dixon abstaining. The motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Commissioner Bradford made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Adams, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

All documents of record for this meeting are on file in either the addendum book or auxiliary file under this meeting date.

DAVID G. THOMPSON, CHAIRMAN

RHONDA HAWK, COUNTY CLERK