

GRADY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING MINUTES

November 5, 2019 Regular Meeting

The Grady County Board of Commissioners met on November 5, 2019 at 9:00 am for the regular scheduled meeting. Chair LaFaye Copeland, Vice-Chair Keith Moye, Commissioners Phillip Drew, June Knight, Ray Prince, County Administrator Buddy Johnson, County Clerk John White, Financial Director Holly Murkerson and Executive Assistant Mary Griffin were present.

Mr. White opened the meeting with prayer and the pledge to the flag.

Motion by Mr. Drew, second by Mr. Prince to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was approved.

Public Comments

Geraldine Dixon, Pine Lakes Dr

Mrs. Dixon stated that workers were in her area starting to work on the Johnson Rd project and she told them to be careful of the water and phone lines. She wanted to remind the board that Mr. Tobar stated that the county would replace anything that was disturbed.

Richard Jordan, 303 Jordan Rd

Mr. Jordan stated that he attended the GPS event and it was fantastic event. Mr. Jordan stated that if Mr. Woods comes before the board again that the board would keep it in consideration. Mr. Drew and Mr. Prince stated they also were in attendance and it was very good. There were no injuries and had 199 riders.

PRESENTATIONS

None

CORRESPONDENCE

The Calendar of Events was reviewed.

SPLOST Referendum today

November 7, 2019 – Public Hearing 9:00 am

November 12, 2019 – Volunteer Firefighter appreciation Dinner 6:30.

Birdsong Thank you letter

CONSENT ITEMS

Motion from Mr. Moye, second by Mr. Prince to approve C025-19 Minutes from the Regular Meeting from October 1, 2019, C026-19 Minutes for Public Hearing October 23, 2019 9:00 AM, C027-19 Minutes for Public Hearing October 23, 2019 6:00 PM, and C028-19 Minutes for Special Called Meeting October 29, 2019. The motion was approved.

FORMAL ACTIONS

FA046A-19 Motion by Mr. Prince, second by Mr. Moye to approve Authorizing Resolution for 5311 Program/Application for rural transit. The motion was approved.

FA047-19 Motion by Mr. Drew, second by Mr. Prince to approve Authorizing CHIP Grant and HOME Investment Program Application and 4 resolutions. The motion was approved.

FA048-19 Motion by Mr. Moye, second by Mr. Drew to approve the Qualifying fees for the 2020 elected positions as presented as follows Sheriff: \$1779.87, Probate Judge: 1491.65, Magistrate: \$1491.65, Clerk of Court: \$1491.65, Tax Commissioner: \$1491.65, Coroner: \$108.00, BOC Districts 1, 3, & 4: \$179.00, and BOE Districts 1, 3, & 4 \$18.00. The motion was approved.

FA049-19 Motion by Mr. Drew, second by Mr. Prince to approve to go with Southern Insurance for Workers Compensation coverage for the 2020 year. The motion was approved.

FA050-19 Motion by Mr. Moye, second by Mr. Prince to approve Old 179 repair (edge failure at box Culvert) up to \$14,500.00 from SPLOST fund. The motion was approved.

FA051-19 Motion by Mr. Moye, second by Mr. Drew to approve the purchase of a Triple 10X5 Box Culvert Wing Wall and Apron on Pine Hill Road from Wilkes Concrete at \$28,000.00. The other bids were

from Southern Concrete with one bid of \$66,350.00 and another bid for \$58,350.00. The motion was approved

FA052-19 Motion by Mr. Moye, second by Mrs. Knight to approve the consent agreement from the October 1 meeting to make Open Pond Road the first priority project in 2020 and approve the required resolution to move forward with application process for a GTIB Grant – Loan for the Open Pond Road restoration and paving project. The motion was approved.

NEW/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mrs. Copeland stated that Georgia Department of Transportation has awarded a contract for \$271,404.59 to Peek Pavement Marking LLC for the lining and installing new signs on 21 roads in Grady County. The only involvement required of the county was to clip the shoulders of roads that will be getting the new edge lines and to remove the old signs.

Mr. Johnson provided the following report for the response to the questions during the public hearings for the budget.

In response to the public hearings dated October 23, 2019.

During the first two public hearings the Grady County Commissioners and staff listened intently to the citizens who spoke their personal concerns and perspectives on the tax increase issues. While many of the statements made were more personal in nature and carried no questions, some citizens did ask questions or presented their critical views based on their personal data and research. Some questions that were asked were answered directly at the hearing, however some of the citizen remarks were more complex or were numerous which did not allow time to properly respond at the hearing. This statement is to address as many of those questions or more importantly clear up the missing variables that a select couple of citizens failed to consider when criticizing the Board of Commissioners both in the hearing and on social media. In the past, public hearings yielded little to no response to the public or resulted in back and forth arguments that are neither productive nor conducive to the success of Grady County. This written/verbal response is intended to educate the public and clarify the variables that often surround the decisions this Board makes. While there is always room for improvement and while mistakes can occur, it is important to understand that no member of this Board of Commissioners or their employee staff has any objective beyond the betterment of the County and its governmental practices.

This statement is not intended to embarrass any citizen and the responses will address the subject matter of the question or concern and not the individual citizen. It should also be understood that we will address the questions that are relevant to the tax increase and digest only. Many statements made at the hearing were simply venting and had no specific tax based subject matter. Those issues will not be addressed in this statement.

Health Insurance Choice.

- The County did hear from two Health Insurance brokers and providers this past year. Both presented their points and perspectives on what would be best for the county both financially and for its employees and family. A citizen implied that through their research that the county missed an opportunity to save approximately 250,000 dollars in premium costs by not changing to the new company. The citizen was drawing their conclusion from the sales presentation and likely was coached from the company sales representative as well as they too have been critical of the county on social media.
 - Unfortunately, the citizen was not diligent in determining the unknown variables that were not presented by the salesperson as those variables would have hindered the salesperson from presenting the huge savings promised. When considering a self-insured program as the county wishes to continue, the stop loss for major claims must be carefully compared to the actual major claims potential. The county currently has a 25,000 dollar stop loss. This means the County is responsible for the first 25,000 dollars of a major health claim before the insurance carrier takes over. Our current company and the one we remain with was able to offer a 25,000 dollar stop loss option where the competing

company openly stated in the presentation that they could not find a provider that would do less than a 50,000 dollar stop loss option. While the higher the stop loss, the lower the premium costs to the county, the variable that must be considered is how many major claims are we subject to have? The answer last year ended up being 20. Grady County is an experienced work force which is great, however we are also an aging work force, which means we are more susceptible to major claims than a younger work force. If we changed to a 50,000 dollar stop loss, yes we would pay less in premiums and show an upfront savings of \$250,000 BUT if we have the same amount or even HALF of the major claims as the previous year at a cost of 25,000 dollars more per claim, that would lend us to a significant deficit over the proposed savings. The Commissioners did their due diligence and we were able to negotiate a 35,000 dollar stop loss with the current company lending us stronger savings in premiums and did not choke us out in the event of another high major claims' year. The citizens numbers were simply wrong as they did not consider this important and game changing variable. The Commissioners did choose wisely and appropriately. We must always trust and verify any sales pitch as a good salesperson will never reveal the variables that fail to meet their narrative.

Enterprise Leasing Option on Administrative Vehicles

- Two citizens made an argument based on the two GMC trucks that the County entered into a lease agreement with Enterprise Leasing. Once again, the citizens failed to consider all the variables that make this an attractive option for the county and a financially responsible one as well.
 - While the lease agreement alone indicates the basic costs to the county, there are other variables that make the lease option on admin vehicles so attractive. The lease agreements are 7-month leases. Enterprise purchases the best vehicle options directly from the manufacturer at wholesale costs MINUS any incentives, meaning they get the vehicle at a significantly reduced rate under the MSRP or retail cost of the vehicle. The county leases are based on that cost for seven months at which time we turn it in, and Enterprise sells the vehicle in the highest market locations at its current MSRP cost which will be more than the original purchase cost. Grady County receives the equity directly and basically puts that money into the next 7-month lease. This significantly lowers the cost of these vehicles and we always have a new fleet with little to no repair costs as they are warrantied. The citizens presentation and numbers were simply wrong because they did not do their due diligence and research by getting all the information and variables before publicly presenting their information and putting it on social media. The Commissioners did do their homework and made a solid fiscally responsible decision.

Zero Turn Lawn Mower Purchase for the Recreation Department

- A citizen was critical of a decision to purchase a higher priced zero turn lawn mower than one that was bid lower. The Commissioners had a detailed conversation on this issue and looked at the matter objectively and went beyond just the lower cost but rather the reliability, functionality and service costs. They ultimately considered the long haul.
 - While the citizen may or may not have some knowledge of zero turn lawn mowers, two of the Commissioners have extensive knowledge and understanding of this type equipment and understand the functionality, reliability, and costs associated over time. It is important to consider all the variables and not just the basic cost when purchasing any piece of equipment. That is what was done by the Commissioners in this matter.

Tire Creek Lake Consultant and Development

- A citizen spoke on their concerns with the Tired Creek Lake project, specifically the cost of the consultant and the citizens personal belief that nothing was being done and that the Commissioners and Lake Authority needed to accept the Lake is a failure.
 - This citizen is under the impression that if information is not being spoken publicly about the sale or development of Tired Creek Lake then nothing must be happening. Nothing could be further from the truth. While this citizen may not agree with the laws surrounding public meetings, information sharing, as well as sunshine law exemptions, it is important to understand there are valid and important reasons for those laws and exemptions. This is not like selling/trading a car or a building or even a house. This is a complex sale that will be subject to specific and unique buyers, investors, brokers, contractors, engineers and lawyers, where careful and smart negotiations will need to occur throughout the development process. This citizen who presents themselves as someone knowledgeable and in the know is not on any Government Board or Authority dealing with the Tired Creek Lake Development and therefore is not entitled to any information beyond what any other citizen is entitled to. Transparency is important, however when dealing with real estate matters, development and sale of property, transparency can easily make the county vulnerable and susceptible to losses in value because all the cards would be visible and that would take away the opportunity to get the best price for the property being sold, leased, or developed. We will update the public when the time is right and appropriate, and all actions will be transparent prior to any final decision being made by the governing entities.
 - We will not acknowledge the Tired Creek Lake Project as a failure because there is vibrant life in it and the potential for greatness exists and must be exploited. Failure of the Tired Creek Lake Project would be detrimental as the debt will not go away, the bonds will still have to be paid and the county would likely be required to sell the property at an extremely low cost and have no say in what became of the lake in the future. It would essentially be equivalent to purchasing a 21 million dollar mansion and selling the deed and all rights to an outside entity at a 70% loss or more, while servicing the remainder of the debt owed and not having the right to go on the property or in the house or having any control over who owns it or what it becomes in the future. There are “wolves” waiting for that opportunity to occur, I believe this group of Commissioners understands the concept of being the sheepdogs that protect the county from those type of predators. Failure is not an option.

Millage Rate Comparisons to other Counties and States

- A few citizens did respectfully mention and compare our millage rates to other Counties and States. It is important to understand that large County Governments such as Lowndes County should have lower millage rates than Grady and other Southwest Georgia Counties. Business, home population, transit, and tourism are major factors in tax revenue accumulation. Many counties enjoy low millage rates because they have the aforementioned options that help lower the individual tax burden. Other States have laws that allow for higher sales tax options, which Georgia does not. With the passing of SPLOST, Grady County would have a 17.3 millage rate which is admittedly high but in line with its sister counties with similar demographics. With the improvements proposed in the 2020 budget, we will likely be able to roll the millage rate back a little and give a break to our property owners in the future. However, we must address our ageing equipment, roads, and sanitation problems immediately.

The possible acquisition of a Financial Advising Firm

- This was critically brought up by a citizen. The Commission did hear from two firms as well as a bond underwriter recently. They have tabled the decision as of now and will consider what to do once all the variables have been weighed and considered. Criticism of their decision to table this matter for the purpose of further educating themselves on the entire matter is a bit confusing and perplexing. Isn't that what we want our Commissioners to do? The Commissioners have made the right call on this matter so far and should be applauded for doing so.

Analysis for the public hearings thus far

While the vast majority of citizens who attended the hearings and spoke their concerns were respectful and legitimate, there was the one or two that seem to enjoy criticizing the commissioners without merit so they might create turmoil from their false narratives and poor researching skills. These are the golf magazine fashion models if you will... They attempt to look like they know what they're doing but when it's time to tee up the ball and start the game, they don't know the difference between a driver, putter, or a whiffle ball bat.

Thank goodness this Board of Commissioners has stood strong and not fallen victim to misguided information. They are rather, conscientious, considerate, thought provoking, and tough decision makers who want to see this county back on top where it belongs. We urge all citizens to be vocal and bring their concerns to us, and we also hope that they do so for the betterment of the entire county and not for some personal or political gain. The commissioners' office has proven that its doors are open to all who wish to come by and discuss their issues and we will continue to have that option for any and all citizens of Grady County. We will have the last public hearing Thursday morning at 9 AM and urge all concerned citizens to come and be heard or just listen to the business of their Commissioners.

Mrs. Copeland brought Mrs. Patti Crawford into the meeting to say thank you for what she does each and every day in the Board of Commissioners office. Mr. Johnson echoed Mrs. Copeland's remarks of appreciation.

Mrs. Knight asked about trash dumpsters.

Executive Session for personnel issues

Motion by Mr. Moye, second by Mrs. Knight to enter executive session.

Motion by Mr. Moye, second by Mr. Prince to exit executive session. No action was taken as a result of the executive session.

REPORTS

1. Code Enforcement
2. Buildings and Grounds
3. Animal Control

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Prince and second by Mrs. Knight. The motion was approved.

LAFAYE COPELAND, CHAIR

KEITH MOYE, VICE-CHAIR

ATTEST:

RAY PRINCE, COMMISSIONER

JOHN WHITE, COUNTY CLERK

JUNE KNIGHT, COMMISSIONER

PHILLIP DREW, COMMISSIONER