

**Legislative Appreciation Luncheon  
City  
Official Minutes**

**205 North Madison Street  
Thomasville, GA 31792  
April 15, 2019 8:30 a.m.**

Board members present were Chairman Wiley Grady, Commissioners Mark NeSmith and Donnie Baggett. County Manager Michael Stephenson and County Clerk Twink Monahan were present.

City Council Members present were Mayor Pro Tem Terry Scott, Council Members Jay Flowers, David Hufstetler, Todd Mobley and Cheryl Presha. City Manager Alan Carson and Executive Director, Payroll Development Authority Shelley Zorn.

Chairman Grady welcomed Thomas County's Legislators; Representatives Darlene Taylor, Sam Watson and John LaHood. He expressed Thomas County's and the City of Thomasville's gratitude for their efforts this year.

Each representative addressed those present updating them on important legislation that had passed. Some of the topics were education, voting, early childhood development, health care and economic development.

County Commissioner NeSmith, who serves on the Thomasville Payroll Development Agency (PDA), introduced Shelley Zorn PDA Executive Director. Commissioner NeSmith asked Ms. Zorn to prepare the following concerns for economic development in rural areas. There are certain criteria standards which businesses consider when choosing an area in Georgia. Rural areas are disadvantaged in comparison to metro areas. They stressed the importance of the legislature to address these disadvantages.

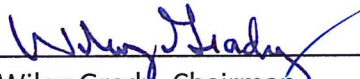
1. New Tier System just for rural communities (we should not move yearly from Tier to Tier)  
New Tiers should be Metro, Hub and Rural
2. Monetize the job tax and investment tax credits in rural communities
3. Lower the minimum wage rate tied to job tax credits (it is \$12.00 now state wide, should be \$9 or \$10 in rural Georgia)
4. More closing deal money for rural communities (EDGE Money) with a set amount per job (\$10,000 per job). More aggressive funding to close deals in rural communities: South Carolina gives state money for relocation fees and Alabama gives cash up front for training

of new employees. Maybe give closing deal money for small business and industry in rural communities.

5. Workforce - every GA county should have a career academy, it should not be competitive. State funds should be given to make this happen.
6. More money for technical colleges and 4-year colleges (once young people leave to go to UGA, Georgia Tech, etc. many do not come back to South Georgia. Many degree programs are not offered in South Ga colleges: i.e. engineering)
7. More of an industrial focus at South Georgia Technical Colleges (CNC). This will take additional funding for equipment and teachers, maybe from lottery funding.
8. Define what the state means by regionalism (does this mean building industrial parks together? Because rural communities have invested millions in parks and buildings that remain empty, we do not need to build more parks at this time, until this is addressed. WE CAN WORK TOGETHER REGIONALLY ON health care, transportation, education, workforce, broad band, and tourism. This would allow elected officials to get to know each other and trust each other so later we can work regionally in other ways down the road.)
9. Change the overall approach to Economic Development from the top down (leadership first), goals given to Atlanta team at the Georgia Department of ED, Atlanta project managers to LAND a certain number of projects in each rural region of Georgia each year

County Manager Michael Stephenson also addressed the widening margins of per-capita income between urban and rural Georgia and even other states in the southeast. This should be a focal concern to keep the rural areas declining.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

  
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Wiley Grady, Chairman

  
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M. Twink Monahan, County Clerk