

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
225 North Board Street
August 11, 2020

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Phillip V. Brown, Chairman, Dist. 7

Rev. Jeremy G. Rich, Dist. 1 (absent)

Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3

Donnie L. Baggett, Dist. 5

Wiley E. Grady, Vice-Chair, Dist. 6

Moses Gross, Dist. 2

Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4

Zippy T. Vonier, Dist. 8

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Attorney Bruce Warren, Elections and Registration Director Frank Scoggins, Planning Director Ken Gay, Zoning Administrator Donna Holbert, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler.

News/Media present: Chris Hurst, WPAX

Others present: Shelley Zorn PDA Executive Director, Andrea Collins, Executive Director Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, Linda Solano and Edward Vonier Board of Elections

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order, and Commissioner Rich gave the invocation.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2020 Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Brown recognized Shelley Zorn with the PDA and Andrea Collins with the Chamber of Commerce who gave an update on the Business Community and Economic Development including existing projects, existing industry expansions, and new projects landed. Shelley specifically highlighted Check Mate Industries that will provide 230 jobs in 2019-2021 resulting in a \$15 million dollar capital investment and Wal-Mart who will have 300 total jobs in 2020 resulting in a \$140 million dollar investment. Andrea updated the Board on the status of the Chamber of Commerce. Membership is on the decline. During the pandemic, small businesses are evaluating their return on investment for membership. The biggest challenge for these businesses is the supply chain. Promotion with limited product isn't a good formula. Andrea also discussed the Chamber initiative "Project Purpose". This program is specifically designed for graduating high school seniors who are interested in beginning a career and pursuing advanced training while working. Unfortunately, during the year when they were hoping to expand, Project Purpose has been delayed. Shelley invited the Commissioners to attend a public meeting on Monday, August 17, 2020 at Thomas University where a proposal to merge the PDA and Chamber would be presented.

Chairman Brown recognized Elections and Registration Director Frank Scoggins who began by introducing the members on the Board of Elections, Linda Solano and Edward Vonier. A report was given on the new voting system including statistics on active voters, absentee by mail, and advance in person. A comparison of the 2016 Primary and the 2020 Primary for each precinct was also given. Frank answered several questions regarding mail-in ballots, requested absentee ballots, and the process of a provisional ballot. He also noted that the Department had received no complaints on voter suppression.

Under Reports Chairman Brown recognized County Manager Stephenson who in turn recognized Planning Director Ken Gay and Zoning Manager Donna Holbert. Donna distributed two memorandums on two upcoming Public Hearings. The Commissioners reviewed a preliminary request for Re-Zoning application 20-8-1 from Kelstone, Inc. on property located on Southridge Road Map 72, Parcel 51 from R-2 (Residential) to Ag (Agriculture). This would allow the owner to construct a produce stand and sell produce grown on this property. A second preliminary request for a conditional use application 20-8-2 from John Wheeler on property located on Ga. Hwy. 122 Map 45, Parcel 62 from CG (Commercial General) to CG C.U. (Commercial General, Conditional Use) was also reviewed. This would allow storage of recreational vehicles, boats, and special equipment.

Commissioner Hickey questioned the process for public notification (through signage) and Commissioner notification. Through this discussion, Ken agreed that the process needed modifying. Moving forward, the Zoning Department will notify the Commissioners by e-mail on the same day the signs are erected.

County Attorney Warren stated that when he received a plat, he would be ready to move forward with the deed transfer to the City of Ochlocknee for the proposed water tower.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to ratify the deed transfer to the City of Ochlocknee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Vonier who made a motion to ratify the diesel fuel purchase from Petroleum Products for \$1.31588/gal. on August 7, 2020. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rich. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Vonier made a motion to ratify the following purchases for the Sheriff's Department:

- Software, Server, & Professional Services from Safe Fleet, COBAN Technologies, Inc. Mobile Vision for \$18,437.00 (budgeted)
- Automated Biometric Identification System from Aware, Inc. for \$12,800 (budgeted) with the remaining balance of \$6354.96 due in 2021
- (4) Emergency Lighting/Decals from Dana Supply for \$67,121.00 (budgeted \$93,000.00)

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to ratify nine Thomas Traction splints and six M.A.S.T. Trousers deemed as scrap. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

The upcoming committee meetings were announced. The Emergency Services Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on August 12, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. The Public Works Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on August 19, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

Chairman Brown recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Brown and

Commissioners Baggett, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, Rich, and Vonier voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.



Phillip V. Brown, Chairman

ATTEST:


Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk