

Minutes  
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
225 North Board Street  
May 23, 2023

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

**Zippy Vonier, Chairman, Dist. 8**  
Rev. Jeremy G. Rich, Dist. 1  
Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3  
Wiley Grady, District 6

**Donnie Baggett, Vice-Chair, Dist. 5**  
Moses Gross, District 2  
Mark NeSmith, District 4  
Phillip V. Brown, District 7

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Attorney Bruce Warren, Planning Director Ken Gay, Zoning Administrator Donna Holbert, Sheriff Carlton Powell, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler.

News/Media present: Jill Holloway, Thomasville Times Enterprise

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

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2023 Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to approve the May 23, 2023 agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rich. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Chairman Vonier declared a Public Hearing and recognized Donna Holbert, Zoning Administrator who introduced rezoning application #23-5-1 from Thomas Akins, property owner, who has applied for a zoning change. The subject property is located on Ga. Hwy. 122 (Map 045, Parcels 062 and 062D) consisting of 49.39 acres, more or less. The request is to rezone the subject parcels from (AG) Agricultural to R-4 (Single Family Residential) to allow for the development of a residential subdivision consisting of approximately 125 lots. The Planning and Zoning staff recommends approval of the application.

Mr. Akins addressed the Board and added that he wants a development similar to Madison Grove which is across the street. He is proposing 1250 – 1800 square foot homes. No one in opposition addressed the Board.

Donna Holbert also introduced rezoning application #23-5-2 from Mark L. Manley, Managing Member of 319 North, LLC, agent for the property owner, Margaret Ragin. The subject property is located on Twin Acres Drive (Map 045B, Parcel 016) consisting of 4.71 acres, more or less. The request is to rezone this property from R-3 (Residential, Mixed Use) to CG (Commercial General) to allow for the use as a Real Estate/Auction Business Office/Warehouse. The Planning and Zoning staff recommends approval of the application.

In opposition to application 23-5-2, Chairman Vonier recognized Mr. Charles Buckwalter of 346 Twin Acres Drive, Thomasville, Georgia who stated that he bought property in a rural residential area, and he wanted it to remain as such. He expressed concern over lower property values and increase traffic. Chairman Vonier recognized Mr. Barney Summers of 268 Twin Acres Drive, Thomasville, Georgia who stated that in previous years he has contested a daycare in the area and added that a commercial building should not be in the middle of a neighborhood. He also claimed that it is improper for a new building to be erected when all other commercial buildings in the area are next to the highway. Chairman Vonier recognized Mr. Jason Mirick of 312 Twin Acres Drive, Thomasville, Georgia who expressed agreement with the other two speakers. He also added that his family has lived out there for 40 years; he has small children, and he wants things to remain as they are.

Chairman Vonier recognized petitioner, Mark Manley of 2239 Harts Mill Road, Pavo, Georgia and Managing Member of 319 North, LLC, agent for property owner, Margaret Ragin. Mr. Manley stated that he is planning on relocating his business, Wiregrass Auction, that is currently located in Colquitt County. The business handles estate sells, business liquidations, etc., and he doesn't anticipate an increase in traffic. This is a daytime operation only, and the auctions are held online. He also added that this will move jobs to Thomas County. He sees this as a positive venture and one that will revitalize the area. The area is pie-shaped and currently has multiple vehicles, vagrants, a house and barn that are falling in, and an open well.

Chairman Vonier recognized "Kay" Olubowale of Southwest Georgia Regional Commissioner (SWGRC) who spoke on the update of the Thomas County Joint 5-yr Comprehensive Plan. He reminded the Board that the first Public Hearing was held in the Fall 2022, a SWOT Review Workshop (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) was held in March 2023, meetings with local governments, Boston, Coolidge, Meigs, and Ochlocknee have been conducted, and communication with bordering counties in Georgia and Florida has been documented. He is seeking authorization to submit the newly written plan to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Chairman Vonier recognized Shirley Jackson of 727 Crowley Road, Thomasville, Georgia who stated that the County should do a better job advertising and seeking the public's input. She added that most people don't read the paper, and she suggested having posters around town and distributing flyers.

Chairman Vonier closed the Public Hearing and asked for action from the Board.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve application 23-5-1. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rich. The motion was approved 7-0-1 with Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye and Chairman Vonier abstaining from the vote.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve application 23-5-2. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved 6-2-0 with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye and Commissioners Brown and Grady voting nay.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to authorize the submission of the Thomas County Joint Comprehensive Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved 7-1-0 with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, and NeSmith voting aye and Commissioner Rich voting nay.

Chairman Vonier recognized Planning Director Ken Gay who recommended the approval of the Preliminary Plat for Bloomfield Lakes Subdivision, Phase 1, Section 1. The original plat for Phase 1 consisted of 70 homes, but for weather related reasons (needs to dry out), it has been modified to 44 houses to keep progress moving forward.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to approve the Preliminary Plat for Bloomfield Lakes Subdivision, Phase 1 Section 1 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

**Open Meeting to the Citizens:** Chairman Vonier recognized Shirley Jackson of 727 Crowley Road, Thomasville, Georgia who reiterated that the Board of Commissioners need to involve citizens more.

**Reports:** Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve the amended ARPA Budget. The changes include a reduction in the Broadband infrastructure category due to the denial of the grant partnering with AT&T and an increase for Negative Economic Impacts to Households and Nonprofits. The latter category would be divided equally between Non-Profit assistance of \$600,00 and Household assistance to unincorporated residents of \$600,000 and \$100,000 to the small-town residents of Meigs, Ochlocknee, Coolidge, Pavo, Barwick, and Boston. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Commissioner NeSmith made a motion to approve the 2023 Budget Amendment 23-5-1/Capital Improvement Fund. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

**2023 BUDGET AMENDMENT 23-5-1  
PROJECT LENGTH BUDGET - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND (350)  
May 23, 2023**

Account	Description	Original 2023 Budget	Amended Budget	Difference
<b>Expenses</b>				
350-3300-542200-000	2022-2023/SO/16 Cars & Equip	404,072	796,048	391,976
350-4100-542200-000	2022/PW/2 Trucks	89,297	94,365	5,068
350-4100-542500-000	2023/PW/Equipment	535,000	526,202	-8,798
350-4900-542200-001	2023/Fleet/Truck Body	14,000	9,500	-4,500
350-4900-542200-002	2023/Fleet/Truck	0	44,963	44,963
350-7210-542200-000	2023/Planning & Insp/Truck	0	44,967	44,967
350-9010-612005-000	Contingencies	1,524,230	1,050,554	-473,676
	<b>Total</b>			<b>0</b>

**Net Increase to Expenses**

**\$0**

Commissioner NeSmith made a motion to approve the 2023 budget Amendment 23-5-2/General Fund that reflects an increase in Court Reporter pay effective July 1, 2023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

**2023 BUDGET AMENDMENT 23-5-1  
GENERAL FUND (100)  
May 23, 2023**

Account	Description	Original 2023 Budget	Amended Budget	Difference
<b>Revenues</b>				
100-34-9960	CR Reimbursement-Brooks Co	24,500	29,260	4,760
100-34-9965	CR Reimbursement-Colquitt Co	3,500	4,180	680
100-34-9970	CR Reimbursement-Lowndes Co	35,000	45,980	10,980
	<b>Total</b>			<b>16,420</b>

**Net Increase to Revenues** \$16,420

Account	Description	Original 2023 Budget	Amended Budget	Difference
<b>Expenses</b>				
100-2155-511100-000	Court Reporter Salaries	140,000	167,200	27,200
100-9010-612005-000	Rainy Day Account	554,189	543,409	-10,780
	<b>Total</b>			<b>16,420</b>

**Net Increase to Expenses** \$16,420

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Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Grady made a motion to ratify the purchase of regular fuel from Petroleum Products for \$2.6875/gal on May 22, 2023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who announced the Public Property Committee will meet on Monday, June 5, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.in the Commissioners’ Chambers in the Historic Courthouse.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Rich who announced the Personnel Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 24, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Commissioners’ Chambers in the Historic Courthouse.

Chairman vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to declare the old self-contained Boom Mower as Surplus and to authorize the sell on GovDeals online auction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

  
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 Zippy Vonier, Chairman

ATTEST:   
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 Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk