

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
Public Hearing
225 North Board Street
October 26, 2015

The 6:00 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Moses Gross, Chairman, Dist. 2	Kenneth E. Hickey, Vice-Chairman, Dist. 3
Merrill E. Baker, Jr., Dist. 1	Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4
Hershel P. Ansley, Dist. 5	Wiley E. Grady, Dist. 6
Phillip V. Brown, Dist. 7	J. Elaine Mays, Dist. 8

Staff present was Michael J. Stephenson, County Manager, Bruce Warren, County Attorney, Twink Monahan, County Clerk. Media present was Chris Hurst, WPAX and Patti Dozier, Times-Enterprise.

Commissioner Grady gave in invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Gross declared a public hearing to receive public input on the Recreational Complex, Woodruff Farm Road. Chairman Gross thanked the Georgia Department of Natural Resources representatives for coming.

Chairman Gross recognized Dr. Philip Watt, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Board Member. Dr. Watt explained that being a lifelong resident of Thomas County a recreational complex that includes archery, shooting, fishing and walking trails where the public can have access is an excellent opportunity to Thomas County. Dr. Watt summarized the DNR's role in recreational complexes like this one and their success throughout the state. Dr. Watt noted the economic impact to the community and the opportunity for surrounding areas who do not have public facilities will be able to come to Thomas County.

Chairman Gross recognized Walter Lane, Hunter Development program Manager of the DNR. Mr. Lane explained that the state has 14 fourteen facilities that they operate. They have been able to use their data and experience in the development of designs for Thomas County.

Chairman Gross recognized Ted Will, Assistant Chief, Game Management of the DNR. Mr. Will developed the cost estimates for construction and operation of the complex based on the facilities now owned by the state. They have also performed studies of the Thomas County location and will be making adjustments as needed.

Commissioner Gross stated during this portion of the public hearing is for questions concerning the concept and operation to be addressed to the DNR representatives.

Those asking questions were Jeff Burton, Hwy 84; Joan Dekle, County Farm Road; Lynn Burton, Hwy 84; James Beveridge, Quail Ridge St.; and Ed Marshall, Railroad St. (one unknown)

Questions: Lead shot beyond range
 Acoustical study
 Law Enforcement usage

Hours of operation
Prison Proximity
Traffic Study
Effects on wildlife
Lead shot/leads in wetlands
Fee structure
Group memberships

Chairman Gross called for questions from the public they wished to address to the board.

Chairman Gross recognized Jeff Burton. Mr. Burton, a landowner next to the county property. Mr. Burdon stated that he had filed complaints with the Sheriff's Office concerning shot that breaches the current private range. He gave an example of the Dept. of Transportation office found holes in their building. He also asked if the county can afford the program if there is a membership shortfall. Mr. Burton presented the board with a petition in opposition of the site location.

Chairman Gross recognized Mickey Waller, Moultrie, GA. Mr. Waller asked that a residential consensus be taken of the area. He also said the current range is being used by the Sheriff's Office and bullets ricochet off of the range into the surrounding area, giving the DOT office as an example. Mr. Waller presented the board with a petition in opposition of the site location. Mr. Waller said the concept is good but not for this area. He also stated that the National Rifle Association guidelines stay that there should be a 900' fall for shot. The concept proposed is only 700'.

Chairman Gross recognized Norman Braughton. Mr. Braughton stated that the existing range is not used all day long. He is a resident of the area and asked if the county has looked into other locations.

Chairman Gross recognized Nancy Herring, County Farm Road. Ms. Herring stated that she likes to walk and hike but would not feel safe with the design. She asked the board to find another location or drop the project.

Chairman Gross recognized Ed Marshall, Boston. Mr. Marshall stated that there are several thousands of acres in Thomas County in the conservation use covenant away from populated areas that should be considered.

Chairman Gross recognized Richard Parker. Mr. Parker stated that the Thomasville Shooting Club is a professional club. He stated that he shoots at odd hours and on Sundays and doesn't see the need to building a new range.

Chairman Gross recognized Harry Bryant. Mr. Bryant spoke about the River Creek DNR project and the amount of money being spent on the projects.

Chairman Gross recognized Joel Grim Mr. Grim named all the ranges currently located in the area. He also referred to them as noise makers. Mr. stated that this will be a professionally constructed and staffed range.

Chairman Gross recognized Mr. Brice Riley stated that the insurance for the range will be costly.

Chairman Gross recognized Mr. Tom Robinson, West Club Drive. He stated that he is a member of the Thomasville Club and that it is a privilege to use a private club.

Chairman Gross recognized Wyatt Brown, Cherokee Circle, who is a member of the Thomasville Club.

Chairman Gross Recognized David Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe stated that he is an Eagle Scout and knows that a professional public range is needed in this area. He is also a member of his school's Shooting teams. Having three tournaments per year none can be held here in Thomasville because there is not a range to accommodate them so they have to travel to Savannah and to other facilities around the state.

Chairman Gross recognized James Beverage. Mr. Beverage stated that he is a certified NRA instructor and the program director at the technical college. He asked about group memberships and was told that that subject had not been discussed but it can be considered. He stated that he has left the existing range because he did not feel safe and that the new range will have quality controlled training.

Chairman Gross recognized Ginger Woodruff, Woodruff Farm Road. Ms. Woodruff said that the Thomasville Club is now open 7 days a week and does not have a set time for the range to close. This will be set times and days and will be much better for the area.

Chairman Gross recognized Monty Lewis. Mr. Lewis said that he trusts the Department of Natural Resources and Thomas County Board. "I applaud and salute" them in this effort.

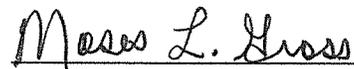
Chairman Gross recognized Kevin Kelley. Mr. Kelley stated that he has been in the shooting industry all his life and there is no public Facility w/in 100 miles. He said that he was sympathetic to all issues but we should proceed forward.

Chairman Gross recognized Larry Draughty who said that he has been a member of the Thomasville Club Range and is a safety officer. He said this range is a good idea.

Chairman Gross recognized Wayne Dodson, Pummy Road. Mr. Dodson said that he would do whatever necessary to make this a success.

Chairman Gross stated that the board would take all the input into consideration.

Chairman Gross recognized Commissioner Mays who made a motion to close the public hearing and adjourn. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Hickey. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Gross, Vice-Chairman Hickey and Commissioners Baker, Ansley, NeSmith, Grady, Brown and Mays voting aye.



Moses L. Gross, Chairman


M. Twink Monahan, Clerk