

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Conference Room, 2nd Floor
227 West Jefferson Street
January 17, 2017

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a Planning Session at 8:30 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Kenneth E. Hickey, Chairman, Dist. 3	Phillip V. Brown, Vice-Chair, Dist. 7
Merrill E. Baker, Jr., Dist. 1	Moses Gross, Dist. 2 (absent)
Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4	Hershel P. Ansley, Dist. 5
Wiley E. Grady, Dist. 6	Zippy T. Vonier, Dist. 8

Staff present was Michael J. Stephenson, Twink Monahan, County Clerk, and Derrick Ogletree, GIS Manager. Media present was Patti Dozier, Times Enterprise.

Solar Energy Donna Holbert and Kathy Brooks, Inspections/Planning and Zoning

Ms. Holbert told the board that the ordinance amendments have been revised since the last time they were distributed. Starting on page 26, 3.267, defines the setbacks from property lines and residential structures and the density and height of a buffer. The conditions and setbacks of facilities in relationship from R1, R2 and R3 were also discussed. There were several options considered by the board.

Mr. Stephenson pointed out that there were two (2) separate items to be considered. The first are solar energy systems to supply the individuals home or business. Secondly solar facilities that are a commercial business where the property owner sells the power generated to the power company.

1 megawatt equals 1,500 panels. Commissioner NeSmith said these amendments can limit the size of a commercial solar field and protect the character of the county.

Mr. Stephenson suggested having a Public Hearing to receive the input from the citizens. This would not be one of the Public Hearings required to amend the Planning and Land Use Ordinance.

The board also discussed enforcement of the required buffer density and height that the board sets. Such as whose responsibility will it be to maintain the buffer, the landowner or the solar company? This should be in the contract between the solar installation company and the landowner.

It was noted that there are cell towers that do not have the required buffer and that Code Enforcement needs to address it.

The consensus of the board is to take the following to a public hearing:

1. Solar facilities with a set back of a minimum of 100 feet from the property line of an adjacent property owner.
2. Solar facilities with a set back of a minimum of 500 feet from habitable residential structures of adjacent properties.
3. Solar facilities would have a set back of a minimum of 500 feet from property zoned R1, R2 and R3.

4. Solar facilities would be screened with an evergreen buffer with a minimum height of 8 feet.

2016 Preliminary Financial Report

Mr. Stephenson said the county is in the same condition as 2015 with a modest improvement. The Health Benefit fund has not been broken out yet. We are waiting for end of the year claims to be processed.

Shooting Range

Derrick Ogletree reported the items still pending before we can continue with the project.

1. Shot Fall Line – should be completed this week
2. Tribal Council assessment – unknown status.
3. Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Dept. Natural Resources (DNR). – Signed by County and being circulated within the Dept. Natural Resources.
4. Construction Drawings – Breedlove contract will be signed when the IGA is executed.

Mr. Ogletree also said that the DNR has offered to contract with Breedlove to assist the county getting the plans.

Commissioner Vonier said that the type shot should be consistent and asked if the county was going to sell the shot. Mr. Stephenson stated that the county would not be selling ammunition because that creates additional liability.

South Pinetree Blvd. Project

Mr. Stephenson reported that until the Georgia DOT provides the information needed on the Hwy 319 entrance to South Pinetree the final drawings cannot be completed. There is no need for Mr. Crawford with Falcon Engineering to come back to report until then. Mr. Crawford did express that the sidewalk is driving the additional need for right of way. One option is to eliminate the sidewalk altogether. The turning lane that is presently the length of the project is requiring additional right of way.

The board agreed to find out the cost of the project and then have the manager to contact the Thomas County legislative delegation for a meeting and inquire about funding assistance. With the expansion of Thomas University and its new location along with efforts to market the Southwestern State Hospital grounds it would be in the state's, county's and city's best interest to continue with the project as planned and not reduce the sidewalks and turning lanes because of funding.

SPLOST

The board agreed to have the 2019 SPLOST referendum on the November 2017. It was agreed not borrow against SPLOST funds before effective date of the new tax. The board members also expressed the need to continue the SPLOST for county road improvements. If there are tiered projects the amount for roads would be reduced. The roads on the 2012 SPLOST CAPITAL PROJECT FUND information handed out shows the completed projects and the projects that have been approved but not started or completed. Those figures are estimates only.

2016 Major Accomplishments

Distributed but not discussed was a report of the 2016 Major Accomplishments.

2016 Major Accomplishments

1. Hines Jail Justice Center expansion
2. Red Hills Business Park
3. New 911 Center
4. New Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software
5. P25 radio system upgrade (total digitized system)
6. South Pinetree Boulevard engineering
7. Shooting Range studies completed & DNR contract signed
8. Resurfacing
 - County Line Road
 - Fredonia Road
 - Gatlin Creek Road
 - Old Bee Line Road
 - Griffin Road
9. Georgia Forestry parking lot
10. Airport Road bridge
11. Stewart Road collection site upgraded
12. Solar moratorium instituted

2017 Upcoming Projects

1. UGA Extension Service offices
2. Shooting range construction starts
3. Patton-Coolidge Road collection site
4. Dillion Road collection site upgraded
5. Start construction on South Pinetree Boulevard – Phase 1
6. Set up service center at Hill Building
7. Close the County prison

Other Business

Commissioner Grady said that he has preliminary estimated costs for contracting the painting and carpeting of the Hill Building; Painting \$14,000 and carpet \$16,000. To save, it was discussed that Thomas County would buy the materials and use inmate labor to paint. Commissioner Grady said the February 2nd Public Property Meeting would be held at the Hill Building.

Chairman Hickey declared the Work Session closed at 11:00 a.m.



Kenneth E. Hickey, Chairman

ATTEST:



M. Twink Monahan, County Clerk