

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
225 North Board Street
February 22, 2022

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:

Mark NeSmith, Chairman, Dist. 4
Rev. Jeremy G. Rich, Dist. 1
Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3
Phillip V. Brown, District 7

Wiley E. Grady, Vice-Chair, Dist. 6
Moses Gross, District 2
Donnie L. Baggett, District 5
Zippy T. Vonier, District 8

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Attorney Bruce Warren, Public Works Director Tony Bodiford, Planning Director Ken Gay, Zoning Administrator Donna Holbert, Emergency Services Director Derrick Ogletree, Sheriff Carlton Powell, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler.

News/Media present: none

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

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2022 Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith declared a Public Hearing, and Donna Holbert presented Application #22-2-1. Monte Ott, property owner, requests to rezone property located on Rena Ridge (Map 046G, Parcel 016) that consists of .53 of an acre from R-3 (Residential, Mixed Use) to CL C.U. (Commercial Limited, Conditional Use, Parking Lot.) If approved, this would allow for the vacant parcel to be used for overflow parking for the adjoining auto repair shop.

Chairman NeSmith recognized John Holt, representing War Eagle Capital, LLC, owner of parcel 046G 012 Rena Ridge, Joan Cox of 98 Rena Ridge, Jerry Miller of 106 Rena Ridge, and Sam Hudson of 30 Rena Ridge, Thomasville, Georgia who spoke in opposition to the re-zoning request. Reasons cited included: the repair shop is already an eyesore and expanding it would make it worse; there should already be a buffer and a tall privacy fence; grass is growing up around the cars; it looks like a junk yard; residential property is devalued; too many cars on the property; hours of operation are too long; and residents are upset over the clear cut that the owner did 1 ½ years ago.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Janice Lawhorn of 321 Helicopter Rd., Thomasville, Georgia who spoke in support of applicant, Mr. Ott. She emphasized that the shop has been there over 25 years, and Mr. Ott is a very well- established businessman.

Chairman NeSmith recognized applicant Monte Ott of 16127 Hwy 84 East for a rebuttal. Mr. Ott stated that he would not want to devalue anyone's property, and even commented that his son is a resident next to the shop. He also stated that he doesn't oppose installing an 8 ft. wooden privacy fence. In response to Commissioner questioning, Mr. Ott stated that the business was an auto repair shop; the ground surface is grass; and typical operating hours are 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Chairman NeSmith closed the Public Hearing and recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to table a decision on Application #22-2-1 for 30 days allowing the applicant to meet with the Thomas County Zoning Department and present a plan that would address fencing, vegetative screening, no access off of Rena Road, and the number of vehicles allowed on the property. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Open Meeting to the Citizens: Chairman NeSmith recognized Candee Henderson of 1453 Egg and Butter Rd. South, Thomasville, GA who encouraged the Board to commit to the goal of 100% renewable energy by 2035. She stated that there are three things that the County could do now: 1) Plan now to convert County vehicles to electric vehicles, 2) Install state-of-the-art chargers, and 3) Place chargers in parking lots with solar panels—a one-time expense guaranteed to last 25 years. Commissioner Grady and Commissioner Hickey went on record stating disapproval of the request. Commissioner Rich inquired about other cities that have implemented this. Commissioner Hickey questioned what would happen to the abandoned solar panels after 25 years. Chairman NeSmith recognized Shirley Jackson of 727 Crowley Rd, Thomasville, GA who asked for an update on the upcoming ARPA Community Meetings that will be held on March 15th and March 29th and asked for flyers from the County. Chairman NeSmith recognized Lucinda Brown of 103 Halcyon Way, Thomasville, GA who reiterated the need for funds for citizens in need of help that continue to be adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reports:

Chairman NeSmith recognized County Attorney Bruce Warren who updated the Board on the Five Forks Road property purchase. He is still waiting for the release from the mortgage company.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to authorize Emergency Services to proceed with the Golden Triangle RC&D grant application. (A grant for fire departments in their service area with no match requirement; \$2000 max.) The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to authorize the adoption of the new Thomas County Timber Harvesting Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye.

The upcoming committee meetings were announced. The Personnel Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on February 23rd at 8:30 a.m., the Purchasing Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse Annex on March 1st at 8:30 a.m., and the Public Property Committee will meet at the Historic Courthouse on March 3rd at 8:30 a.m.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, Rich, and Vonier voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.



Mark NeSmith, Chairman

ATTEST:


Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk