

Minutes  
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
225 North Board Street  
July 25, 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, Fleet Services Director Jamie Parrott, Sheriff Carlton Powell, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler.

News/Media present: Chris Hurst, WPAX Radio and Jill Holloway Thomasville Times Enterprise

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

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2023 Board Meeting. 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.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve the July 25, 2023 agenda. 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 Kathleen Bowen, Bill Twomey and Martha Revelo, representatives with ACCG, who presented the 2023 Legislative Service Award to Rep. Darlene Taylor. Along with being a friend to County Governments, Rep. Taylor's efforts resulted in an increase in EMS reimbursements and her ongoing diligence and concern with increased truck weights was highlighted. Rep. Taylor was given an attractive framed picture of the Thomas County Historic Courthouse.

Chairman Vonier declared a Public Hearing and recognized Donna Holbert, Zoning Administrator who introduced rezoning application #23-7-1 by Joe Harvard, Sr., who is the agent for the property owners, Rosemary Coleman and Polly Hopkins. This property is located on Hall Road (Corner of Hall Road and the Bypass) and is located on Thomas County Map 045, Parcel 146 consisting of 20 acres, more or less. The request is to rezone this parcel from Ag (Agricultural) and R-2 (Single Family Residential) to R-4 (Single Family Residential) to allow for the development of a residential subdivision for approximately 50 lots. The Planning and Zoning staff recommends approval of the application.

Chairman Vonier recognized Mr. Joe Harvard, Sr. who answered questions from the Board and described the proposed housing project as one that will look similar to the one directly across the street.

Speaking in opposition to the project was Mr. Michael Owens of 1576 Hall Road, Thomasville, Georgia, Mr. Baker Watkins of 11983 US 319 North, Thomasville, Georgia, and Ms. Michael Walden of 929 Hall Road, Thomasville, Georgia. Mr. Owens stated that he was more concerned about the traffic on Hall Road than being in opposition to the development. He described the traffic on Hall Road as already "horrific" and referenced Sweet Grass, Sweet Water, and Jordan Oaks Subdivision. Planning Director Ken Gay clarified that access had been granted to Hall Road and the Bypass. Mr. Watkins stated that the backside of the property borders his property. He hasn't seen any plans, but he does not want a subdivision in his back yard. He feels there are too many houses proposed for 20 acres. Ms. Walden expressed concern over her property value.

With no further comments, Chairman Vonier closed the Public Hearing and asked the Board members if they were prepared to take action. Commissioner Baggett made a motion to approve rezoning application #23-7-1. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion passed 6-2 with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady Hickey, and NeSmith voting aye, and Commissioners Gross and Rich voting nay.

Chairman Vonier recognized Planning Director Key Gay who recommended the approval of the final plat for Bloomfield Lakes Subdivision Phase I. He commented that he had received a letter from the City of Thomasville stating the approval of the utilities. Thomas County Public Works has also inspected and signed off on the project.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to approve the final plat for Bloomfield Lakes Subdivision Phase I. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baggett. The motion was approved 7-1 with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye and Commissioner Gross voting nay.

Chairman Vonier recognized County Manager Stephenson who presented the 2023 Property Tax Levy. His recommendation is to have the Millage Rates stay at the Rollback Rate, thereby bringing in the same amount of revenue.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion to set the Tentative 2023 Millage Rate as presented. 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 Brown who made a motion to adopt the 2023 Budget Amendment 23-7-1 for 2 Sanitation Trucks from the Capital Improvements Fund. The motion was seconded by Commissioner NeSmith. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

**2023 BUDGET AMENDMENT 23-7-1**  
**PROJECT LENGTH BUDGET - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND (350)**  
**July 25, 2023**

| Account             | Description            | Original 2023 Budget | Amended Budget | Difference |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| <b>Expenses</b>     |                        |                      |                |            |
| 350-4300-542501-000 | 2023/San/2 Lift Trucks | 0                    | 470,000        | 470,000    |
| 350-9010-612005-000 | Contingencies          | 890,554              | 420,554        | -470,000   |
|                     | <b>Total</b>           |                      |                | <b>0</b>   |

**Net Increase to Expenses** \$0

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to appoint Sandra Hayes of Meigs, Georgia to the Thomas County Public Library Board. 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 approve the Amendment to the Driveway Installation Policy and noted the approval from the County Attorney. 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.

**Open Meeting to the Citizens:** Chairman Vonier recognized Ucher Dent of 4084 Pine Street, Ochlocknee, Georgia who spoke on the local Juneteenth Freedom Event and expressed disappointment on the lack of participation from the County Commissioners. As founder and organizer of the local chapter. Ms. Dent stated that the event was moved to the Deep South Fairgrounds due to its growth and was a huge success this year. She asked for future support of the Juneteenth celebration, and announced the date for next year's event as June 22, 2024. Chairman Vonier recognized Lucinda Brown of 103 Halcyon Way, Thomasville, Georgia who continued requesting Thomas County to hire a Human Resource Manager who would ensure employees are treated fairly. She also questioned public awareness on zoning and rezoning issues. County Manager Stephenson stated that it would be helpful if she met with Planning Director, Ken Gay.

**Reports:** Chairman Vonier recognized County Manager Mike Stephenson who reminded the Board of the Mayor's meeting tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. to go over the proposed 2023 SPLOST in preparation of the November referendum.

Chairman Vonier recognized County Attorney Warren who spoke briefly on the inmate per diem rate at the Bobby Hines Justice Center. He will continue to work with the County Manager and the Sheriff's Office for clarity and resolution.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Grady who announced that the Purchasing Committee meeting will be held on August 1, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. in the Historic Courthouse.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who announced that the Public Property Committee meeting will be held on August 3, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. in the Historic Courthouse. He also expressed appreciation for the nice Grand Opening event at the Southside Station.


Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to ratify the purchase of 2 hook lift trucks for the Sanitation Department (\$235.00 each truck). 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.

Commissioner Hickey made a motion to approve the recommendation from the Public Works Committee to clear cut trees at the Riverwood Sanitation Site and add the approximate 12 acres to the bid awarded to South Georgia Forest Management, LLC. 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.

Commissioner Hickey made a motion to declare vehicles surplus as presented by the Fleet Services Director and authorize the sale of the vehicles 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 Mr. Paul Fryer who introduced himself as the new Field Representative for Congressman Sanford Bishop

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to adjourn. 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. The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

  
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Zippy Vonier, Chairman

ATTEST:   
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Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk