

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
225 North Board Street
November 12, 2024

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Wiley Grady, Chairman Dist. 6

Rev. Jeremy G. Rich, Dist. 1 (absent)

Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3 (absent)

Phillip V. Brown, Dist. 7

Donnie L. Baggett, Vice-Chair Dist. 5

Moses Gross, Dist. 2

Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4

Zippy T. Vonier, Dist. 8

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Attorney Bruce Warren, Elections and Registration Supervisor Frank Scoggins, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler

Others present: Trey Ezell, Georgia Forestry Report

Michael Borden, Elections & Registration Board Chairman

News/Media present: None

Chairman Grady called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2024 Board Meeting. Commissioner Vonier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve the agenda for the November 12, 2024 Board Meeting with the addition of the 2024 Budget Amendment 24-11-1. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Grady recognized Trey Ezell who presented the 2024 Georgia Forestry Commission Annual Report for Thomas County to the Commissioners. Thomas County contributed \$7464.00 to the Georgia Forestry Commission during the 2024 fiscal year toward the cost of protecting the forest land in the County. There was a total of 27 fires with the average fire size 3.59 acres. In FY2024 the Thomas County Unit issued 2256 permits. Georgia Forestry assisted 4 landowners with the burning of 101 acres, all of which was silviculture. The Thomas County unit is also currently working with 12 active Cogon grass spots and monitoring numerous other spots. In other projects, they have worked with the tree board and recertified Thomasville for Tree City USA, now 29 years running. Chairman Grady expressed appreciation for all they do to protect Thomas County.

Chairman Grady recognized County Manager Stephenson who presented the final numbers of debris monitoring and debris removal for Hurricane Debby. Of the \$385,463.57 total expenses,

Thomas County is responsible for 15% (\$57,819.54), FEMA 75% (\$289,097.67) and GEMA 10% (\$38,546.36).

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the invoices from Crowder Gulf for debris removal (\$181,754.85 and \$116,035.00). Commissioner NeSmith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Grady recognized County Manager Stephenson who presented information regarding the Georgia First Responder PTSD Program. The newly acquired materials from ACCG reflect the two coverage components required by House Bill 451 to be effective on January 1, 2025—PTSD Diagnosis Benefit and a PTSD Disability Benefit. The insurer, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife), estimates the annual premium for both components to be \$37,416.00. Due to the short notice of the mandate, County Manager Stephenson recommends approving the coverage as presented by MetLife and seek other cost estimates from other companies for 2026.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve the Resolution authorizing participation in the ACCG First Responder PTSD program and the ACCG – IRMA proposal for coverage with MetLife estimated at \$37,436.00. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to re-appoint Mrs. BJ Vonier to serve on the Georgia Pines Community Service Board. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0-1 with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, and NeSmith voting aye. Commissioner Vonier abstained from voting.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to re-appoint Mr. Michael Borden to the Elections and Registration Board. This will be his 2nd term, and it will expire on December 31, 2027. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye. Mr. Borden thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity. County Manager Stephenson expressed appreciation for Mr. Borden keeping him abreast of everything during the election. Commissioner NeSmith inquired about the website and the results that are usually posted. Frank Scoggins added that the Georgia Secretary of State has changed to a different software for posting results.

Chairman Grady recognized County Clerk Celeste Tyler who presented 2024 Budget Amendment 24-11-1 for approval. She reminded Commissioners that a Flock Safety Grant for the Sheriff's Department was approved at the last Board of Commissioners' Meeting. The \$58,000 grant is reimbursable.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the 2024 Budget Amendment 24-11-1 as presented. Commissioner Vonier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

2024 BUDGET AMENDMENT 24-11-1
Capital Improvement Fund (350)
November 12, 2024

Account	Description	Original 2024 Budget	Amended Budget	Difference
Revenues				
350-33-1014	FLOCK Safety Grant	0	58,000	58,000
	Total			58,000

Net Increase to Revenues

\$58,000

Account	Description	Original 2024 Budget	Amended Budget	Difference
Expenses				
350-3300-542400-001	FLOCK-License Plate Reader	0	58,000	58,000
	Total			58,000

Net Increase to Expenses

\$58,000

Open Meeting to Citizens: none

Committee Reports

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Baggett who reported on the Open House event at the Five Forks Volunteer Fire Station held last Thursday. He was pleased with the turnout (approximately 85 people) and shared appreciation remarks from the community.

Chairman Grady congratulated Commissioner Gross for his election win on November 5th.

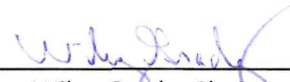
Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a legal matter. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye. (9:23 a.m.)

The Board of Commissioners came back into the Regular Session. No action was taken. (9:32 a.m.)

Chairman Grady recognized County Manager Stephenson who commented on the upcoming 2025 Budget Public Hearing and the Budget Work Session following. He distributed a copy of the 2025 Budget Summary and noted a few items. There will not be a tax increase next year and possibly 2026. He is still concerned with inflation and the increase in costs of equipment, vehicles, and buildings. He has added 1 new account tech position anticipating the retirement of Finance Director Laura Nichols. He has included a \$1 per hour raise for full and part-time employees. A request from the Public Defenders Office and Network Technical Services (NTS) will be made during the Budget Work Session. The attachments include a Thomas County Audit Report that gives a comprehensive evaluation of where the County stands financially. There has not been a tax increase since 2013. The rollback formula is designed for the County to receive the same amount of revenue as before. Capital Expenses were included this year in the overall Budget process. He anticipates there being less and less monies available for capital spending over the next three to four years. He reminded the Commissioners that the first check for the 2023 SPLOST will not arrive until March 2025.


The County Clerk will invite the "small towns" to meet with the Commissioners to discuss the Floating Homestead and the Floating Local Option Sale Tax.

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Vonier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Gross, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.



Wiley Grady, Chairman

ATTEST:



Celeste Tyler, County Clerk