

Minutes  
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
225 North Board Street  
January 14, 2025

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  
Phillip V. Brown, Dist. 7

**Donnie L. Baggett, Vice-Chair Dist. 5**

Moses Gross, Dist. 2 (absent)  
Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4  
Zippy Vonier, Dist. 8

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Attorney Bruce Warren, County Clerk Celeste Tyler, Planning Director Ken Gay, and Public Works Director Jay Knight

News/Media present: Jill Holloway, Thomasville Times Enterprise

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

Chairman Grady recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2024 Board Meeting. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Hickey, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Grady requested the items on the agenda under "New Business" be moved to the end of the agenda after a Closed Session. Commissioner Baggett made a motion to approve the January 14, 2024 agenda with the request made by the Chairman. Commissioner Vonier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Grady, Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Hickey, NeSmith, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Grady welcomed all those in attendance and then turned the meeting over to County Attorney Bruce Warren who asked for nominations for 2025 Chairman of the Board. Commissioner Baggett made the nomination to elect Commissioner Mark NeSmith. With no other nominations forthcoming, County Attorney Warren ceased the nominating period. Upon voting, Commissioner NeSmith was unanimously selected to be the 2025 Chairman. County Attorney Bruce Warren asked for nominations for 2025 Vice-Chairman of the Board. Commissioner Vonier made the nomination to elect Commissioner Donnie Baggett. With no other nominations forthcoming, County Attorney Warren ceased the nominating period. Upon voting, Commissioner Baggett was unanimously selected to be the 2025 Vice-Chairman.

Newly elected Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to re-appoint Bruce Warren as the County Attorney. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith thanked Commissioner Grady for his leadership and service to the Board in 2024. He also thanked the Board members for selecting him as the 2025 Chairman and spoke on their mutual commitment to serve all of the citizens of Thomas County to the best of their abilities. He added "we continue to strive to make Thomas County a desirable place to live".

Board Appointments: Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Baggett who spoke on the Southwest Georgia Commission and commended Elaine Mays and Jason Giddens for their commitment to serving on the Council in 2024. Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion to re-appoint Donnie Baggett, Elaine Mays, and Jason Giddens to the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council. Commissioner Vonier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to re-appoint Commissioner Jeremy Rich to the Land Bank Authority Board. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Open Meeting to Citizens: Chairman Nesmith recognized Jackie Shoemaker with the American Red Cross at 385 Connell Road, Valdosta, Georgia. Ms. Shoemaker gave statistical information on the services the Red Cross provided in Thomas County for 2024. She also distributed contact information and added that their main point of contact with counties is the EMA Director. Chairman NeSmith thanked Ms. Shoemaker for coming to the meeting and expressed appreciation to the Red Cross for being a vital asset to our community.

Reports: Chairman NeSmith recognized County Manager Stephenson who distributed a handout that numerically reflects a 2025 FLOST proposed distribution by the Thomas County Board of Commissioners of a 1 cent proposal prorated by property tax levy versus a ½ cent proposal pro-rated by property tax levy. Commissioner Hickey asks for the consideration of the ½ cent proposal.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Vonier who made a motion to authorize the submittal of a grant application to the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance and Safety fire to replace 5 Skids estimated at \$66,000. This is a no match grant. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid to multiple vendors, as presented, for Public Works Warehouse Supplies. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid for Culvert Replacements to Green's Backhoe for \$222,370.00. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid for Debris Removal to SDR, Southern Disaster Recovery, LLC. DRC, and Ceres. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid for Debris Monitoring to sole bidder Debritech. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid for a Security Fence for the Animal Shelter to J&C Fence and Welding for \$53,100.90. the motion was seconded by Commissioner Vonier. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid to multiple vendors, as presented, for Janitorial Supplies. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner Baggett made a motion to award the bid to multiple vendors, as presented, for Office Supplies. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to go into Closed Session. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye. 9:21 a.m. (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(1)).


The Board of Commissioners returned to the Regular meeting at 10:18 a.m. No action was taken.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to authorize the County Attorney to draft a 2025 FLOST (Flexible Local Option Sales Tax) Intergovernmental Agreement. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion authorizing the Chairman of the Board to approve and or negotiate the 2025 FLOST Intergovernmental Agreement. Commissioner Vonier seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Southwest Georgia Regional Commission for providing technical assistance to update the Pre-Mitigation Plan required by FEMA. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, and Vonier voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.



Mark NeSmith, Chairman

ATTEST:



Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk

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