

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Conference Room, 2nd Floor Annex
116 West Jefferson St.
April 3, 2017

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:

Kenneth E. Hickey, Chairman, Dist. 3	Phillip V. Brown, Vice-Chair, Dist. 7 (Absent)
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 County Manager, and Twink Monahan, County Clerk and Bill Blackburn Attorney standing in for Bruce Warren, County Attorney. No news media was present. Other staff members present was Bill Eddings and Donna Holbert Planning and Zoning, Jay Knight and Angela Jones Public Works; Daniel Stokes, Tax Assessor Office,

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

Chairman Hickey explained that Mr. Stephenson and Tony Wooten met with Scott Cloud the Roadmaster for Georgia & Florida Railway. The county is working the railroad to repair seven (7) railroad crossings. The railroad submitted a proposal that included the following:

Railroad responsibilities

Tear out old asphalt, provided track protection until each crossing is finished, clean out mud along ditches, install all new ties; depending on length of crossing, surface track to above crossing height, fill with rock to allow 4-6 inches of asphalt, furnish back hoe to help spread asphalt. Furnish crossties for all crossings, approx. 90-100 ties under asphalt, rock 4" granite to fill and surface crossing, 5 guys labor for each crossing.

Thomas County responsibilities

Cut crossing with asphalt saw, use of dump truck to load old asphalt; provide the new asphalt, pave the crossings, traffic control.

Commissioner Grady made a motion to approve one railway crossing repair as outlined above, Midway Church Road and determine the expense before approving the other five (5) crossings; Myrick/Rook Roads , McMillan, Rupp Road, Hansell Road and North Pinetree (Railroad's responsibility). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ansley. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, NeSmith, Ansley, Grady and Vonier voting aye. Vice-Chairman Brown and Commissioner Brown were absent.

Mr. Stephenson requested for Bill Blackburn to check into any liability for the county if we perform the work before entering into an agreement.

Solar Energy Ordinance

The decision was turned over for the Board to consider a solution in today's work session and bring back to the full board on April 11, 2017.

Options for consideration and discussion.

- A. Consider a motion to recommend adoption of the ordinance updated on 2/13/2017 and as advertised.
- B. Changes to the ordinance advertised to be considered in the order listed below:
 - 1. Consider changing the setback of 500' from a habitable residence
 - 2. Consider changing setback of 500' from any property zoned R-1, R-2, and R-3.
 - 3. Consider changing the height restriction of eight feet on freestanding solar panels or solar arrays.
 - 4. Consider changing the requirement of eight feet screening from adjoining property and adjacent roads.
 - 5. Consider changing the setback of 10' for every acre covered with a minimum setback of 100' and maximum setback of 500'
 - 6. Consider any other changes to the ordinance as advertised.

Commissioner NeSmith made a motion to have a minimum 100' fixed set back on all sides noting that there is a variance process in place that could be used. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, NeSmith, Ansley, Grady and Vonier voting aye.

Commissioner NeSmith said that with passing this minimum set back that sets the standard for all solar installations.

Chairman Hickey recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to approve the setback from a habitable structure or residential zoning district of 500 feet. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ansley. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, NeSmith, Ansley, Grady and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Hickey recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve an 8 foot maximum height. The motion was seconded by Chairman Hickey. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, NeSmith, Ansley, Grady and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Hickey recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve that solar fields in excess of 200 acres in an AG zoning district must be rezoned to CG or IND. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, NeSmith, Ansley, Grady and Vonier voting aye.

Chairman Hickey recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to require bonding or an irrevocable letter of credit of 120% for decommissioning the facility after it is no longer functioning using the Jasper, South Carolina example. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vonier. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, NeSmith, Ansley, Grady and Vonier voting aye.

After discussion between the board, staff, and Courtney Brinson and Neil Fleckinsein and subsequent motions the board will make the following recommendations to the 13 February 2017 draft and present to the board on 11 April, 2017.

- A. There will be two categories of setbacks; 1) "solar facilities" of 200 acres or less will be permitted in Commercial General and Industrial districts and conditional use is Ag district, 2) "solar facilities" of more than 200 acres will be only permitted uses in Commercial General and Industrial districts.
- B. "Solar facility" setbacks from adjacent property lines will be 100 feet.
- C. "Solar facility" setback from habitable structures will be 500 feet.
- D. "Solar facility" setback from residential zones will be 500 feet.
- E. Decommissioning solar panels will require a bond or irrevocable line of credit consistent with text suggested by Neil Fleckinsein.

Chairman Hickey recognized Commissioner Ansley who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded Commissioner Baker. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Baker, Ansley, NeSmith, Grady, and Vonier voting aye.

ATTEST:


M. Twink Monahan, County Clerk


Kenneth E. Hickey, Chairman