

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
116 West Jefferson St. 2nd Floor
March 14, 2018

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a special called meeting at 10:30 a.m. at the Commissioners' Office, Conference Room, with the following board members present:

Wiley Grady, Chairman, Dist. 6	Phillip V. Brown, Vice-Chair, Dist. 7(absent)
Merrill E. Baker, Jr., Dist. 1	Moses Gross, Dist. 2 (absent)
Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3	Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4
Hershel P. Ansley, Dist. 5 (absent)	Zippy T. Vonier, Dist. 8

This meeting was called for the City and County officials to receive information on grants available for infrastructure to expand broadband services in the rural areas.

Staff present was County Manager Michael J. Stephenson, County Clerk Twink Monahan, and GIS Information Services Director Derrick Ogletree. Media present was Chris Hurst, WPAX Radio

City Council and staff present were Jay Flowers, Councilman and Chris White, David Howell and Don Atkinson, South Georgia Governmental Services Authority.

Chairman Grady gave the invocation and opened the meeting.

Chairman Grady introduced Tom Berry, former City of Thomasville, is here today to explain the grant opportunities for federal and state funds to improve the internet connections in rural Thomas County. Mr. Berry detailed the information and funding available through the FCC, 2 billion dollars over the next 10 years. There are also state funds available. The application deadline for the FCC pre-application is 3/30/2018 and the next round will be in July. Mr. Berry said that the City of Thomasville will have to be involved since they already have infrastructure in place, without the infrastructure it will not be possible to expand to the rural areas. The infrastructure currently owned by the City of Thomasville is television, fiber, and telephone. Thomas County has no infrastructure or funds available. Chris White stated that nothing works in rural areas without subsidization. Mr. Berry again said the county needed to encourage the City of Thomasville's participation and suggested that the county send a resolution to the City of Thomasville requesting them to file application.

Commissioner NeSmith asked what areas according to the maps provided are candidates to receive the services and about the other areas the city partners with through South Georgia Governmental Services Authority (SGGSA). Mr. Berry said that the 'orange' areas on the maps have to be served and the grey can be in auctions. Chris White stated they are doing the preliminary cost estimates.

Commissioner Hickey made a motion to send the following resolution to the City of Thomasville encouraging them to submit application for the FCC grant. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vonier and approved by Chairman Grady, and Commissioners Merrill Baker, Zippy Vonier, Kenneth Hickey and Mark NeSmith.

Resolution

Whereas the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), through its Connect America Fund II, is offering subsidies to successful bidders for providing enhanced broadband capability to underserved areas in the rural parts of our nation. The total funding available nationwide is \$2 billion to be disbursed over a 10 year period; and

Whereas the FCC has identified underserved areas by census block (shown in orange on the attached Thomas County census map) and has reserved subsidies census block by census block. Potential providers have until March 30th to indicate their interest in providing the service. Formal proposals, detailing the service to be provided, will be submitted at a later date.

Whereas many rural areas in Thomas County currently have no broadband and where it is available the quality of the service provided might range from 5 megabytes to 25 megabytes. The FCC's goal is to expand the area served and to increase the quality of the broadband where provided. Something in the range of up to 30 megabytes would be a reasonable expectation.

NOW THEREFORE be it resolved the Thomas County Board of Commissioners recommend the City of Thomasville submit a grant pre-application to the Federal Communications Commission for subsidies through Connect America Fund II; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Thomas County Board of Commissioners shall provide coordination, encouragement and staff support for the City of Thomasville to prepare the pre-application to the Federal Communications Commission as described hereinabove.

SO RESOLVED, this 14th day of March 2018.

Mr. Stephenson said that he is going to call all the other counties in the region to let them know of our actions.

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



Wiley E. Grady, Chairman

ATTEST:



M. Twink Monahan, County Clerk