

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
225 North Board Street
February 14, 2023

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:

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, Public Works Director Tony Bodiford, 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 NeSmith gave the invocation.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Rich who made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2023 Board Meeting. 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 Commander Greg Thweat who represented Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 4995 and presented EMT and Law Enforcement awards to Michael J. Bennefield and Sgt. Brandon. Every year the VFW presents awards to individuals in Public Service who protect life and property and who exemplifies personal courage. They are also recognized by their colleagues as individuals who are dedicated and consistently demonstrate excellence in their duties and profession.

Chairman Vonier recognized Mayurbhai Patel, Jenshir, LLC, applicant for a Package Beer & Wine License for Summerhill Food Mart at 1555 Summerhill Road, Thomasville, GA 31757. Mr. Mayurbhai Patel dba Summerhill Food Mart passed all requirements according to the Thomas County ordinance. Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to approve the application. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Chairman Vonier recognized County Manager Stephenson who introduced a Resolution for the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 10 – Animal Control that deletes the verbiage of “humane society” and substitutes in its place “Thomas County Board of Commissioners”.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to adopt the Resolution for the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 10 – Animal Control 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.

Board Appointments: Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett made a motion to appoint Commissioner Jeremy Rich to the Land Bank Authority Board, fulfilling the remainder of Commissioner Vonier's term. The term will expire on 12/31/2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously (7-0) with Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye and Chairman Vonier abstaining from the vote.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Rich who made a motion to re-appoint Commissioner Gross to the Land Bank Authority Board. The term will expire on 12/31/2026. 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 Hickey who made a motion to appoint Jason Giddens to the non-public position on the Southwest Georgia Regional Commissioner Advisory Board. The term will expire on 12/31/2023. 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 Grady who made a motion to re-appoint Terry Hurst to the Recreation Advisory Board. The term will expire on 12/31/2025. 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.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to appoint Bob Brettel to the Animal Control Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rich. 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 Candee Henderson of 1453 Egg & Butter Road South, Thomasville, Georgia who spoke on her mission of 100% renewable energy for Thomas County by 2035. Chairman Vonier recognized Judy Bradshaw of 314 White Oak Trail, Thomasville, Georgia who referenced conversations with County Manager Mike Stephenson and Commissioner Phillip Brown. She commented on the Commissioners' reasons of not contracting with the Humane Society; inquired about vetting animal shelters and asked questions regarding the intentions of the County to continue implementing the no-kill shelter standards. Chairman Vonier recognized Sharon Johnson of 476 Newton Road, Thomasville, Georgia who spoke in favor of a continued working relationship between the Humane Society and the County and presented a petition of 100 plus names of like-minded folks. She came representing neither side but pled for common ground, mediation if necessary, and negotiating the differences between the two parties. Chairman Vonier recognized Dale Nasinovich of 155 Lake Shore Drive, Thomasville, Georgia who referenced good conversations held with County Clerk Celeste Tyler, Commissioner Ken Hickey, and Chairman Vonier. She asked if the contract could be shorter than ten years. She is concerned about the safety of animals and citizens, stray dogs, and adoption. Chairman Vonier recognized Kathy Vignos of 2508 S. Pinetree Boulevard, Thomasville, Georgia who stated she was dismayed at the status of the County and the Humane Society's relationship. She had several questions including: when will the taxpayers know the cost of the proposed new shelter and operating costs; is the county sticking with the 5-day holding period/ Georgia State law for owners to re-claim their lost animals; and who does the public call. Stephanie Dodson Dougherty, Board of Directors President with the

Thomasville-Thomas County Humane Society at 180 Big Star Drive, Thomasville, Georgia addressed the Board and stated that the Humane Society is willing to negotiate.

Reports: County Manager Stephenson recognized Planning Director Ken Gay who gave an update on the status of Evergreen Brook Apartments. The Planning Department is waiting to receive drawings that are in compliance with the County's standards.

Chairman Vonier recognized County Attorney Warren who announced that the County has received the 1st contribution to the Opioid Settlement and a separate account at TNB has been opened specifically for the settlement funds.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Grady who noted that at the Library Board meeting yesterday, it was announced that there was \$8,800 damage to the eaves/gutters of the library roof.

Commissioner Grady made a motion to ratify the purchase of diesel fuel from Petroleum Products for \$2.9859/gal on February 9, 2023. 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 Grady made a motion to ratify bid approval for Roadside Spraying Chemicals for \$112,283.75 from Coastal Plains. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

Commissioner Grady made a motion to ratify bid approval for water well installation for \$20,700 from Gainous Well Drilling for the Five Forks Station. 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 Grady made a motion to approve the Thomas County Field Operations 2023 budget for \$150,795 and to approve the Thomas County Shelter Operations 2023 Budget for \$222,750. County Manager Stephenson commented that the Field Operations will be under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Office. 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 Grady made a motion to adopt the 2023 Budget Amendment 23-2-1 for Thomas County Animal Services Shelter for \$960,000 out of the SPLOST 2017 Capital Projects Fund. 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 Grady made a motion to ratify the approval of the plans for the Thomas County Animal Services Shelter as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hickey. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.


Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Rich who made a motion authorizing the application for the Georgia Trauma Commission Grant (\$8,071.56). 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.

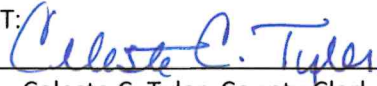
Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who announced that the Public Works Committee meeting will be held on February 15, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. in the Historic Courthouse.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Gross who announced that the Emergency Services Committee meeting will be held on February 20, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Historic Courthouse.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rich. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.



Zippy Vonier, Chairman

ATTEST: 

Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk