

Minutes  
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
225 North Board Street  
October 24, 2023

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.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, Emergency Services Director Derrick Ogletree, Retirement/Benefits Jessie Winkelmann, and County Clerk Celeste Tyler.

News/Media present: Chris Hurst, WPAX Radio

Others present: John Taylor and Brittany Stephenson, Taylor Benefit Resource

Chairman Vonier called the meeting to order, and Commissioner Ken Hickey gave the invocation.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2023 Board Meeting. 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 Rich who made a motion to approve the October 24, 2023 agenda. 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 the County Clerk who requested a permit for (2) one-day special events on behalf of the Master National Retriever Club—October 26<sup>th</sup> Pebble Hill Plantation and October 31<sup>st</sup> Deep South Fair Grounds. All required licensure has been submitted to the County Clerk’s Office and security for the events has been scheduled.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Baggett who made a motion to approve the request for the permits for the (2) one-day special events as presented. 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.

Chairman Vonier recognized County Manager Stephenson who briefly explained the current Health Benefit Plan and his recommendation to amend retirement option 3 which would allow Taylor Benefit Resource to become the secondary coverage provider when an employee turns 65 and Medicare becomes their primary provider.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who made a motion to approve amending option 3 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.

Chairman Vonier recognized John Taylor with Taylor Benefit Resource who presented a Total Cost Report for 2024. The claims came in a little higher in the last two years due to the elective procedures that were canceled during COVID-19 and then rescheduled during the last two years. John reported that there are 290 employees on the healthcare plan. He recommends staying with our current reinsurance provider, Western Skies. The total plan cost will increase 4%.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner NeSmith who made a motion to approve the renewal of Western Skies as our reinsurance carrier. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman Vonier and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Gross, Hickey, NeSmith, and Rich voting aye.

**Reports:** Chairman Vonier recognized County Manager Stephenson who thanked Chris Hurst for the WPAX Radio interview on the 2023 SPLOST referendum. He also announced that his budget recommendations will be ready by November 3<sup>rd</sup>; the Budget Hearing will be held on November 13<sup>th</sup>, and Budget approval will be made at the December 12<sup>th</sup> Board of Commissioners' Meeting.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to ratify the purchase of diesel fuel made on October 17, 2023 from Petroleum Products for \$3.2997/gal. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. 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 announced the Public Property Committee will meet on November 2, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse

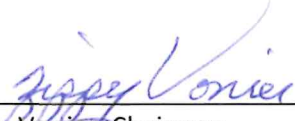
Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Brown who thanked the Board for their support and phone calls during his sister's illness.


Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Hickey who thanked everyone for the food, phone calls, and flowers during his father's passing. He also announced the Public Works Committee will meet on October 25, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse.

Chairman Vonier recognized Commissioner Gross who referenced the itemization form submitted by Emergency Services Director Derrick Ogletree for the annual Georgia Trauma Grant. He then made a motion to authorize the submission of the application. 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.

Commissioner Gross made a motion to declare 2 ambulances as surplus and be placed on GovDeals online auction for sale. 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 adjourn. 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. The meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

  
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Zippy Vonier, Chairman

ATTEST:   
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Celeste C. Tyler, County Clerk