



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING
102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022 AT 5:00PM
T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
KINCHAFOONEE ROOM
WWW.LEE.GA.US

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Billy Mathis, Chairman	District 3
John Wheaton, Vice-Chairman	District 1
Luke Singletary, Commissioner	District 2
Rick Muggridge, Commissioner	District 4
George Walls, Commissioner	District 5

COUNTY STAFF

Christi Dockery, County Manager
Kaitlyn Sawyer, County Clerk
Jimmy Skipper, County Attorney

The Lee County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Called Meeting on Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 5:00pm. The meeting was held in the Kinchafoonee Room of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present from the County were Chairman Billy Mathis, Vice-Chairman John Wheaton, Commissioner Luke Singletary, Commissioner Rick Muggridge, Commissioner George Walls, County Attorney Jimmy Skipper, County Clerk Kaitlyn Sawyer, Finance Director Heather Jones, and County Manager Christi Dockery. Those present from the City of Leesburg were Mayor Billy Breeden, City Manager Bob Alexander, Councilwoman Judy Powell, and Councilwoman Amanda White. Those present from the City of Smithville were Mayor Vincent Cutts, Councilman Dwight Hickman, Councilman James Champion, Councilwoman Ilean Bady, and City Attorney Tommy Coleman.

Chairman Mathis called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

INVOCATION

County Commission Chairman Billy Mathis led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board and the audience said the Pledge of Allegiance in unison.

CALL TO ORDER

(A) **LOST Renegotiations with officials from the City of Leesburg and the City of Smithville.**

Chairman Mathis welcomed everyone and asked if anyone would like to start the discussion. Commissioner Muggridge began by directing everyone to page 2 of the agenda packet (handed out to all attendees prior to the start of the meeting). Commissioner Muggridge summarized the spreadsheet, which displayed the amount of revenue received from LOST in 2021, the 2020 Census population figures of each entity, and the per capita benefit of each, as displayed below:

Location	LOST (2021)	Population	Per Capita Benefit
Lee County	\$3,837,245.11	33,163	\$115.71
Leesburg	\$615,847.14	3,480	\$176.97
Smithville	\$284,231.72	593	\$479.31

Commissioner Muggridge stated that in 2021, based on these figures, Lee County received LOST revenues at the amount of \$115.71 per person, the City of Leesburg received \$176.97 per person, and the City of Smithville received \$479.31 per person. Commissioner Muggridge stated that he is seeking a fair and consistent solution. In the current configuration, for every \$1.00 someone in the unincorporated area receives, someone in Leesburg

receives \$2.53 and a citizen in Smithville receives \$5.14. The only way to truly be consistent would if the county received all the funds to offset county taxes as everyone pays county taxes, however, this is unrealistic.

Pulling from the 2020 Census population numbers, Commissioner Muggridge suggests a split of 88%, 10%, and 2%, as displayed below:

Location	LOST (2021)	Population	Per Capita Benefit
Lee County – 88%	\$4,168,845.09	33,163	\$125.71
Leesburg – 10%	\$473,732.40	3,480	\$261.84
Smithville – 2%	\$94,746.48	593	\$285.48

City Manager Bob Alexander stated that the City of Leesburg is interested in the same split as was agreed upon last time and City Councilwoman Judy Powell pointed out that all schools and most County buildings are within the city limits of Leesburg and no tax benefit is received. Mayor Billy Breeden echoed Mr. Alexander's statement by agreeing that the City of Leesburg did not want less than what is current.

Mayor Vincent Cutts stated that it doesn't hurt to ask for more and discussed the improvements made by the City of Smithville, including the re-implementation of the full time Police Department, which is costly to maintain. Mayor Cutts added that they have been good stewards to present and they could use more help in funding the technology needed for the Police Department. To echo what Mayor Breeden stated, Smithville wants no less than what they currently have, but would like more. Councilman James Champion added the roads in Smithville are in bad shape and in need of help. In past years, he cited there were grants available to assist; however, they have not received any help lately.

Chairman Mathis asked Mayor Cutts about the City of Smithville's available LMIG funding and them not applying. Councilman Champion stated they have had no luck; that they do not know how to apply. Mayor Cutts added that they have fixed a lot of roads themselves, including potholes. Chairman Mathis stated that the DOT sent information regarding Smithville not using or applying for their available funds, to which Mayor Cutts stated he was unaware. City Attorney Tommy Coleman stated that the city has the documents necessary for LMIG and will be able to move forward in that regard soon but were temporarily delayed, as staff was out of the office due to a water problem. Councilman Champion reiterated that they have been fixing potholes themselves, using asphalt and a recently purchased packer, so as to maintain the roads they have.

Councilman Hickman added that years ago, each city would submit a list of roads to the county that they would like to have repaved and the county would pave those roads; however, this practice has seemingly stopped. County Chairman Billy Mathis stated that those road lists were sent to the state. County Manager Christi Dockery added that the SPLOST VII and TSPLOST funds go directly to the city/county. Ms. Dockery excused herself to retrieve the aforementioned LMIG information.

Smithville City Attorney Tommy Coleman brought up the absent cities provision, stating that if both cities choose not to participate, they will receive a portion of what is allocated for the municipalities, approximately 15% as preliminarily calculated, of what would be allocated to the cities, which would give Smithville some room above 2%. City Attorney Coleman summarized that if \$100,000.00 were to be allocated to the cities, they would receive \$15,000.00. Essentially, Smithville is wrapped up with Leesburg. There was a brief discussion on how to correctly calculate the numbers if the provision was used. Commissioner Singletary calculated what this percentage and figure might look like, with the resulting amount being less than the proposed amount: A total of \$568,478.88, with the absent city provision amount being approximately \$85,500.00... the proposed 2% share for Smithville is \$94,700.00. Therefore, based on these preliminary calculations, the city of Smithville would receive less if they chose not to participate. Chairman Mathis stated that that did not seem to be a good bargaining position. City Attorney Coleman stated that the cities would still need to negotiate.

Commissioner Muggridge stated that 100% of his constituents live in the unincorporated part of the county. He understands the cities' need for funds, but if we are to split the same penny that all citizens pay, then it should be divided consistently, so what is the rationale for allotting someone in Smithville 5x more than this person in the

unincorporated part of the county and someone in Leesburg 3x more? Chairman Mathis added that it would seem the County is getting the short end of the stick. Councilman Hickman asked where the numbers (per capita per person as mentioned previously) came from, to which Commissioner Muggridge stated that it is the amount paid out in 2021 divided by population numbers, the number of people who live in each area... this shows the benefit each entity receives per person.

Commissioner Muggridge pointed out that those who live in the city receive both county portion and the city portion. Mayor Cutts added that citizens within the cities pay both city and county taxes. Commissioner Muggridge agreed. Commissioner Singletary added that they were talking about property taxes whereas the current discussion is about sales tax. Chairman Mathis stated that the county's sales tax revenues have increased greatly in the last couple years for probably a number of reasons, including internet sales, so the percentage may be lower, but the total revenue could be higher. The Department of Revenue doesn't tell us where the money is coming from, but after the law passed allowing tax on internet sales, our sales tax revenue increased 50%. We don't know exactly what that number will look like for everyone in the next few years; the county is growing, with Chairman Mathis stating it's an almost monthly occurrence to hear from a business that wants to move to Lee County.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that the LMIG funding available to the City of Smithville, as stated from GDOT officials, is \$15,859.00 and it seems that the issue was the submission of the FY2020 budget; however, they may be eligible for a certain percentage of the FY2021 funds. County Manager Dockery stated she has also been in contact with the City Clerk of Smithville and made her aware of this as well. City Attorney Tommy Coleman stated that he was aware and would be updating the necessary documentation citing staff had been out of their offices due to a water issue.

Mayor Breeden stated that he would not be signing anything tonight, to which Chairman Mathis replied that this was only the first discussion and no one was expecting to sign anything or make any decisions tonight. City Attorney Coleman asked if what was presented was the position of the county. Chairman Mathis replied that they were talking points with real numbers and are not necessarily the position of the County.

Commissioner Muggridge asked that the cities present rationale if they wish to support any different numbers than the ones proposed. Why should the people in the unincorporated area receive so much less than those in the cities? Commissioner Muggridge added that the vast majority of LOST received is in the unincorporated areas because this is where most of the businesses are located. Additionally, the County is providing many of the services (i.e. Fire & EMS, 911, etc.), so all taxpayers should receive the same amount, a consistent benefit, as opposed to some receiving more than others. Commissioner Muggridge stated he is just looking for more consistency and is not intending to hurt anyone.

Mayor Cutts stated that 2% or anything less would hurt Smithville. Chairman Mathis echoed Commissioner Muggridge's statement requesting officials from the cities provide rationale and justification for new figures if the numbers presented are not desirable. Mayor Cutts stated that the re-implementation of the Police Department has been expensive and their department works with the County a lot to help the Lee County Sheriff's Office by taking a number of calls and pointed out that their citizens pay county taxes as well. Commissioner Singletary added that the county shouldn't be taking any revenues or resources from the city, stating that if the City gets a County call, they should redirect them to the Sheriff's Office because the city shouldn't be spending their 2% in LOST to help the County. City Attorney Coleman clarified that with both Smithville and Leesburg having Police Departments, they are taking calls that the Sheriff's Office would have to, were those departments not there; thereby, helping the County.

Chairman Mathis advised that we would all work together to come to a conclusion. City Attorney Tommy Coleman reminded everyone of the penalties, also emphasizing the importance of working together. Chairman Mathis stated that today's meeting was for discussion; we will schedule another meeting to come back together in a few weeks and come to a consensus. County Manager Dockery reminded everyone that this process must be concluded within 60 days, which is May 22, 2022. The next LOST meeting will be held Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 5:00pm.

PUBLIC FORUM

Citizens will be allowed to address the Board of Commissioners regarding any issues or complaints. Individuals should sign up prior to the start of the meeting.

No citizens took part in the Public Forum.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission meeting is **March 22, 2022 at 6:00pm.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30PM.

Lee County is a thriving vibrant community celebrated for its value of tradition encompassing a safe family oriented community, schools of excellence, and life long opportunities for prosperity and happiness without sacrificing the rural agricultural tapestry.

Persons with special needs relating to handicapped accessibility or foreign language interpretation should contact the ADA Coordinator at (229) 759-6000 or through the Georgia Relay Service (800) 255-0056 (TDD) or (800) 355-0135 (voice). This person can be contacted at the T. Page Tharp Building in Leesburg, Georgia between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will assist citizens with special needs given proper notice of seven (7) working days. The meeting rooms and buildings are handicap accessible.

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