



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023 6:00 P.M.

T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
OPAL CANNON AUDITORIUM
WWW.LEE.GA.US

MEETING MINUTES
WORK SESSION

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Billy Mathis, Chairman	District 3
Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman	District 2
Dennis Roland, Commissioner	District 1
Chris Guarnieri, Commissioner	District 4
George Walls, Commissioner	District 5

COUNTY STAFF

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

The Lee County Board of Commissioners met in a work session on Tuesday, December 12, 2023. The meeting was held in the Opal Cannon Auditorium of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Vice-Chairman Luke Singletary, Commissioner Dennis Roland, and Commissioner Chris Guarnieri. Staff in attendance was County Manager Christi Dockery, County Attorney Jimmy Skipper, and County Clerk Kaitlyn Good. Chairman Billy Mathis and Commissioner George Walls were absent. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook Live. Vice-Chairman Singletary called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

INVOCATION

Pastor Josh Posey, First Baptist Church of Leesburg, led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- (A) Consideration to approve the minutes for the Board of Commissioners meeting for November 14, 2023.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes for the Board of Commissioners meeting for November 14, 2023. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

CONSENT AGENDA

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

- (A) Recognition of County employees' years of service.

The following County employees were recognized for their years of service:

5 years – Krista Moore – 911 Communications Officer

5 years – Thomas Glass – Sergeant, Sheriff's Office

5 years – Tristan Smiley – Firefighter/EMTA

5 years – William Yochum III – Firefighter/EMTA

20 years – Charles McBurnett Sr. – Shop Supervisor, Public Works

25 years – Joey Davenport – Co-Assistant County Manager/Chief Building Inspector/Interim Planning Director

(B) **Chief Ranger David Hodges, Georgia Forestry Commission, to present the annual report.**

Chief Ranger David Hodges, Georgia Forestry Commission, presented the annual report (July 2022 – June 2023), summarizing the following highlights for Lee County: (1) A total of 914 permits were issued for just over 24,000 acres; (2) burning assistance was provided to 22 landowners, affecting 1,118 acres; (3) there was one (1) reported wildfire, affecting 2.46 acres; and (4) the Dougherty/ Lee County Unit received 6,870 seedlings from the GFC nursery to fulfill orders for Dougherty and Lee County landowners.

GFC personnel also visited over 302 water meters across the County to collect data for the water usage program and participated in 11 Public/Education Outreach Programs reaching approximately 1,157 people. Personnel also spent several months in Louisiana and Texas helping with wildfires in those areas.

(C) **Justin Elliott of Mauldin and Jenkins to present the FY2022-2023 audit.**

Handouts of the draft Auditor's Discussion and Analysis were provided to the Board at the beginning of the meeting. Justin Elliott of Mauldin and Jenkins presented on the FY2022-2023 single audit, stating that the full audit was not yet completed as they were awaiting some information from the Health Department. There will be a more comprehensive report finalized hopefully by the end of the week or next week, but there is no anticipated major changes and a clean, unmodified opinion is expected.

In summary and in sticking with the highlights, Mr. Elliott stated that there was approximately \$31.5 million in revenues (the majority of which is property taxes and vehicle taxes) and \$28 million in expenses, with approximately 44% of that being for Public Safety and 29% for general government, which is standard for a county of this size. Mr. Elliott stated there was \$21.9 million (8.5 months of expenditures) in the fund balance, adding that there has not been a negative change in fund balance over the past six (6) years, which is a strong financial position to be in. Again, a clean, unmodified opinion is expected.

Mr. Elliott thanked staff for their assistance during this process.

PUBLIC HEARING

NONE

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

Building Inspection/ Business Licenses

(A) **Consideration to approve the alcohol license renewals for 2024.**

Co-Assistant County Manager/ Chief Building Official/ Interim Planning Director Joey Davenport presented the list of renewals to the Board, stating that all renewals had been received except for that of Family Dollar. Family Dollar has been contacted about submitting their renewal paperwork and will have until December 31, 2023 to do so before Code Enforcement has to get involved. Mr. Davenport stated that the renewals could be voted on as a whole.

Mr. Davenport also discussed package store license renewals stating that he believes the existing ordinance needs to provide clarification regarding the renewal process for package stores. Mr. Davenport questioned if those stores who have paid the provisional license fee a few months ago would need to go ahead and pay the business license renewal fee this year. Vice-Chairman Singletary stated that this could be approved in January if need be, based on what Skipper says and suggested waiving any late fee and added that he would think the next license fees would begin when the business was ready to open.

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper clarified that the fees are not prorated based on what time of year they are applied for, they are the same no matter what. Mr. Skipper added that the law states they are required to submit license fees annually (January 1 – December 31). Currently, package store applicants are provided with provisional licenses and are given a nine (9) month time limit to construct the businesses, with the option for an extension.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve the alcohol license renewals for 2024, subject to

Family Dollar providing all required documents and paying required fees by December 31, 2023. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

County Extension Office

- (B) **Consideration to approve a MOU with the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension for the provision of Cooperative Extension Services and Personnel in Lee County.**

County Manager Christi Dockery summarized the agreement, stating that the only difference in this agreement from the past is that the County is changing the way of payment (cooperative contract payment). This item is budgeted.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve a MOU with the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension for the provision of Cooperative Extension Services and Personnel in Lee County. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

- (C) **Consideration to approve a contract with the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension for salaries, taxes, retirement and health and life insurance for Extension Services personnel for January 2024 – June 2024.**

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve a contract with the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension for salaries, taxes, retirement and health and life insurance for Extension Services personnel for January 2024 – June 2024. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES

- (A) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member to the Health Board of Lee County for a term of six (6) years. Current term expires 12/31/2023. New term expires 12/31/2029. Letter of interest in appointment received from Dr. John E. Vance Jr. (reappointment).**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Dr. John E. Vance to the Health Board of Lee County for a term of six (6) years, expiring 12/31/2029. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

- (B) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member to the Joint Development Authority for a term of one (1) year. Current term expires 12/31/2023. New term expires 12/31/2024. Letter of interest in appointment received from David Brokamp (reappointment) and George Houston.**

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to reappoint David Brokamp to the Health Board of Lee County for a term of one (1) year, expiring 12/31/2024. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

- (C) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member to the Joint Development Authority for a term of two (2) years. Current term expires 12/31/2023. New term expires 12/31/2025. Letter of interest in appointment received from Greg Crowder (reappointment).**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Greg Crowder to the Joint Development Authority for a term of two (2) years, expiring 12/31/2025. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

- (D) **Consideration to appoint two (2) members to the Regional Commission Council of Southwest Georgia for a term of one (1) year. Current term expires 01/01/2024. New term expires 01/01/2025. Letter of interest in appointment received from Cicily Florence (Private Sector- reappointment) and Chad Griffin (Public Sector- reappointment).**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Cicily Florence (Private Sector) and Chad Griffin (Public Sector) to the Regional Commission Council of Southwest Georgia for a term of one (1) year, expiring

01/01/2025. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS

- (A) **Updates on County projects.**
 County Manager Christi Dockery discussed ongoing projects in the County: (1) the new 911 telecommunications tower is in progress as staff is awaiting plans and construction to begin soon, to be located at the Smithville Fire Station; (2) staff met with the architect for the 100 acre park project recently to discuss concept plans; and (3) Windstream will be laying fiber for broadband in January 2024.
- (B) **Consideration to approve an agreement with Lee County Youth Baseball for calendar year 2024.**
 Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve an agreement with Lee County Youth Baseball for calendar year 2024. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.
- (C) **Consideration to approve a renewal contract for the Public Defender for January 2024 – June 2024.**
 Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve a renewal contract for the Public Defender for January 2024 – June 2024. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea. This item is budgeted.
- (D) **Consideration to adopt a resolution set qualifying fees for 2024 elections.**
 Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adopt a resolution set qualifying fees for 2024 elections. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

The Board of County Commissioners is required by O.C.G.A. 21-2-131, to fix and publish qualifying fees for county offices not later than February 1 of any year in which a general primary, nonpartisan election, or general election is to be held. The qualifying fees for the offices of Clerk of Superior Court, Judge of Probate Court, Sheriff, Tax Commissioner, Coroner, and Chief Magistrate shall be 3% of the minimum base salary, specified in state law for each county based on population. The base which appears in the Code should not be adjusted to reflect supplements, cost-of-living increases, or longevity increases. For the offices of members of the county governing authority, or Board of Commissioners, the qualifying fee is 3% of the base salary established by local Act of the General Assembly, and is not adjusted to reflect training, supplements, or cost-of-living increases.

COUNTY OFFICE	TOTAL GROSS SALARY FOR 2023	3% QUALIFYING FEE
County Commissioner	\$5,638.55	\$169.16
Sheriff	\$77,294.36	\$2,318.83
Chief Magistrate	\$64,512.39	\$1,935.37
Probate Judge	\$63,247.38	\$1,897.42
Clerk of Superior Court	\$63,247.38	\$1,897.42
Tax Commissioner	\$63,247.38	\$1,897.42
Coroner	\$3,600.00	\$108.00
School Board Member	\$600.00	\$18.00

Qualifying for the 2024 elections for partisan offices (Sheriff, Clerk of Superior Court, Tax Commissioner, County Commissioner, and Coroner) will begin at 9:00 a.m., Monday, March 4, 2024 and end Friday, March 8, 2024 at 12 noon with the respective political parties. Qualifying for nonpartisan offices (Probate Judge, Chief Magistrate, and Board of Education members) and independent candidates will be held beginning Monday, March 4, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. and end Friday, March 8, 2024 at 12 noon in the Lee County Elections and Registration Office. For more information regarding the election process, contact the Board of Elections and Registration at 759-6002.

(E) **Consideration to award the bid for the Bermuda Lane Pipe Repair project.**
Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to award the bid for the Bermuda Lane Pipe Repair project to the lowest, most responsive bidder, Oxford Construction Company for \$74,095.00. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

(F) **Consideration to ratify an addition to employees' retention payments in December.**
On December 7, 2023 retention payments were provided to full-time and part-time County employees, as follows: Full-time employees received \$1,500 and part-time employees received \$750.00 before taxes. Previously, the Board of Commissioners had approved in the 2023-2024 budget, approved in June 2023 the amounts of \$1,000.00 and \$500.00 before taxes.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to ratify an addition to employees' retention payments in December. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

(G) **Consideration to adopt a resolution approving the Final Capital Improvements Element (CIE) Annual Update. Public Hearing held November 14, 2023**
Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adopt a resolution approving the Final Capital Improvements Element (CIE) Annual Update. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

(H) **Consideration to award the bid for the 2024 Road Resurfacing project.**
Brent Davis, Reliable Engineering, summarized the project and bid process, stating his recommendation was Oxford Construction Company, the lowest, most responsive bidder. County Manager Christi Dockery added that staff recommends funding for this resurfacing project to include the LMIG funds, remaining SPLOST VII Funds (\$2,675,000.00), and then TSPLOST Funds.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to award the bid for the 2024 Road Resurfacing project to the lowest, most responsive bidder, Oxford Construction Company for \$5,032,661.75 utilizing LMIG, SPLOST VII, and TSPLOST funds. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS

(A) **Discussion of the Coston Road paving project.**
Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to table the discussion of the Coston Road paving project until all commissioners were present. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS

(A) **Consideration to approve an amended Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Leesburg and the City of Smithville for SPLOST VIII.**
County Attorney Jimmy Skipper summarized the amendment stating the County and Cities had previously approved the IGA for SPLOST VIII, however, it was after this occurred that discussions took place regarding the addition of language for the possibility of issuing general obligation bonds in the amount of \$7 million in order to advance pay some of the listed projects (\$5 million for the Courthouse and \$2 million for recreation). This amends the IGA among the three (3) government entities to allow for that general obligation bond to be approved by the voters at the same time they approve the SPLOST VIII in March 2024. SPLOST VIII will start collections in October 2025. All entities must approve this IGA; however, the resolution for special election (next item) needs only to be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adopt an amended Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Leesburg and the City of Smithville for SPLOST VIII. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

(B) **Consideration to adopt an amended resolution approving notice of special election, call of special election, and ballot question in connection with SPLOST VIII.**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adopt an amended resolution approving notice of special election (March 12, 2024), call of special election, and ballot question in connection with SPLOST VIII. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NONE

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.

Vice-Chairman Singletary asked if anyone else would like to speak. With no comments or questions from the audience, the Public Forum was closed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission Meeting is **Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 6:00pm.**
- (B) Officials from Lee County, Leesburg, and Smithville will be conducting a **Joint Public Hearing** to present the Lee County **Joint Comprehensive Plan** draft on **Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 5:00pm.**
- (C) The renewal process for 2024 Occupation Tax/Business Licenses began November 1, 2023. Please go to Lee County's website at www.lee.ga.us for information or contact the Building Inspection office at (229) 759-3326 and we will mail you a packet with an application and all information. **All current business licenses will expire on December 31, 2023.**
- (D) Offices of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be **closed Monday, December 25, 2023 and Tuesday, December 26, 2023** in observance of Christmas and will be **closed Monday, January 1, 2024** in observance of New Year's Day.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adjourn. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

The meeting adjourned at 6:38PM.

Facebook video link: <https://www.facebook.com/leecountyga/videos/684611737193490>

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST: _____
COUNTY CLERK

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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