



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 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 voting session on Tuesday, June 13, 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, Commissioner Chris Guarnieri, and Commissioner George Walls. Staff in attendance was County Manager Christi Dockery, County Attorney Jimmy Skipper, and County Clerk Kaitlyn Good. Chairman Billy Mathis was 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 May 23, 2023.**
Commissioner Walls made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes for the Board of Commissioners meeting for May 23, 2023. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary and Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.
- (B) **Consideration to approve the minutes from the Joint Public Hearing with the City of Leesburg and the City of Smithville for May 23, 2023.**
Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the Joint Public Hearing with the City of Leesburg and the City of Smithville for May 23, 2023. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

CONSENT AGENDA

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

- (A) **Kelly Bruner Moore requests to address the Board regarding the 5th Annual Georgia State Bible Reading on July 14, 2023.**
Ms. Moore addressed the Board regarding the 5th Annual Georgia State Bible Reading on July 14, 2023. The event will take place on the courthouse steps and begin around 7:00am, lasting approximately 30 to 45

minutes. All counties in the state will be participating and the area of focus will be 1 Kings 3-8.

(B) **Melissa Schroeder of NextEra to address the Board regarding a permit extension.**

Melissa Schroeder of NextEra addressed the Board regarding an extension to their existing conditional use permit. The Pinewood Solar project was approved by the Board in January 2022 and a conditional use was granted, set to expire July 24, 2023. Due to a supply chain issue as well as an investigation by the US Department of Commerce into tariffs by solar panel production companies in Asia, the RFP for this project was cancelled by the customer before any bids were received. Now, the investigation is complete and the supply chain issues have been resolved.

This project has high odds of being awarded a contract in 2023 through the Georgia Power Company RFP. Projects with permits are prioritized and ranked higher than those without, so an extension to the conditional use permit could prove critical for this project. Based on the challenges listed above, a one year extension is requested, to commence following the expiration of the current permit on July 24, 2023 and be effective until July 24, 2024.

The 200mW project area sits approximately 6 miles north of Leesburg and the footprint is on 1500 acres of clear land situated on four (4) parcels. This project will comply with all federal, state, and local erosion and sediment control regulations. EDP is expected to soon release updated stormwater prevention plan requirements; requirements NextEra is already working to comply with. A full site report shows that the project site has a low risk of flooding and all electrical equipment will be built above the 100 year flood level. Ms. Schroeder also summarized the required vegetative buffers of the project site. Additionally, the transmission provider is requiring 24 to 30 months in order to construct the switch yard that is needed to connect the project with the Georgia Integrated Transmission System. The capital expenditures are estimated at \$270 million for a projected tax revenue of \$24 million over the life of the project.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve a twelve month extension to the conditional use permit for NextEra, to commence following the expiration of the current permit on July 24, 2023 and be effective until July 24, 2024. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

PUBLIC HEARING

(A) **The Lee County Board of Commissioner will hold a public hearing regarding the proposed 2023-2024 Budget.**

Vice-Chairman Singletary opened the Public Hearing.

Terry Brown asked that the roads within Callaway Lakes Subdivision be considered for resurfacing.

With no further comments or questions from the Board or audience, the Public Hearing was closed.

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

E-911 Center

(A) **Discussion of new telecommunications tower.**

Glenn Hendry, Executive Account Manager, and Art Harris, Project Manager, of Motorola was present to discuss the new telecommunications tower.

The tower project itself has been approved by the Board; the decision that needs to be made now is regarding the location of the tower. The purpose of this project is to place a telecommunications tower in the Northern end of the County to allow for more coverage in that area. Maps were provided to the Board in their packets as well as displayed for the audience. Mr. Hendry explained that the first map is showing the present coverage and the second map is showing coverage if the tower is placed at Fire Station 4, the proposed location. Mr. Harris stated that the 300 foot tower would have an approximate radius of 5 miles; adding any additional height would not greatly impact the range.

Commissioner Roland voiced concern over how the most Northeasterly corner of the County still had some unpainted area (area that is not rated to be within the 95% reliability factor). Mr. Hendry explained that the priority was to cover the City of Smithville, an area with a higher population density. Moving the tower from the proposed location and more towards the center of the County will then allow an unpainted area over the Smithville. Consultations were previously held with Sheriff's Office and Fire & EMS personnel who agreed with the placement. Mr. Hendry stated that if the will of the Board was to move the location, he would suggest moving it no further than half a mile to the east. Mr. Hendry also added that the unpainted areas do not indicate that there is zero coverage in an area, simply that it is less than 95%.

Commissioner Singletary added that utilization of Dougherty County's transmission sites allows for the coverage at the Southern end of the County. E-911 Director Nikkie Celinski explained that over a series of months, she searched for appropriate land areas to place the tower, but was unsuccessful when given multiple attempts to purchase land. Fire Station 4 was deemed as a great option because the County owns the land, there is room on the property for a tower, and it would be located at an area that is always monitored. Ms. Celinski also added that there will be room on the tower that can be leased for a company such as a cell phone provider, which will in turn provide revenue to the County.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve the placement of the new telecommunications tower at Fire Station 4. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

Fire & EMS

(B) **Consideration to approve repair on a fire engine.**

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that one of the fire trucks was in need of a new engine and that Fire & EMS staff are currently obtaining quotes for the project. No action was taken on this item.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES

(A) **Magistrate Court – Consideration to award the bid for Indigent Defense Services.**

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to award the bid to The Eidson Firm for Magistrate Court Indigent Defense Services at a cost of \$3,000.00 per month. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

(B) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member to the Chehaw Park Authority for a term of three (3) years. Current term expires 06/30/2023. New term expires 06/30/2026. Letter of interest in reappointment received from George Walls.**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint George Walls to the Chehaw Park Authority for a term of three (3) years, expiring 06/30/2026. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary voting yea.

(C) **Consideration to appoint three (3) members to the Utilities Authority Board for a term of one (1) year. Current term expires 06/30/2023. New term expires 06/30/2024. Letter of interest in reappointment received from Arthur Ford, Levent Gokcen, and Victor Stubbs.**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Arthur Ford, Levent Gokcen, and Victor Stubbs to the Utilities Authority Board for a term of one (1) year, expiring 06/30/2024. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary and Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS

(A) **Updates on County projects.**

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed ongoing projects in the County: (1) The CDBG project for Palmyra Mobile Home Park in completed; (2) staff is working on the five year update to the comprehensive plan; (3) staff is also working with Superior Court Judge Sizemore on his requests for the courthouse

expansion project; and (4) staff has been requested to submit projects for SPLOST VIII.

- (B) **Consideration to authorize staff to put out a bid for Disaster Recovery Management, Disaster Debris Monitoring and Disaster Recovery Services. Current five (5) year contract expires September 30, 2023.** Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to authorize staff to put out a bid for Disaster Recovery Management, Disaster Debris Monitoring and Disaster Recovery Services. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary and Commissioner Walls voting yea.
- (C) **Consideration to approve an annual renewal lease for DFCS.** Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve an annual renewal lease for DFCS at a cost of \$3,066.50 per month. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Singletary and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS

- (A) **Discussion of road projects.** County Manager Christi Dockery discussed the list of roads created by engineer Brent Davis and Public Works Director Danny Kenner. The roads listed are those that require the most maintenance and are in the worst shape, per maintenance records, and are presented as roads that are recommended for resurfacing in the next few years. The County has LMIG and TSPLOST funds for projects such as these; notification should be received soon regarding the 2024 LMIG application process.

Commissioner Roland discussed a stormwater issue in an area off of Hwy 32. There are three culverts and these culverts always get clogged with debris, causing the water to back up. Commissioner Roland suggested putting in a box culvert at the road sooner rather than later because of all the recent and upcoming rain. An estimate for this project was approximately \$30,000 - \$40,000. Vice-Chairman Singletary asked County Manager Christi Dockery to look into pricing and possible RFP options.

- (B) **Discussion of placing gates at the Pine Lakes subdivision greenspace.** Commissioner Walls began the discussion by stating that he would like to see gates similar to those at Pirate's Cove placed around the holding pond and greenspace area in question to prohibit vehicles from driving back there, while still allowing foot traffic. County Manager Christi Dockery added that if a gate is put in place, there needs to be room for parking around the entrance of said gate and added that signs could be added stating the area is closed from dusk until dawn. Commissioner Singletary agreed and asked if staff could get with Public Works and determine if the County has the necessary rights of way and even the room for a parking area. County Attorney Jimmy Skipper stated that he would like the Board to allow him time to review the relevant County ordinances to ensure conformity with greenspace codes. This item will then be brought up for discussion again at a future meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS

- (A) **Discussion of proposed amendments to Chapter 70 of the Code of Ordinances of Lee County, Georgia (the Lee County Zoning Code), as required by 2022 Georgia Laws Act 881 (HB 1405).** County Attorney Jimmy Skipper summarized the text amendment stating that it allows for the County code to adhere to the changes brought forth by recent state legislation, effective July 1, 2023. These changes include updates to certain procedures such as changing some of the appeal process for zoning cases. This text amendment will have to go through the Planning Commission prior to being brought before the Board for a Public Hearing and vote.
- (B) **Discussion of a proposed amendment to Section 70-6 of the Code Ordinances of Lee County to revise the definition of "Home Occupation, Residential".**

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper summarized the text amendment stating that it includes changes to the definitions section, namely that of “Home Occupation, Residential”, with the intention of loosening requirements. This text amendment will have to go through the Planning Commission prior to being brought before the Board for a Public Hearing and vote.

(C) **Discussion of a proposed amendment to Chapter 70, Article III, Section 70-94 of the Code of Ordinances of Lee County, Georgia, relating to Greenspace.**

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper summarized the text amendment stating that the proposed changes were in accordance with the discussion held at the last commission meeting regarding lot sizes and acreage requirements. This text amendment will have to go through the Planning Commission prior to being brought before the Board for a Public Hearing and vote.

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.

Johnny Golden – Old Stage Road – Concerns regarding flooding

Cicily Florence – Interest in serving on the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission

Kathleen Fiorito – Concerns regarding issues within the Callaway Lakes Subdivision including water pressure, a park, and an abandoned home

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission Meeting is **Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 6:00pm.**

(B) The offices of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be **closed Monday, June 19, 2023** in observance of Juneteenth. County offices will reopen Tuesday, May 30, 2023 for regular business hours. **Residential garbage services will be delayed one day for the rest of the week.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Facebook video link: <https://www.facebook.com/leecountyga/videos/1948714678860332>

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.