



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M.
T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
OPAL CANNON AUDITORIUM
WWW.LEE.GA.US

MEETING MINUTES
WORK SESSION

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Luke Singletary, Chairman	District 2
Chris Guarnieri, Vice-Chairman	District 4
Dennis Roland, Commissioner	District 1
Billy Mathis, Commissioner	District 3
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, March 12, 2024. The meeting was held in the Opal Cannon Auditorium of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman Chris Guarnieri, Commissioner Dennis Roland, Commissioner Billy Mathis, and Commissioner George Walls. Staff in attendance was County Manager Christi Dockery, County Clerk Kaitlyn Good, and County Attorney Jimmy Skipper. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook Live. Chairman Singletary called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

INVOCATION

Senior Minister Jim Morrow, First United Methodist Church of Albany, led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Singletary recognized Commissioner Guarnieri for completing all courses necessary to obtain his certification.

Chairman Singletary also wished to thank all personnel who worked through the weekend for the flooding (e.g. Public Works, Fire & EMS, E-911, Sheriff's Office, etc.) for their attention and efforts in monitoring the situation and keeping citizens informed and safe.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- (A) **Consideration to approve the Board of Commissioners meeting minutes for February 27, 2024.**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve the Board of Commissioners meeting minutes for February 27, 2024. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

CONSENT AGENDA

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

- (A) **Jennifer Stephens, Community Supports Day Coordinator for ASPIRE, to address the Board regarding Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month.**

Jennifer Stephens, Community Supports Day Coordinator for ASPIRE, addressed the Board regarding

Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month and this year's theme of "What's Your Talent" stating that we all have talents and abilities that we can share no matter our disability. The Board thanked Ms. Stephens and ASPIRE for all they do for the community. A photo was taken upon the meeting's adjournment.

Consideration to adopt a Proclamation declaring March 2024 as Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month, on behalf of ASPIRE Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.

Commissioner Walls made the **MOTION** to adopt a Proclamation declaring March 2024 as Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month, on behalf of ASPIRE Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

- (B) **Aaron St. Pierre, Vice President of Lose Design, to present concept plans for the 100 acre park project.**
Additional plans were provided to Board as handouts prior to commencement of the meeting. Aaron St. Pierre, Vice President of Lose Design, presented plans for the 100 acre park project, Lee County Community Park. Mr. St. Pierre summarized the project and the process of working through concept plans to produce the final plan, as presented to the Board. The plan includes the following: Three turf fields, spectator seating, a multipurpose building, parking, an RV campsite (will create some cost recovery), cross country/walking trails, eight pickleball courts, four tennis courts, a flexible lawn area, amphitheater, restroom pavilions, picnic pavilions, a playground, and the boat ramp being completed by DNR. There is also room for any future plans and expansion to include more pickleball and tennis courts or other uses, depending on the needs at the time. This project will be completed in phases, with Phase 1 projected to cost an estimated \$3.5 - \$4 million. The next step is to have Lose Design prepare a bid package for the construction of Phase 1.

PUBLIC HEARING

NONE

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

- (A) **Building Inspection/ Business Licensing**
Consideration to approve a renewal alcohol license for Temp Coffee & Brew located at 1420 US 19 South.
Chairman Singletary stated that this renewal would have been included in the mass approval in December; however, the business at that time did not want to continue serving alcohol. The business owners have since changed their minds and would like to be able to once again serve alcohol.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve a renewal alcohol license for Temp Coffee & Brew located at 1420 US 19 South. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Walls voting yea.
- Planning, Zoning & Engineering**
- (B) **Review of the minutes for the February 1, 2024 Planning Commission meeting.**
The meeting minutes were reviewed as presented.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES

- (A) **Consideration to appoint four (4) members to the Community Foundation Board of Trustees for a term of two (2) years. Current term expires 03/22/2024. New term will expire 03/22/2026. Letters of interest in appointment received from Christi Dockery (reappointment), Ann Nix (reappointment), Heather Jones (reappointment), and Marian Grant-Whitlock (reappointment).**
Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Christi Dockery, Ann Nix, Heather Jones, and Marian Grant-Whitlock to the Community Foundation Board of Trustees for a term of two (2) years to expire 03/22/2026. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Walls voting yea.
- (B) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member (required resident representative) to the Housing Authority**

Board for a term of one (1) year. Current term expires 03/31/2024. New term expires 03/31/2025. Letter of interest in appointment received from Sabrina Mason.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to appoint Sabrina Mason to the Housing Authority Board for a term of one (1) year to expire 03/31/2025. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

(C) **Discussion of Courthouse concept plans and renderings.**

Superior Court Judge James Sizemore was present and discussed the presented plans by stating this was a basic plan that was provided to him for renovations to the courthouse. There are some areas that he is not in total agreement with; however it is a great start. Judge Sizemore asked that the Board allow him to work with County Manager Christi Dockery to establish a committee to evaluate and discuss the needs and plans for the building. A lot of input is needed to the project, especially the interior. It is important to maintain the historical features of the existing Courthouse and not compromise any of the sort with said renovation. The renovation will include an addition to the Courthouse and minimal interference with the original courthouse structure.

(D) **Doug Goodin, Chief Appraiser, to discuss potential legislation.**

Doug Goodin, Chief Appraiser, discussed several pieces of potential legislation, including HB 1019 (a constitutional amendment) which would raise the homestead exemption from \$2,000.00 to \$4,000.00, HB 1031 which would mandate a reappraisal of real property every three years (would also allow Tax Commissioner and Tax Assessors' office to appeal to the Department of Audit's ratio study), a major piece of legislation that would change the amount of personal property that you can be taxed on from \$7,500.00 to \$20,000.00 (based on last year's report, that would be approximately 3,000 tax bills that would no longer go out), and HB 1185 which would create a local floating homestead exemption that the Board would have to approve and adopt. The requirement to put estimated taxes on assessment notices has also been removed, thereby lessening confusion.

Mr. Goodin stated that the ratio for this year is 35.62; however, we are not the only County out of compliance as there are approximately 79 currently. The ratio needs to be above 36 or we risk a penalty of a \$5.00 fine per parcel. The Tax Assessor's Office is working to fix it in house and the efforts should be evident in possibly the 2025 Tax Digest, but realistically it may be more likely for the 2026. Approximately 70% of the digest is residential property and people are paying top dollar for houses. If things keep going in the way they are, we unfortunately may need to complete a revaluation.

Commissioner Mathis asked what Mr. Goodin would need in order to correct the issues with the digest, to which Mr. Goodin replied two (2) completely trained employees. The training process for this department can take several years. Chairman Singletary asked if there was perhaps an opportunity to contract with someone to come in and help with the revaluation and training. Mr. Goodin said he could ask around to find someone. Mr. Goodin also stated that the law mandating non-disclosure is not necessarily for public officials.

COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS

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

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed ongoing projects in the County: (1) The road resurfacing project is ongoing with approximately 14 roads completed and 10 being worked on; (2) the pipe repair project on Bermuda Lane should be completed within the next week; (3) the generator project is ongoing and estimates for generators at all county buildings should be available to the Board at an upcoming meeting; and (4) there may be a delay in the boat ramp project at the 100 acres as DNR has to have an environmental study completed.

(B) **Consideration to appoint a voting delegate for the Georgia Opioid Settlement regional meetings.**

This voting delegate can be either an elected official or a staff member and would attend a Georgia Opioid Settlement regional meeting on March 26, 2024 at 2:00pm. Being that March 26 is the next scheduled Board of Commissioners meeting, Chairman Singletary suggested County Manager Christi Dockery select a staff member so as there may be no chance of a Commissioner or pertinent staff missing the meeting at 6:00pm if this meeting were to go long.

COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS

(A) Discussion of the speed hump policy.

Chairman Singletary discussed the current policy and stated that a new policy should be considered so as to lighten the load for Public Works crews. Commissioner Guarnieri asked if there was an ordinance that discussed the placement and process for speed humps, to which County Attorney Jimmy Skipper replied that there wasn't, but that many entities have a policy in place that sets up a specific set of criteria for the placement of speed humps. The Board would have ultimate approval. Commissioner Mathis suggested the Board develop a plan to tell Public Works crews where to place them. County Manager Christi Dockery stated that there were 46 speed humps already in place and 21 placement requests pending. There is a certain set of criteria for placement that Public Works abides by. Chairman Singletary asked that the Commissioners think on it and come back to a future meeting with suggestions on a policy.

(B) Discussion of social media.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that several entities have limited the number of comments allowed on their social media posts and suggested the County do something similar. Chairman Singletary stated that his major concern is the spreading of misinformation and asked about the option of not allowing comments at all, but rather providing contact information to allow citizens to contact staff via email, phone or in person to gather the correct information directly from the source as a one on one discussion, stating social media should simply be a place for the County to distribute information. County Attorney Skipper replied that as long as people are provided with an option or outlet such as an email address or phone number, this shouldn't violate the First Amendment; however, he would like more time to research. Commissioner Mathis stated that staff should be continuously monitoring social media to which Chairman Singletary replied that he didn't see how that was possible.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS

(A) Consideration to approve a 10 month extension to the Conditional Use Permit with Pinewood Solar, LLC for the proposed Pinewood Solar Energy Project.

Melissa Schroeder of Pinewood Solar LLC addressed the Board, requesting a 10 month extension for the proposed Pinewood Solar Energy Project. Ms. Schroeder stated that they had applied for a conditional use in 2022 and then an extension was approved, to expire in July 2024. The company is now currently asking for an additional 10 months. Pinewood Solar is on track to secure a contract with Georgia Power. The project plan has not and will not change since its original approval in 2022 and the estimated operational date is the end of 2026. Ms. Schroeder explained that the promise of an extension is needed to secure the contract and without the contract, the project will not continue on the desired timeline and the entire conditional use application process will have to restart.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve a 10 month extension to the Conditional Use Permit with Pinewood Solar, LLC for the proposed Pinewood Solar Energy Project. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

(B) Consideration to approve an Amended and Restated Inducement Agreement with Pinewood Solar, LLC.

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper summarized the agreement, stating that an ordinance was done that changed the financial agreement in terms of bonds with the Development Authority and this is one of the few projects that was grandfathered in. This agreement had to be approved and signed by the Development Authority, the Board of Commissioners, the Tax Commissioner, and the Tax Assessor's Board.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve an Amended and Restated Inducement Agreement with Pinewood Solar, LLC. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous

with Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Walls 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.

Sam Johnson – State of Old Leslie Road

Paul Clayton – Old Leslie Road

Chairman Singletary asked if anyone else would like to speak.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that she had just received word from EMA officials that the creek is rising and increased flooding potential on Uncle Jimmy's Lane

- (A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission Meeting is **Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 6:00pm.**
- (B) Offices of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be **closed Friday, March 29, 2024** in observance of **Good Friday**. Offices will reopen for normal business hours on Monday, April 1, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Walls voting yea. The meeting adjourned at 7:22PM.

Facebook video link: <https://www.facebook.com/leecountyga/videos/1480481715895491>

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.