



**Fannin County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Jury Assembly Room
January 10, 2017 6:00 PM**

OPENING REGULAR MEETING

Chairman Stan Helton called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

The Invocation was given by Zach Ratcliff.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Earl Johnson.

Chairman Helton called for a motion to appoint County Attorney Lynn Doss at the Interim County Clerk for the January 10, 2017 meeting. Motion made first by Commissioner Larry Joe Sosebee. Second made by Commissioner Johnson; motion passed by unanimous vote.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Helton asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2016 regular meeting. Motion made first by Commissioner Johnson. Motion made second by Commissioner Sosebee; motion passed by unanimous decision.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Chairman Helton remarked that Public Commentary had been moved in the agenda order so that citizens would not need to wait until the end of the meeting to speak. Chairman Helton opened the floor for public comment at 6:05 PM.

Ralph Garner stated he had three items for the board. Garner first extended a welcome to Chairman Helton and stated he trusted Chairman Helton would keep his promises to bring transparency and financial accountability to county government. Secondly, Garner spoke of asking District Attorney Alison Sosebee to contact the Georgia Bureau of Investigation regarding the forensic audit of the Recreation Department's financial records under a former director. Garner stated District Attorney Sosebee had emailed him saying she had spoken with a special agent with the FBI who confirmed recent receipt of the forensic audit and that the investigation is ongoing. Garner asked the board to make an inquiry regarding the audit. Lastly, Garner complimented former County Clerk and Finance Director Rita Kirby on her diligence and cooperation responding to Open Record Requests and other questions from citizens.

With no further comments, Public Commentary was closed at 6:09 PM.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Helton shifted to approving all invoices over \$4,500. Motion to approve invoices over \$4,500 made first by Commissioner Sosebee. Second made by Commissioner Johnson; motion passed by unanimous decision.

Brian Pritchard asked if in the future the media could obtain a copy of the invoices over \$4,500 and if he could get copies of the invoices approved during the meeting. Chairman Helton stated he would not answer without first consulting the County Clerk but would be glad to discuss after the meeting.

Chairman Helton moved to the appointment of Larry Atkins to the Fannin County Water Authority to replace his vacant seat. Chairman Helton asked Anita Weaver to comment on Atkins. Weaver stated she felt Atkins would make a great asset to the Water Authority. Chairman Helton asked for a motion to appoint Atkins to the Fannin County Water Authority. Motion made first by Commissioner Sosebee. Second made by Commissioner Johnson; motion passed by unanimous vote.

Chairman Helton moved to Rita Oberle speaking on Shallowford Bridge Road. Oberle presented the board with a petition to blacktop 3/10 of a mile of Shallowford Bridge Road to the National Forest. Oberle stated the petition was signed by all residents except one who resides in Huntsville, Alabama. Oberle stated they are asking for the blacktop to decrease the dust. Chairman Helton asked Oberle if she lived on the Aska Road side and the gravel was across the river. Oberle said yes but the residents on the petition received the dust from the gravel. Chairman Helton stated this would be an item to possibly move to the workshop to give the board time to look at the project.

Chairman Helton proceeded to a variance request from Big Creek Overlook. Chairman Helton stated the variance request had been tabled from the December 13, 2016 meeting. Commissioner Johnson stated he has spoken with Brandon Mathis and Mathis believed it would conserve time to apply for the variances together instead of individually. Commissioner Johnson stated his initial reaction was that the board could not give blanket variances. Commissioner Johnson inquired with Building Inspector Keith Nicholson regarding the issue. Nicholson stated that Mathis had applied for several variances to save time but, if needed, would apply individually. Commissioner Sosebee remarked he felt to grant the variance would set a precedence for future variances applied for in the same manner. Commissioner Johnson asked if each variance was handled as one. County Attorney Doss answered yes and they all stand on their own. Doss recommended that if the board decided to approve the variance, to do so according to certain criteria, with time not being one of the criteria. Commissioner Johnson stated the board would need specifics regarding which lots would be included. Nicholson said he believed it was only going to be 4-5 lots included in the variance request. Doss commented on a multiple lot variance and not blanketing an entire subdivision. Commissioner Johnson stated if Mathis could identify which lots would be due to the slope issues he would not mind granting a multiple lot variance. Chairman Helton discussed denying the variance as a technicality and Mathis reapplying under the

stipulations that had been discussed. Motion to deny the variance made first by Commissioner Sosebee. Motion made second by Commissioner Johnson; motion to deny the variance passed by unanimous decision. Chairman Helton stated the motion had been denied but Mathis could reapply with something the board could work with. The Big Creek Overlook variance request is included and should be considered as part of the minutes.

Chairman Helton moved to a variance request from Tech Lim as the Trustee of Tech Lim Living Trust to build fourteen apartments instead of the twelve the county allows. Motion made first by Commissioner Johnson. Motion made second by Commissioner Sosebee; motion passed by unanimous vote. The Trustee of Tech Lim Living Trust variance request is included and should be considered as part of the minutes.

Chairman Helton shifted to a report from Sherry Morris with Fannin County Family Connections. Morris stated that Family Connections serves the community by offering the food pantry and the family shelter. Morris stated that 45% of Fannin County residents live at or below 150% of Federal Poverty guidelines. Morris remarked that Family Connections provides a food box for residents that meet their guidelines and during the previous year served 17,194 people including 4,724 children and 4,639 seniors. Morris stated that while residents are visiting the pantry, Family Connections provides information for community service, job fairs, and more. Morris said that during 2016 the shelter had provided 2,948 bed nights to those with no homes. Morris thanked the board for including a line item in the proposed budget for Family Connections. Morris requested the Board of Commissioners to once again serve as the fiscal agent for Family Connections. Chairman Helton inquired about volunteers at Family Connections. Morris stated they operate between 100-150 hours for volunteers each week and there is always a room for more volunteers. Chairman Helton made first the motion for Fannin Board of Commissioners to serve as Fiscal Agent for Family Connections during 2017-2018. Second made by Commissioner Sosebee; motion passed by unanimous decision.

Chairman Helton moved to a report from Zach Ratcliff, Director of Public Works, concerning the winter storm. Ratcliff stated that the winter storm had begun at approximately 1:30 PM on January 6, 2017. Ratcliff said the Road Department began putting materials on roads throughout the county and crews worked through the night. Ratcliff commented on materials used including approximately 125 tons of salt, 4 spreaders, 3 graders, and pickup trucks. Ratcliff stated there were 438 man hours and overtime would be turned in. Chairman Helton commented that he had heard citizens say county roads were better than state roads. Steve Stanley of Fannin County School Board stated there would be school the following day and thanked Ratcliff for his efforts. Chairman Johnson said county roads were better than the state roads. Commissioner Johnson said the work was done strategically and he appreciate the hours spent working. Commissioner Sosebee commended Ratcliff on having all the equipment ready to go when needed.

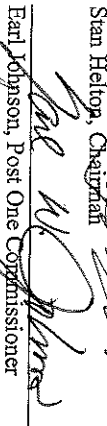
Chairman Helton moved to a discussion of adding a monthly workshop in between the meetings. Chairman Helton said the workshop would allow for more discussion, communication, and time to reflect on issues brought forth in meetings. Chairman Helton recommended the meeting be held on the third Wednesday of each month. Commissioner Sosebee stated he is flexible on Wednesdays. Commissioner Johnson inquired about holding workshops as needed. Commissioner Johnson agreed that the board needed more time to make wise decisions and he would be willing to try the workshops at this time but expressed reservations during the summer with his business. The board decided the workshops would take place at 6:00 PM on Wednesday, January 18, 2017. Chairman Helton asked the commissioners to decide what items they would like to be on the agenda by Friday. Commissioner Johnson stated he would like the board to have a specific road list of roads the county will maintain during weather emergencies. Commissioner Sosebee asked that a priority paving road list be made. Chairman Helton stated Shallowford Bridge Road would also be discussed.

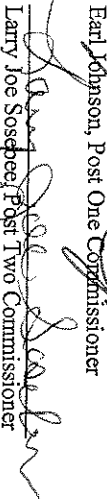
Chairman Helton asked if the board needed Executive Session and they agreed they did not.

CLOSING

With no further business, Chairman Helton called for a motion to adjourn at 6:49 PM. Motion made first by Commissioner Johnson. Second made by Commissioner Sosebee; motion passed by unanimous decision.


Stan Helton, Chairman


Earl Johnson, Post One Commissioner


Larry Joe Sosebee, Post Two Commissioner

Attest:


Lynn Doss, Interim County Clerk