

NEWTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
1124 Clark Street
Covington, Georgia

January 17, 2023
Regular Meeting
MINUTES

Present: Chairman Marcello Banes, Commissioners' Stan Edwards, Demond Mason, Alana Sanders, J.C. Henderson, Ronnie Cowan, County Attorney Priya Patel, Interim County Manager Jarvis Sims, and Clerk Jackie Smith

Others Present: Citizens, Covington News and the Newton Citizen

Chairman Banes called the meeting to order, extended a welcome, and read the thought for the day. The invocation was given by Pastor Gabriel Stovall, Covington News Editor & Publisher. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Demond Mason.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason, to adopt the agenda for January 17, 2023.

Motion carried unanimously

CITIZEN COMMENTS – None

REPORTS FROM CHAIRMAN BANES

- Recognized Chester Clegg, director of transportation and Wendy Patterson, EMA staff to give an update on storm relief efforts.
- President Biden as well as Governor Kemp declared Newton County as a disaster area.
- Federal funding will be available for temporary housing, grants, home repairs and low cost loans for the uninsured.
- Being declared a disaster area will allow the county, businesses and citizens to apply for GEMA & FEMA assistance programs, i.e. debris removal, home owners with no insurance, loan assistance for home owners and businesses with storm damage, etc.
- PowerPoint showed photos of storm.
- Stewart area hit hard.
- Chris Malcolm had seven (7) crews on site within minutes and called in five (5) more crews to begin the clean-up of roads.
- SSEMC brought in crews Friday and Saturday.
- More than 200 power poles were broken off.
- Public Works, Fire Services, Sheriff's Office EMA.... all worked to help clear the roads.

- We estimate over 1000 truckloads of debris.
- 14 roads were completely blocked and by early Friday morning our public works teams had roads opened.
- Commissioner Sanders voiced her concern over citizens not being able to hear the tornado sirens. EMA staff Wendy Patterson responded they are researching how best to handle this issue. She noted that outside sirens will only be heard if you are on the outside. This siren is to alert people to seek shelter.
- Ms. Patterson told the board they continue to promote Code Red for emergency alert notifications. You can receive this alert on your cell phone, text or home.
- Chairman and board members expressed appreciation to Mr. Clegg, his teams of workers, Sheriff Brown & staff, Fire Services, SSEMC teams and our citizens who went into action to assist others.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

- ICM Sims recognized Pastor Clara Lett to provide an update on the Warming Shelter Center.
- Provided an update of the daily operations of the Center.
- Our clients are transferred daily to the GOG Homeless Shelter on Turner Lake Circle.
- Provided nutritious meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner) and snacks daily.
- They can shower, do their laundry, read, watch television or enjoy the park area and fire pit.
- All 14 beds are filled at Rainbow Covenant Ministries.
- Cousins gym has 24 sleeping cots. (filled)
-
- She stated they hire some of the residents who are trained and proven capable.
- Total Clients served @ Cousins from December 21, 2022 – January 15, 2023:
Men: 119
Women: 84
Children: 8
Total: 183
- Total Clients served @ Rainbow Church from December 14, 2022 – January 17, 2023:
Men: 136
Women: 116
Children: 4
Total: 256
- Recognized finance department staff and invited them to the platform to be honored.
Brittany White, finance director, Randi Fincher, Dana Darby, and Beth Edwards
- He expressed appreciation for the outstanding job our finance department does day in and day out under the excellent leadership of finance director Brittany White and noted this recognition acknowledges our dedication to fiduciary responsibility.

- The FD recently received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. This is the highest achievement and recognition given out. (Copy is attached and made part of these minutes).
- Delighted to say that N.C. has received this recognition and honor every year since 2018.
- Chairman Banes & Board expressed their gratitude and congratulations to the Brittany and staff. They received a round of applause from the audience and BOC.
- Commissioner Henderson requested a copy of how much money is being spent at Gaither's of Myrtle Creek Farm. He would like to know the advantages of how it helps the people of Newton County.
- ICM noted there will be a Budget Work Shop on March, 28, 29 & 30th.
- Budget Work Session will be held on April 18th.
- He noted he is working towards more citizen engagement.
- Could possibly have a survey of priorities and budget could project your top 3 or 4 projects.

7:30 P.M. PUBLIC ZONING HEARING

Presenter: Shena Applewhaite, IDDS

Old Business

MODIFICATION CASE NUMBER MOD22-000002

Applicant: John Nix

Location: 2486 Hwy 81

Map & Parcel Numbers: 28A-1**District:** 4 (Four)

FLUM: DN (Development Node)

Zoning: CG (General Commercial)

Acreage: 2.63 acres

Modification to zoning conditions by substituting the site plan for condition #2(a) which references the preliminary site plan associated with the proposed operation of a landscape business; and to remove condition #3(d) which limits the hours of operation from 7:00am through 10:00pm; and condition #3(e) which requires the maintenance of a 75 ft. tree line along Shepherd Road.

- Public Hearing was held at the last meeting.
- October 18, 2022 BOC tabled request for 60 days.
- December 6, 2022 the applicant requested deferral until January 17, 2023
- Commissioner Henderson noted that he was unable to attend the recent Zoom Meeting (Mrs. Henderson in the hospital) and would like to table the request for 30 days.
- He voiced his concern there wasn't enough advertising for the zoom meeting for citizens to attend meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Henderson, second by Commissioner Mason to table for 30 days (February 21, 2023) for further advertising of the modification to the zoning.

Motion carried 4/1 with Commissioner Cowan voting in opposition to the motion.

REZONING CASE NUMBER: REZ22-000014

Applicant: Geza DeGall, Rep: Brad Horbal

Location: 7079 Hwy 212 & Hwy 212

Map & Parcel Number: 1-7, 1-7A

District: 2 (Two)

FLUM: MIX (Mixed Use)

Zoning: R2 (Single Family Residential)

Acreage: 3.096 total Acres approx.

Request: Rezone parcel from R2 (Single Family Residential) to CG (General Commercial) for commercial/retail use.

- The director read the conditions into the record.

Motion by Commissioner Mason, second by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the zoning change from R2 (Single Family Residential) to CG (General Commercial for commercial/retail use.

- Commissioner Cowan voiced his concern that stricter conditions (prohibited uses) might be needed when approving zoning changes.
- Would like to discuss finding a way to place conditions on the property.
- Commissioner Edwards clarified that all conditions follow the property when sold and the director confirmed.

After a brief discussion the board decided to table the request for 30 days (February 27th BOC meeting) to discuss further.

Motion by Commissioner Mason, second by Commissioner Edwards, to table REZ22-000014 for 30 days (February 21, 2023). -

Motion carried unanimously

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

FIRE SERVICES IS SEEKING APPROVAL TO ORDER 4 PUMPER APPARATUS' AND 2 TANKERS BEFORE PRICE INCREASES.

- Presenter: Mike Conner, Fire Chief
- Approved as a 2023 SPLOST project.
- Spreading on tonight's minutes is a formality due to the amount if purchase.
- Purchasing Policy requires item must be presented twice.
- First presented at the January 10, 2023 BOC Meeting.
- Cost: \$4,933,312.88
- Funding Source: 2023 SPLOST
- No action necessary

Consent Agenda

Superior Court/Resource Court is requesting permission to apply for CACJ (Council of Accountability Court Judges) supplemental grant.

- No match requirements.
- Time Sensitive: Yes
- Date: 01/27/2023
- Funding Source: CACJ

Fire Services is requesting approval to apply for Assistance to Firefighters Grant (\$85,000.00).

- To purchase fire hose to replace outdated hose.
- Time Sensitive: Yes
- Date: 02/10/2023
- Cost: \$8,500.00
- Funding Source: \$85,000.00 (Grant)
- Budgeted: Yes
- Match: 10%

Board Appointment: View Point Health Board-Brandy Burch of the Newton County Sheriff's Office will serve the remaining term of previous board member Terria Maxwell. Term to expire June 30, 2024.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason, to approve the Consent Agenda for January 17, 2023.

Motion carried unanimously

ITEMS FOR BOARD DISCUSSION & CONSIDERATION

INFORMATION SERVICES IS REQUESTING APPROVAL OF AT&T INTERNET FEED BANDWIDTH UPGRADE.

- Presenter: Greg Mann, director of information services
- Cost: \$1,562.00 Monthly
- Quadruple internet bandwidth for lower cost.
- Will save county \$3800 over 24-month term.
- Funding Source: FY 2023 Information Services Budget
- Budgeted: Yes

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason, to approve the AT&T Internet Feed Bandwidth Upgrade as presented and requested by information services director Greg Mann.

Motion carried unanimously

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES/PURCHASING IS REQUESTING APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR CPL ARCHITECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES CONSULTANT.

- Presenter: Shena Applewhaite, Development Services, Interim Director
- Company: CPL Architects, Engineers, Landscape Architect and Surveyor, DPC
- Consultant will help with Zoning Administration, Land Use & Development Reviews, Storm Water/Floodplain and MS4 Report.
- Cost: Not to exceed \$130,000.00
- Funding Source: General Fund
- Budgeted: Yes
- Match: No

Motion by Commissioner Cowan, second by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the Professional Services Agreement between Newton County, Georgia and CPL Architects, Engineers, Landscape Architect and Surveyor for a not to exceed amount of \$130,000.00 as presented by planning and development director Shena Applewhaite.

Motion carried unanimously

FINANCE DEPARTMENT – DECEMBER 2022 FINANCIAL UPDATE

- Presenter: Brittany White, Finance Director
- No action necessary

FINANCE DEPARTMENT – FY 2024 BUDGET CALENDAR

- Presenter: Brittany White, Finance Director
- Time Sensitive: January 17, 2024
- Requesting to move forward with budget dates.

Motion by Commissioner Mason, second by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the FY2024 Budget Calendar as presented by Finance Director Brittany White.

Motion carried unanimously

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MANAGER/FINANCE DEPARTMENT WILL PROVIDE UPDATE ON 2023 SPLOST TIER LIST, TIER 1 AND TIER 2

- Presenter(s): ICM Jarvis Sims, Brittany White, Finance Director, Jeff Prine
- Updated the board on regarding the 3 different tiers.
- Represents schedule for tasks to be done.
- Update on 2023 SPLOST projects
- Commissioner Henderson voiced his concern regarding R.L. Cousins project.
- Mr. Prine noted that the project was originally \$16,000,000 and it was narrowed down to \$10,000,000 and we have \$8,000,000 earmarked from SPLOST.
- Mr. Prine noted it is clearly a high priority project.
- They decided to approve the list and to approve Tier 1 projects from 6/7 months to pushout to 12 months and add R.L. Cousins project to the Tier 1 List.
- The updated list is attached and made part of these minutes.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason, to approve the 3 tiers as presented

Commissioner Cowan made a motion to approve the list with consideration being given to bonding the R.L. Cousins project.

- Ms. White suggested that we stay within the \$25,000,000 for bonding projects.
- She noted that we built the interest into \$25,000,000.
- ICM Sims noted that all projects are approved SPLOST projects.
- ICM Sims noted we are identifying the projects to bond and start and that all projects are important to us.
- Mr. Prine noted we could scoot some projects back and move R.L. Cousins to the 1st priority tier.
- Commissioner Henderson asked for certainty that R.L. Cousins would begin this year.
- Mr. Prine stated we could start the project in 2023 and change nothing but the time frame for the Tier 1 projects.
- Mr. Prine asked to clarify this would allow us to start the R.L. Cousins project this year...not finish the project, but start the project. He said at best it will be 18 months to finish.
- All Tier 1 projects will be pushed up 6 more months.
- The updated project list is attached and made part of these minutes.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason, to approve the updated Tier list to include moving the R.L. Cousins project to a Tier 1 project and begin project this year.

PUBLIC WORKS IS REQUESTING APPROVAL TO CONTRACT WITH COLLIERS ENGINEERING AND DESIGN TO NEGOTIATE THE ACQUISITION OF EASEMENTS FOR THE YELLOW RIVER TRAIL PROJECT.

- Presenter: Chester Clegg, Transportation Director
- Time Sensitive: January 17, 2023
- County needs to acquire easements for the trail.
- Lowest proposal was from Colliers Engineering & Design.
- Cost: \$72,750.00
- Funding Source: 100% 2017 SPLOST
- Budgeted: Yes
- Match: No

Motion by Commissioner Henderson, second by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the contract with Colliers Engineering & Design in the amount of \$72,750.00 as presented by Transportation Director Chester Clegg. -
Motion carried unanimously

DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL: CONTRACT FOR BERRY, DUNN. THE STRATEGIC PLAN CONTRACT FOR NEWTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS. CONTRACT AMOUNT NOT EXCEED \$67,600.00

Presenter: ICM Jarvis Sims

- RFP: October 2022
- Received 6 RFP's
- Interviewed 2
- Based on criteria Berry, Dunn was selected to bring to board for approval.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason to approve Berry, Dunn's Strategic Plan Contract for an amount not to exceed \$67,600.00.

Further Discussion:

- Commissioner Sanders requested a copy of the work/background of the companies.
- Commissioner Cowan voiced his concern that the county spent thousands of dollars for a strategic plan and instead of tweaking that plan we are now going to bring in a new consultant to start all over.
- Totally against bringing in a new consultant.
- Feels we just need an update.
- Going with a new consultant is a waste of time and money.
- My intent all along was that we were doing an update.
- Brittany White, finance director told that board that after consulting with legal and reviewing current procurement policy that based on the dollar amount we had to do an RFP.
- ICM Sims noted the RFP was framed to review and make recommendations.
- ICM Sims noted that legal did not make a recommendation.
- After a lengthy discussion the board tabled the request.

Amended Motion

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason to amend the motion to table request for 30 days and to include receiving an update from the Foster's on the cost of an update to the Strategic Plan.

Motion carried unanimously

DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL: SECOND AMENDMENT TO CONTRACT OF SALE (REVISED PURCHASE AGREEMENT) CITY OF COVINGTON AND NEWTON LAND INVESTMENTS, LLC.

- Chairman Banes removed this item from the agenda.

ALCOHOL BEVERAGE LICENSE

Final Reading

Walgreens #12621
12955 Brown Bridge Road
Covington, GA 30016
Applicant: Clayton Schwindt
District 2

Motion by Commissioner Mason, second by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the alcohol license request for Walgreens #12621, located at 12955 Brown Bridge Road, Covington, GA.

Motion carried unanimously

Final Reading

Flash Foods, Circle K
4175 Salem Road
Covington, GA 30016
Licensee: Misty Wilson
District 2

Motion by Commissioner Mason, second by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the alcohol license request for Walgreens #12621, located at 12955 Brown Bridge Road, Covington, GA.

Motion carried unanimously

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Thelma Starr
Covington

- Expressed concern for senior citizens and the amount of time it is taking to receive assistance from ARPA funding.
- Suggested representative set up an office in Covington to be of assistance in completing application for those in need and applying for ARPA funding.

Jean

Fieldstone Subdivision
Covington

- 40-year resident
- Many residents love our neighborhood and do our best to keep it up.
- Disappointed at response from Code Enforcement and questioned if that department is fully staffed.
- Several homes are in violation of the ordinance governing code enforcement.
- Junk in yards (washers, dryers, cars in need of repair, flatbed trailers, home businesses not following policy.

Frederick Johnson
Covington

- Gave a report on cemetery clean-up on MLK Day.

- Popular Hill Cemetery
- 15/20 volunteers
- Expressed appreciation to Commissioner Edwards and Commissioner Cowan for their donations.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Edwards

- Expressed appreciation to Mr. Johnson for the clean-up of Popular Hill Cemetery.

Commissioner Mason

- Shared his recent trip to Mobile, Alabama with NACO
- Visited five different sites. Excellent!
- Innovation is similar to Newton Tomorrow.

Commissioner Sanders

- Recently attended University Cancer Center.
- January 21st
- March 4th

Commissioner Henderson

- Voiced his concern about county money being spent for Gaither Plantation.

Commissioner Cowan

- Voiced his concern for lack of insurance.
- He noted we can't build parks and public facilities without liability insurance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Time: 9:41 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards, second by Commissioner Mason, to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of possible land acquisition.

Motion carried unanimously

The board entered back into regular session at 10:02 p.m.

With there being no further business, a motion by Commissioner Mason, second by Commissioner Cowan, the meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie B. Smith, County Clerk

Marcello Banes, Chairman