

CHARLTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
COUNTY AUDITORIUM
68 KINGSLAND DRIVE, SUITE B
FOLKSTON, GA 31537
THURSDAY, AUGUST 15TH, 2024
6:00 PM

8/15/2024 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:59 PM.

Present was Chairman Jesse Crews, Commissioner Alpha Benefield, Commissioner James Everett, Commissioner Drew Jones, Commissioner Luke Gowen, County Administrator Hampton Raulerson, County Attorney John Adams, HR/Finance Coordinator Rebecca Harden, and Deputy Clerk Madeline Nettles. Guests also present are recorded here after.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Invocation was led by Commissioner Benefield.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Benefield made a motion to amend the agenda. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Everett made a motion to adopt the amended agenda. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Commissioner Everett motioned to adopt the minutes. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

5. FINANCIAL REPORT (SECOND MEETING)

Commissioner Benefield motions to adopt the financial report. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

6. CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AC REPAIR FOR ANNEX BUILDING

Commissioner Benefield motioned to table this item. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

7. CONSIDER RATIFYING PURCHASE OF MATERIALS FOR ROAD DEPARTMENT

Commissioner Benefield moved to ratify the purchase. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. County Administrator Raulerson clarified that the money would be taken from TSPLOST to fund the purchase. Motion carried unanimously.

8. CONSIDER REPEALING COUNTY ORDINANCE REGARDING BUILDING CODES

County Administrator Raulerson informed the board of the contradictions existing in the code and the current practice in the permitting office, which is to follow the International Code.

The board intends to advertise a resolution repealing Section 110-184 from the current county code twice, discuss the resolution at the public hearing on August 26th, 2024, and bring it back at the next meeting.

AMENDMENT TO THE AGENDA: HEAR FROM GARY TIPPINS BOARD OF ASSESSORS

Mr. Tippins informed the board that a current employee will be retiring at the end of February or beginning of March. The Board of Assessors plans to advertise for the position around November 15th and begin hiring after that, as the first class the new hire would need to take begins January 6th.

No action was taken by the Board of Commissioners at this time.

9. FIRST READING OF NUISANCE ORDINANCE

County Administrator Raulerson informed the board and public that both ordinances were available on the county website and online. There will be a public hearing to discuss the ordinances further on August 26th, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the County Auditorium.

The board reviewed the changes made to the Nuisance Ordinance draft, presented by County Administrator Raulerson. Several commissioners made comments towards the public, encouraging them to come to the public hearing, voice their opinions, and reminding the public that the board wants to consider what they say when making decisions.

10. FIRST READING OF TIMBER HARVESTING ORDINANCE

The board discussed the ordinance and its connection to House Bill 897.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS: (PLEASE LIMIT TO 3 MINUTES)

Chairman Crews opened the floor to public comments about the nuisance ordinance.

Marian Benefield discussed section 4, asking how the board plans to protect privacy rights and what measures will be put in place to prevent abuse. Chairman stated they will research and return with an answer on August 26th, 2024.

Dale Taylor recommended a board or committee of citizens be formed to review condemnation plans of structures. He also recommended that the commissioners put off this ordinance until the economy is in a better place.

Kathy Lloyd mentioned the limited contractors available in the county and asked what the board recommends citizens do.

Doug Walters asked what the time frame on this ordinance would be and when it will be brought up for a final vote. County Administrator informed him that the ordinance could be heard again at the September 5th meeting if the board wishes.

Steve Sikes wants the board to consider citizens who are living in camper trailers currently. He also thanked Commissioner Gowen and Ronnie Pollock, Road Superintendent, on their work to fix the road.

Lisa Chacon expressed her opinion that the ordinance is too large for the community and asked if it would be condensed to better fit Charlton County. Commissioner Gowen said the board had asked for a broad ordinance, so they could slim it down and customize it for Charlton County.

Lee Steedley expressed her concerns about this ordinance violating her rights. She also expressed her concern about limited resources in the area and the community being unable to resolve the issues listed in the ordinance due to financial strain.

Elaine Bailey shared her desires for the community to find a way to help each other. She commented on commissioners previously seeking out funding to help citizens and suggested the board be advocates on behalf of citizens who are struggling but also trying to better themselves. She shared that she wants to board to help property owners, providing an example of the board helping people living in camper trailers bring their housing up to code. County Administrator Raulerson and Commissioner Benefield shared the previous attempts to get funding for housing and how they were unsuccessful in securing that funding.

Lisa Taylor expressed her feelings that the timeline to pass the ordinance felt rushed and that the current draft was not suited for Charlton County.

Jo Dube agrees with the ordinance about cleaning properties. She asked if this would apply within the city limits. County Administrator Raulerson said the City of Folkston has a similar ordinance already in the books, and the county does code enforcement for them. Together, Code Enforcement and the City of Folkston are focusing on US-1. This specific ordinance does not apply to the City of Folkston or the City of Homeland, and it would be up to the cities to pursue the ordinance or a similar ordinance themselves.

Zach Carter asked about the board up process and the fees associated with it. County Administrator Raulerson explained that a fee would be established for the board-up process and an additional fee would not be charged for any extensions. Mr. Carter also asked if a bond would be placed on the timber owner or harvester, in regard to the Timber Harvesting Ordinance. County Administrator Raulerson stated that it would be on the harvester. Mr. Carter also asked that the commissioners introduce themselves to anyone who is unfamiliar with who they are. The board introduced themselves individually.

Matthew Knowles asked why it is anyone's business what happens on private property.

Darlene Tait stated it is hard to find contractors and supplies in the area. She said the county needs to lead by example and start with public buildings.

Buck Roddenberry stated he does not want to be told what to do with his property.

Cole Carter had questions during the public hearing about where the funds were going to go once the money was recouped. After rereading the ordinance, he stated the answer given was not written in the draft. County Attorney Adams and County Administrator Raulerson explained that it doesn't have to be written in the ordinance since there is a state law on liens and the lien process.

Herbert Richie mentioned page 12 and the recovery of county expenses, asking about the minimum charge of \$150 an hour. County Administrator Raulerson explained that the minimum charge would include personnel, fuel, equipment, etc.

Brandon Carter mentioned a specific property that he considers a nuisance. County Administrator Raulerson explained that the property has been sent to court and fined twice, with the County Inspector working on it again with new issues.

Commissioner Gowen again mentioned the reason the ordinance was brought forward. Chairman Crews informed the audience that the board would now be accepting comments on the Timber Harvesting Ordinance.

Brandon Carter asked why the tax matters if you own the land. County Administrator Raulerson clarified that property tax is not paid on timber until it is harvested. The reporting process is currently state law, and this ordinance would take the process to report to an online system.

Antwon Nixon spoke about the proposed comedy show he has requested to rent the county auditorium for. Mr. Nixon said the comedy show is for funding opportunities. County Administrator Raulerson thanked Mr. Nixon for appearing and stated an answer will be provided by the beginning of next week.

Kay Davis believes the ordinance punishes harvesters and asked why it was being brought up now? Commissioner Jones explained that it has already been brought to the board twice. He has spoken to timber dealers, land managers, property owners, and other county representatives about this ordinance and found it to not be more cumbersome on the timber industry, as they already participate in the other counties. Commissioner Jones and County Administrator Raulerson explained that this ordinance is required to participate in the notification program. Mrs. Davis asked if the bond would be used for road damage. Mrs. Davis also asked if there were legal or ethical issues with Commissioner Jones voting on this matter since he was involved with the timber industry, to which Commissioner Jones stated that he would be happy to recuse himself, but he does not benefit from this ordinance personally or financially.

Chairman Crews reminded everyone about the public hearing on August 26th, 2024, and thanked everyone for their comments, closing the public comment section.

12. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Chairman Crews closed comments.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF REQUIRED)

Commissioner Gowen made a motion to hold an executive session to discuss personnel. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion.

Executive session began at 7:24 PM.

Executive session ended at 7:48 PM. No action was taken in the executive session.

Chairman Crews announced County Administrator Raulerson had resigned to accept employment with another county.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to accept County Administrator Raulerson's resignation. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The commissioners shared sentiments towards Mr. Raulerson and the work he has done for the county.

14. NEXT MEETING:

Next meeting to be held is September 5th, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the County Auditorium.

15. ADJOURN

Commissioner Benefield motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM.

Jesse A. Crews, Chairman

Madeline Nettles, County Clerk