CHARLTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
COMMISSIONERS CONFERENCE ROOM
68 KINGSLAND DRIVE, SUITE B
FOLKSTON, GA 31537
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3RD 2024
6:00 PM

10/3/2024 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 5:58 PM.

Present was Chairman Jesse Crews, Commissioner Alphya Benefield, Commissioner Drew Jones, Commissioner James Everett, Commissioner Luke Gowen, Interim County Administrator David Headley, HR/Finance Coordinator Becky Harden, County Attorney John Adams, and County Clerk Madeline Nettles.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Invocation was led by Commissioner Everett.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Benefield motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2024-2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Chairman Crews opened up the public hearing.

Guest, James Horton, from South Georgia Regional Commission presented the kick-off public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Horton talked about the need to update the plan, the legal requirements, and programs tied to the Comprehensive plan qualifications.

Mr. Horton explained that the plan requires community participation, included elected officials, appointed officials, emergency services personnel, board of education personnel, and representatives from the general public. There will be 3 workshops to discuss the plan. Dates and locations are to be determined, but each workshop typically last 2 hours in length.

Mr. Horton asked the board and public if they had any questions or comments.

Kim Bednarek asked about resiliency planning being part of the comprehensive plan. Mr. Horton stated that it could be discussed and considered during the workshops.

The public hearing closed at 6:08 PM.

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Commissioner Everett motion to adopt the minutes as presented. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. HEAR ABOUT COASTAL INCENTIVES GRANT PROPOSAL

Guests, Merrill Varn and Rob Brown, were present to discuss the grant proposal.

The grant is a reimbursement grant. There would be a zero cash cost to the county, but there is a time commitment from the road department and committee members. GMC would send an invoice to the county to be paid, and the grant would reimburse at the end of the year.

Commissioner Jones asked about the cost. The whole cost would be $25,000. Interest would be lost on the $12.5k invoiced during the middle of the project.

Commissioner Benefield asked about the deadline for the grant. Ms. Varn introduced Rob Brown, an engineer with GMC, and allowed him to discuss the grant further.

Mr. Brown clarified that in past use of the grant, the awardee worked with the Coastal Resources Department to get reimbursement in the middle and at the end of the grant period to cover the costs.

The grant would be used in the county to identify issues with storm water infrastructure and flooding hotspots. The county would then be able to start working on priority issues identified through the project.

Mr. Brown would work on the pre-application and return it to the board by November. The pre-application is due December 6th. In January, the county would find out if they are selected for the full application, at which time Mr. Brown would then submit. The county would find out in the spring if they were awarded the grant funds, which would be available starting in October.

Commissioner Joens expressed his concerns for the time dedication required of the staff, the funding to fix issues identified through this project, and the legal implications that could occur after the issues are identified.

Interim County Administrator Headley stated that the grant could be a positive project for the county. If the county identifies areas that typically flood, the public works department could target those areas when applying for LMIG or other funding. This could also help for future budgeting purposes. Interim County Administrator Headley wants to ensure the project won't take all of the staff's time and that the project areas are truly under county ownership.

Stakeholder committee, compromised of staff and stakeholders suggested by the board, would establish the target areas that are the most problematic to apply the grant to.

The county would not be committing to the financial responsibility of the project by just applying.

Commissioner Jones asked Mr. Brown to inform Road Superintendent, Ronnie Pollock, of the labor involved in the project to see if it is feasible. Mr. Brown said that GMC would do some initial assessment and create project books that Mr. Pollock would take with him to other project and make notes on any problem areas. If Mr. Pollock does this over one- or two-month period of time, he could accumulate eighty hours. Some of the match responsibility would also be accumulated by committee meetings and presentations to the board. The total number of hours required is 720 hours. GMC and Mr. Pollock would each be responsible for doing some of the assessments.

County Attorney Adams stated that there were no legal issues with pursuing the grant.

The board discussed the need for more time to consider and ask questions about the proposal.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to table the proposal until the October 17th, 2024, meeting. Commissioner

Benefield seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

7. CONSIDER PURCHASE OF TRUCK FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Lewis discussed the need to replace the Chief's truck.

The suggested truck would have to have a skid unit put on. He provided an estimated price to the board. Chief Lewis is trying to communicate with the company if they have a state contract. Funds would come from 2020 SPLOST.

Commissioner Everett asked if the truck would work for the department's needs. Chief Lewis confirmed that it would.

Chairman Crews said the fire board had approved of the purchase.

Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the purchase of the truck, dependent on the vendor being on a state contract. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

8. CONSIDER PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT RADIOS FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Lewis discussed how the current radios will not change over to new system. He stated that the price presented to the board is for both truck and handheld radios.

Chairman Crews stated that the Fire Board had approved for the purchase.

The funds to purchase the radios will come from 2020 SPLOST.

Commissioner Jones motioned to approve the purchase. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion.

Commissioner Everett asked what could be done with the old radios. Chief Lewis stated that if they have trade in value, the department will trade them. If they can find anyone who still uses the old system, Chief Lewis suggested that they sell the radios. Commissioner Jones suggested keeping them around.

Motion carried unanimously.

9. CONSIDER ADOPTING SOP/SOG CHANGES IN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Lewis discussed the need to update fire department policy to meet county policy, and how these updates could potentially be reoccurring.

Chairman Crews said the fire board approved these changes.

County Attorney has not looked over these changes.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to approve the changes, pending approval by counsel. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion.

Commissioner Jones asked if the policy changes meet state requirements. Chief Lewis stated that the training hours meet the state's minimum requirements.

Motion carried unanimously.

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

Antwon Nixon addressed the board to discuss the comedy show. He provided a flyer regarding the event to the board. Mr. Nixon thanked the board for allowing his organization to have the comedy show. All proceeds will be going to park restoration and development. Mr. Nixon stated that they are trying to bring some positive events to the area to dispel negativity in the community. Mr. Nixon asked the board to consider allowing food in the auditorium later down the road, like a movie theater.

Chairman Everett asked Mr. Nixon about one of the acts in the comedy show. Mr. Nixon explained that one of the acts is local and another one of the acts has family from the area. Mr. Nixon also introduced Ms. Tammy King, who originated the idea.

Elaine Bailey addressed the board regarding a road issue. Mrs. Bailey stated that around 9/13/24, she saw the road splitting, which she reported to Mr. Ronnie Pollock, Road Superintendent. Mrs. Bailey stated that she went back the next day, took some photos, and spoke to residents. Mrs. Bailey stated that on behalf of the residents of Homeland Cemetery Road, she is requesting that Homeland Cemetery Road be added to the road paving list.

Ronnie Pollock thanked the fire department and Sheriff's department for their work on the roads following the storm.

11. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Benefield thanked the inmates who helped clean up Indian Trail from the board. She thanked the board and staff for helping the community getting through the hurricane.

Commissioner Benefield addressed the issues with Windstream and Verizon. She informed the public that the board is aware of the issue from an administrative standpoint.

Commissioner Gowen thanked the community as a whole for their support and coming together to help each other.

Commissioner Everett stated that the county is blessed that we are not devastated from the storm like our surrounding communities.

Commissioner Jones shared his appreciation for Ronnie Pollock, Road Superintendent, and CL Lewis, Fire Chief.

Chief Lewis reminded the board about the funeral for the Pierce County firefighter that was killed during the storm.

Commissioner Benefield stated that she has been unable to maintain her 24-hour turn around on returning phone calls due to the phone issues in the county.

Mr. Allen brought up issues around Chatman Mobley park and suggested that the board allow for a concerned citizen section that would allow the public to make comments without their name going on record. County Clerk Nettles informed Mr. Allen of the citizen comment section available on the website, which allows for anonymous comments or complaints.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF REQUIRED)

No executive session was required.

13. NEXT MEETING: OCTOBER 17TH, 2024, AT 6:00 PM, IN THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONER'S MEETING ROOM

14. ADJOURN

Commissioner Jones made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 PM.

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Jesse A. Crews, Chairman

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Madeline Nettles, County Clerk