

CHARLTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
COMMISSIONERS CONFERENCE ROOM
68 KINGSLAND DRIVE, SUITE B
FOLKSTON, GA 31537
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16TH, 2025
6:00 PM

1/16/2025 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

Present was Chairwoman Alpha Benefield, Commissioner Jesse Crews, Commissioner Drew Jones, Commissioner Luke Gowen, Commissioner Everett, County Administrator Glenn Hull, County Attorney John Adams, Director of Administrative Services Rebecca Harden, and County Clerk Nettles.

Guests present as recorded hereafter.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Invocation was led by Commissioner Crews.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

County Administrator Hull asked that an executive session to discuss personnel and real estate be added to the end of the agenda.

Commissioner Gowen made a motion to amend the agenda to include the executive session. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE JANUARY 2ND, 2025 SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Gowen made a motion to adopt both minutes. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. MOTION TO ADOPT THE JANUARY 2ND, 2025 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Minutes were unanimously adopted under "MOTION TO ADOPT JANUARY 2ND, 2025 SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES"

PRESENTATIONS

1. PRESENTATION BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR GLENN HULL OF 2024 ANNUAL EMPLOYEE AWARDS

County Administrator Hull presented employees with pins in recognition of their years of serving the county. Director of Administrative Services Harden helped present the awards by calling the names of the employees in increments of 5 years, starting with 40-year service pins.

County Administrator Hull presented the 2024 Employee of the Year Award to Michael Nelson.

2. PRESENTATION BY STAFF ON HOUSE BILL 581

Chief Appraiser Laurie Thomas and Joe Wright of GMASS presented on House Bill 581.

Mr. Wright highlighted certain areas of the bill and provided explanations of what they meant to the county.

Mr. Wright discussed the option for counties and municipalities to "opt-out" of the floating homestead exemption. "Opting out" would require 3 public hearings, each of which must be advertised 7 days prior, and a resolution sent to the Secretary of State by March 1st. If the county does not "opt-out," then they are automatically "opted-in." There is not option to "opt-out" later. Mr. Wright stated that several counties, cities, and school boards are planning on "opting out" due to tax and grant reasons, with some entities already being the advertising for the public hearings.

Mr. Wright presented some data, which showed that if the 2024 floating homestead exemption was in place in 2024, over \$246,000 in tax revenue would have been missed due to the exemption. Commissioner Jones asked if the county could adjust the rollback rate to make up that difference, which Mr. Wright stated that the millage rate would have to increase at some point to start making up the difference in tax revenue from the exemption rate being frozen. Commissioner Jones shared his concern about the value of the home and the tax rate being disproportionate, as well as concern that uniformity in the housing value and the discouragement this would cause with homeowners who would want to move.

Mr. Wright recommends that the county "opts-out" but informed that Commissioners to consider what the voters wanted. Mr. Wright did state concerns that the votes may not have been fully aware of how the bill would affect the millage rate at the time of voting.

Commissioner Everett asked who the bill benefits. Mr. Wright stated that it was designed to benefit homesteaders but could cause the community to have to pay an increase in taxes to make up the loss of revenue.

Mr. Wright informed the Commissioners that the cities and county need to vote together, because if one "opts-out" while the others "opt in," all municipalities will lose out on FLOST eligibility. FLOST is a specialized sales tax that could help recoup revenue loss. Voters would have to approve FLOST if eligible. County Administrator Hull warned that sales taxes were very aggressive taxes and its effects on the impoverished more than the wealthier community members.

Commissioner Gowen suggested that the county and the cities get together to discuss the bill further. County Administrator Hull suggested a joint public presentation from Mr. Wright on the bill to ensure that everyone is informed. Commissioner Gowen asked Pender Lloyd, the City Manager of Folkston, if the council would agree to meet. Mr. Lloyd agreed to try to get everyone together.

Mr. Wright confirmed that he would be available on January 23rd, at 6:00 PM to present again.

3. PRESENTATION BY COUNTY CLERK MADELINE NETTLES REGARDING PARTNERSHIP WITH HOSPITAL AUTHORITY TO COMPLY WITH FEDERAL COURT ORDER

County Clerk Nettles presented the final report on the County partnership with the Hospital Authority,

highlighting certain areas like the number of employees that participated, the amount of records destroyed, and the total cost of the project.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PETITIONS

PURCHASING ITEMS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO PAY OUTSTANDING INVOICES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$15,402.52 FOR RECORDS SERVICES RENDERED DURING PARTNERSHIP WITH HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

Commissioner Crews made a motion to authorize County Administrator Hull to pay the outstanding invoices. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

GRANTS AND SPLOST PROJECT

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO APPLY FOR THE 2025 LMIG GRANT

Director of Infrastructure and Development Ronnie Pollock was present for any questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Crews made a motion to authorize County Administrator Hull to apply for the 2025 LMIG Grant. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Crews asked where the roads for the project were located, to which the answer was in Commissioner Gowen's district.

AGREEMENTS

1. MOTION AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE AN ANNUAL AGREEMENT WITH SENTRY DATA MANAGEMENT FOR ONGOING RECORD DESTRUCTION SERVICES

County Administrator Hull discussed the reasoning behind seeking out a contract and recommended that a new contract be entered with this vender after lessons learned during the partnership with the Hospital Authority.

Commissioner Crews made a motion to authorize County Administrator Hull to execute an annual agreement with Sentry Data Management. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioners Jones asked County Attorney Adams if the services were something that would have to be bid out. County Attorney Adams stated that it can be done through an agreement because it is on an as-needed basis.

County Attorney Adams stepped out of the meeting at 7:10 PM.

ORDINANCES

RESOLUTIONS

1. MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION APPOINTING TERESA GUINN TO THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

County Administrator Hull explained that the item was tabled at a previous meeting due to lack of quorum.

Commissioner Crews recused himself due to the appointee being a relative.

Commissioner Gowen made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried with 4 votes in favor, and one recused.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE DECEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

Commissioner Crews asked Director of Administrative Harden if there were any issues, to which she stated that there were none.

Commissioner Everett made a motion to adopt the financial report. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

ADDED AGENDA ITEMS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Everett thanked the staff for the employee awards that were presented, stating that he appreciated the staff being recognized.

Commissioner Jones thanked Mrs. Connie Bass for what she has accomplished at the Senior Center, as well as thanked Mr. Gary Tippins, Director of Fire and Rescue CL Lewis, Director of Infrastructure and Roads Ronnie Pollock, Sheriff Robet Phillips, and City of Folkston Manager Pender Lloyd. Commissioner Jones also shared his appreciation of the Board of Elections and their work in the Elections Office.

Commissioner Gowen thanked Mr. John Johns for his years of employment with the county.

County Attorney Adams returned to the meeting at 7:14 PM.

Commissioner Crews thanked Mr. Johns for his years of employment with the county. Commissioner Crews also thanked Mr. Tippins and Mr. Lloyd.

County Administrator Hull stated that an item should have been added to the agenda but was not. County Administrator Hull asked the Commissioners to approve a resolution to enact a local state of emergency due to inclement weather next week.

Commissioner Crews made a motion to approve the addition of the item to the agenda and adopt the

resolution. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion.

Commissioner Gowen asked where this resolution came from. County Administrator Hull explained that the resolution is a reaction to citizen comments and concerns regarding the weather forecasts. The county will be implementing a warming station at the Old Bethune Elementary School Gym. Commissioner Gowen asked what would trigger the implementation of a warming station. County Administrator Hull stated that the resolution would trigger the implementation. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairwoman Benefield thanked everyone in attendance.

MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL AND REAL ESTATE

Commissioner Gowen made a motion to enter executive session to discuss personnel and real estate. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board of Commissioners, County Administrator Hull, County Attorney Adams, and County Clerk Nettles entered executive session at 7:19 PM.

The Board of Commissioners, County Administrator Hull, County Attorney Adams, and County Clerk Nettles exited executive session at 8:11 PM. No action was taken.

NEXT MEETING:

1. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORKSHOP ON FEBRUARY 6TH, 2025 AT 5:00 PM IN THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM
2. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING ON FEBRUARY 6TH, 2025 AT 6:00 PM IN THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM

ADJOURN

Commissioner Crews made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 PM.

Alphya Benefield, Chairman

Madeline Nettles, County Clerk