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

2/6/2025 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

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

All guests present as recorded below.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Invocation led by Commissioner Crews.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Crews motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. MOTION TO APPROVE JANUARY 16TH 2025 MINUTES AS PRESENTED

   Commissioner Gowen made a motion to amend the workshop minutes to include him asking the board if there were any objections to moving forward with the animal ordinance process, to which there were none made, and adopt the minutes with said amendment. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATIONS

1. PRESENTATION FROM GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY WILDFIRE DEFENSE GRANT (CWDG) PROGRAM

   Anthony English from the Georgia Forestry Commission was in attendance to present on the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) Program.

   The grant program provides funding for the planning and mitigation of wildfire risk in high and very high wildfire-prone areas. Mr. English stated that Charlton County is an eligible area.

Commissioner Crews asked Mr. English when the application deadline is, which is February 28th. Commissioner Crews also asked when the award would be released, which Mr. English stated could take between 5-9 months.

Commissioner Jones motioned to use a non-profit organization to apply for the CWDG program. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PETITIONS

PURCHASING ITEMS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO PURCHASE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT FROM MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS AMERICA IN THE AMOUNT OF $10,680.00

   Chief CL Lewis, Director of Fire and Rescue, presented this item.

   Commissioner Jones asked if these radios are similar to the current radios, which Chief Lewis confirmed.

   The cost is to fund 8 radios. Chief Lewis has applied for a grant that would reimburse 50% of the cost if awarded to the county. The funds would come from the General Fund.

   Commissioner Jones motioned to purchase the Emergency Medical Service communication equipment from Mobile Communications America in the amount of $10,680.00.

GRANTS AND SPLOST PROJECT

AGREEMENTS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE THREE CONTRACTS WITH CSRA PROBATION FOR PROBATION MONITORING SERVICES FOR THE STATE, SUPERIOR, AND MAGISTRATE COURTS

   Commissioner Crews motioned to authorize the county administrator to execute three contracts with CSRA Probation for probation monitoring services for the State, Superior, and Magistrate Courts. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE AN ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT WITH STRYKER IN THE AMOUNT OF $17,341.20 TO SUPPORT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES (EMS)

   Chief CL Lewis, Director of Fire and Rescue presented.

The presented annual agreement would cover repairs on stretchers, power lifts, and the stair chairs over the 12-month agreement period.

The county previously paid as the repairs came up, but the county was not experiencing the same kind of issues that they are currently facing due to the equipment's age.

Commissioner Jones motioned to authorize the county administrator to execute an annual maintenance contract with Stryker in the amount of $17,341.20 to support Emergency Management Services.

3. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO EXECUTE SUPPLEMENTAL CONTRACT #1 WITH GORDIAN IN THE AMOUNT OF $79,837.14 FOR RENOVATION OF ANNEX FRONT PORCH, WINDOWS, AND DOORS

Joanna Powell, Public Works Coordinator, was present to discuss several options for supplemental contract #1.

Commissioner Crews recalled the original discussion and quote for Gordian to repair the annex building. Commissioner Crews expressed his opinion that the board should vote to have all the repairs done at one time, instead of doing it in phases.

Mrs. Powell discussed the quotes Gordian has offered to continue repairing the annex building. All funds would come from Reserves. All presented quotes reference exterior repairs only.

Commissioner Gowen expressed concern about spending the reserves. Commissioner Crews stated that the board had plenty of money in reserves to cover the costs. Commissioner Gowen stated that he would rather give the money back to the citizens and have funds to cover costs in the event of anything catastrophic. Commissioner Crews discussed the possibility to lose grant awards due to the amount of money the county is holding in reserves.

Commissioner Crews again expressed his opinion on doing all repairs at once, stating it would be more cost effective.

County Administrator Hull stated he has not received a quote from Gordian on interior repairs yet, as he wants to evaluate staffing needs before moving forward.

There was more discussion about the repairs being done in phases or all at once and funding.

Commissioner Crews made a motion to go with Option #3, in the amount of $292,296.71, funded from the Reserves. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Gowen advised staff to keep a close eye on the reserves and expressed that he would like to take a conservative approach to spending.

4. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH DEBORAH "SAMI" LUFFMAN FOR EMT AND PARAMEDIC TRAINING

County Administrator Hull presented the item.

County Administrator Hull discussed overtime costs accumulated while Mrs. Luffman was acting in a training role for the Emergency Management Services. The proposed agreement would half the cost and would be compliant with the Department of Labor standards.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to authorize the county administrator to execute an agreement with Deborah "Sami" Luffman for EMT and Paramedic Training. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO SURPLUS A 12M3 MOTOR GRADER

   Ronnie Pollock, Director of Development and Infrastructure, presented the item.

   The Road Department is recommending to surplus a 12M3 motor grader through JW Wood Auction Company out of Alabama. The auction would take place in March 2025.

   Commissioner Gowen made a motion to authorize the county administrator to execute an agreement with JW Wood Auction Company to surplus the 12M3 motor grader. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ORDINANCES

1. DISCUSSION OF ANIMAL ORDINANCE

   County Administrator Hull presented the proposed ordinance, which combined new additions, Sections 6.22-6.25, with existing ordinance.

   Commissioner Jones and Commissioner expressed their support of an ordinance that would allow for nuisance and dangerous dogs to be addressed at no cost to the county while Heart 2 Heart worked towards a private shelter.

   Commissioner Crews asked for the Sheriff to share his opinions on the proposed ordinance.

   Sheriff Phillips expressed his concerns for the ordinance, pointing out that identification of the dogs is a main issue currently and the lack of staffing to enforce the ordinance. There was discussion among the commissioners and Sheriff Phillips about these concerns.

   Commissioner Jones stated that if Heart 2 Heart finds a way to get a shelter running, he would be in full support of it.

   Commissioner Crews expressed his intent to vote against the ordinance, stating he cannot vote in favor of an ordinance if the Sheriff cannot guarantee his deputies could enforce it.

   Chairwoman Benefield asked the sheriff what he needed from the board to move forward with this issue. Sheriff Phillips again shared concerns about the hardship this ordinance would cause on deputies, due to the lack of identification of these animals. Sheriff Phillips asked the board to give him 90 days to find an alternative solution, and stated if he could not propose one in 90 days, he would try to make the current draft ordinance work.

   Commissioner Jones asked County Attorney Adams about the legal ramifications if an ordinance is passed but not enforced, which County Attorney Adams advised against.

   Commissioner Everett, Commissioner Gowen, and Commissioner Jones expressed were in favor of giving Sheriff Phillips 90 days to explore the issue further.

   Chairwoman Benefield opened the floor to the public to discuss the animal ordinance only.

Leslie Coolwick, Treasurer for Heart 2 Heart, spoke on the topic. Mrs. Coolwick expressed her appreciation for the commissioner's trying to get an ordinance passed. Mrs. Coolwick feels that the Sheriff's deputies do not need to handle enforcement and feels that the county needs to hire and train someone specifically to carry out animal control duties.

No other public comments were made.

County Administrator Hull requested that the board allow him to work with Sheriff Phillips and some stakeholders to put together an ordinance and bring it back before the board during their retreat.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to table the ordinance discussion for 90 days. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS

MISCELLANEOUS

ADDED AGENDA ITEMS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sheriff Phillips asked the commissioners to have people call him when they reach out to them about the dog issues. Sheriff Phillips also thanked Gary Tippins for his work on the roll-up door in the training room.

Connie Bass, Senior Center Manager, invited everyone to the Senior Valentine's Day dance at Jenny Ridge Pavilion on February 15th, 2025, from 5:00-9:00 PM.

County Administrator Hull informed Mrs. Bass that the county is working on obtaining an estimate to replace the Senior Center roof due to the leak.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Crews shared that he was glad to see everyone present.

Commissioner Jones expressed that he was also glad to see everyone at the meeting, and shared that he hopes to work together and find something that works for all parties.

Chairwoman Benefield thanked everyone in their respective places and thanked them for being present. Chairwoman Benefield then asked all directors and employees to stand so she can address them directly. Chairwoman Benefield shared some motivational words, appreciating them for the work they do, encouraging them to rise to the challenges of change and transition into new roles, and demanded that they ignore gossip and refuse to partake in rumors, in order to represent themselves, their families, and the county in the best way.

NEXT MEETING:

1. WORKSHOP: FEBRUARY 20TH, 2025 AT 5:00 PM IN THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS CONFERENCE ROOM

2. REGULAR MEETING: FEBRUARY 20TH, 2025 AT 6:00 PM IN THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM

ADJOURN

Commissioner Crews motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM.

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Alphya Benefield, Chairman

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Madeline Nettles, County Clerk