

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CALLED MEETING  
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON MARCH 18, 2020 AT 11:00 AM IN THE  
BEN HILL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSION  
OFFICE MEETING ROOM

Those present for the meeting were as follow:

Steve Taylor	Chairman
Hope Harmon	Vice-Chair
Daniel Cowan	Commissioner
John Mooney	Commissioner
Michael Dinnerman	County Manager
Donna R. Prather	County Clerk

Commissioner Bennie Calloway was absent.

Chairman Steve Taylor called the meeting to order.

**Budget Amendment**

Chief Financial Officer Darlow Maxwell stated the budget amendment is needed because Legal fees have been adjusted in different departments. This was a minor cleanup and there was no net change.

Chairman Steve Taylor made a motion to approve the 2019 budget amendment for legal fees. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Chairman Steve Taylor, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Chairman Steve Taylor stated due to the corona virus circumstances they can have meetings without restrictions.

**Human Resource Personnel Policy Ratify**

County Manager Michael Dinnerman stated the Commissioners need to ratify the vote to amend the county's personnel manual by adopting the policy on Contagious Symptoms and Contagious Conditions.

Chairman Steve Taylor made a motion to ratify the vote to amend the county's personnel manual by adopting the policy on Contagious Symptoms and Contagious Conditions. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Chairman Steve Taylor, Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

## **Information on How to Handle COVID-19**

Sheriff Lee Cone stated the jail is being sanitized daily. They released 11 inmates who had misdemeanor charges and they also released felony probationers. This action was approved by Judge Chasteen to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Georgia State Patrol are only writing tickets unless the case is a felony or drunk driving. He stated they are also taking temperatures and sanitizing each employee before shifts. Sheriff said they are taking every precaution. If any inmate has two (2) of the symptoms of the virus or flu they may be released. If the inmates have all the symptoms, they will be quarantined as best they can. Sheriff Cone stated he is working close with the Judges on all options case by case. Visitation for Saturday and Sunday has been stopped and transports have been stopped unless the inmate is a felon.

EMA/E911 Director Brandon Fletcher stated they are screening each employee temperature before each shift. They have stopped all visitors and public traffic. They are spraying the dispatch room and equipment several times a day and night. If E911 have several employees out at once due to the COVID-19 they have no one to transfer their radio traffic to. Brandon recommended the Tango Tango app as a phone base app that can be downloaded and used so E911 calls will roll-over to nearest E911 center. The cost for the system is between \$3,000 to \$4,000 to install and maintain location capability.

GEMA has branches throughout the state for E911 if any employee test positive. The control room would need to be sanitized and GEMA would send other dispatchers to help run E911. If an employee test positive again, GEMA will shut down the center.

Brandon stated surface sanitizer, hand sanitizer, and gloves have been ordered for all departments.

County Manager Michael Dinnerman stated maintenance is building a wall and a window at the Tax Assessors office. Clerk of Court Annex is also looking to separate their office. Mr. Dinnerman stated we are going to have limited exposure and social distancing by keeping the public out of the buildings, shutting down foot traffic, and locking the door. Each department will handle the public by phone, email, fax, and appointments for the next 30 days. He stated he will talk with the judge regarding locking the courthouse.

Mr. Dinnerman reported Tax Commissioner Barry Foster will waive all penalties. Chief Appraiser Joyce Merritt, at the Tax Assessor Office, will handle what she needs to over the phone or internet.

Mr. Dinnerman asked Commissioner John Mooney his thoughts regarding freezing permits for 30 days. Commissioner John Mooney answered by saying he didn't think it would be a problem if the county decided to do so.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan stated don't just shut the county down completely, just limit traffic. Mr. Dinnerman replied, shutting down would protect the employees. Chairman Steve Taylor stated this is control access instead of exclusion. Commissioner John Mooney stated, lock down and let citizen call the office and the employee will determine if they need to come in. Mr. Mooney said, keep as many people out of the office as possible.

Mr. Dinnerman stated he is being proactive. He will communicate with the public that the county is not shutting down; but there is control access in the business and they will need to make an appointment. The message will be sent out through code red, newspaper, website, and radio. We want to be proactive and educate the public. This will be effective March 19, 2020.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Steve Taylor, Chairman

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Pamela Turner, Acting County Clerk