

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON JULY 07, 2020 AT 6:00 PM IN THE  
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

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

Commissioner Bennie Calloway was absent.

**Call to Order**

Chairman Steve Taylor called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

Everyone gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes**

Vice-Chairman Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

**Acceptance of Prior Minutes**

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting held on June 02, 2020. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion.

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the Special Called Meeting held on June 10, 2020. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion.

**Constitutional Officer:**

Tax Commissioner Barry Foster gave an update on property and mobile home taxes collections.

**Department Head Reports:**

EMA Director Brandon Fletcher gave an update on EMA. He reported Ben Hill County currently has 192 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 3 deaths. He organized a drive thru mask give away with local churches to help distribute mask to the citizens. The mask was provided by FEMA. He also assisted with the school meal program; but due to poor participation the program ended last week.

Election's Supervisor Cindi Dunlap gave an update on how well the election functioned. She stated only 3000 people voted. They experienced minor issues with parking but Sheriff Cone and EMA Brandon Fletcher blocked off Orange Street and helped with the flow of traffic. The State of Georgia has already contacted her and said they will function the same way for the November election.

Department of Leisure Services Director Keith Morrison stated he don't know if football, soccer, and cheerleading will happen in the fall, but they are accepting registrations. They will have a meeting soon to decide.

**County Board Reports: NONE**

**County Manager's Report:**

Mr. Dinnerman stated:

- We are close to getting the old numbers ported
- He and Chief Financial Officer Darlow Maxwell did an analysis on LOST and SPLOST taxes and we up by 10% from last year
- We are losing a little revenue through the courts because of COVID-19
- The Governor will release money through FEMA. We are expected to receive an estimated \$125,000
- TAVT is up \$50,000 from last year
- Our cash position is good
- Mr. Dinnerman stated it is a pleasure being here and he don't have to worry where money is coming from

**Annexation Request: NONE**

**Rezoning Application: NONE**

**Alcohol Application: NONE**

**Appointments: NONE**

**Old Business: NONE**

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to stop the Regular Monthly Meeting to enter the Public Hearing with the right to return to the Regular Monthly Meeting. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner John Mooney all voting for the motion.

**Public Hearing**

*Special Exception/ Cell Tower*

Zoning Administrator Lawton Lovett stated, Gary and Elizabeth Fowler are requesting a Special Exception to have Verizon erect a cell tower on said property zoned G-F located at 556 Astor Road. Verizon Representative Michael Raia attended the meeting via phone.

There were no public comments.

*Rezoning Application/ John E. Hayes*

Zoning Administrator Lawton Lovett stated Dorothy and John Hayes are requesting to rezone 1.17 acres of said property from G-F County to W-L-I County for a welding shop located at 444 Bowens Mill Hwy.

There were no public comments.

*Comprehensive Plan Update*

Southern Georgia Region Commission Senior Planner Loretta Hylton stated the purpose of this Kick-off Public Hearing is to brief the community on the process to be used to develop the Comprehensive Plan, announce opportunities for public participation in the development of the plan and obtain input on the proposed planning process.

There were no public comments.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to close the Public Hearing and re-enter the Regular Monthly Meeting. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

**New Business:**

*Special Exception/ Cell Tower*

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Special Exception for the cell tower for Gary and Elizabeth Fowler to have Verizon erect a cell tower on said property zoned G-F located at 556 Astor Road contingent upon Verizon allowing Ben Hill County Public Safety access and Verizon pay for the Engineering Study. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

*Rezoning Application/ John E, Hayes*

Vice-Chairman Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the Rezoning application of Dorothy and John Hayes to rezone 1.17 acres of said property from G-F County to W-L-I County for a welding shop located at 444 Bowens Mill Hwy. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion. Commissioner John Mooney opposed the motion.

*Authorizing the Tax Commissioner the Authority to Accept Payments of Taxes and Fees Resolution*

Vice-Chairman Hope Harmon made a motion to adopt the Resolution allowing the Tax Commissioner the authority to accept payments of taxes and fees by way of any form of payment. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion.

*Special Exception Permit/ Heriberto Avila*

Vice-Chairman Hope Harmon made a motion to approve Heriberto Special Exception Permit. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair

Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion.

*Ben Hill Head Start Lease Agreement*

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Ben Hill Head Start Lease Agreement and authorize the County Manager to sign all documents. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon second the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

*Senior Citizen Nutrition FY 2021 Contract*

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the Senior Citizen Nutrition FY 2021 Contract and authorize the Chairman to sign all documents. Commissioner John Mooney second the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

*Tax Assessors Board Reappointment/Randy Hughes*

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to reappoint Randy Hughes to the Tax Assessors Board. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

*Public Access to County Buildings*

Chairman Steve Taylor stated controlled access for all County buildings ended July 3, 2020. Chairman Taylor also stated that we need to reach out to Department Heads and Constitutional Officers to encourage them to continue utilizing social distancing, washing hands, and wearing mask. He said they should only allow so many into the lobbies at a time to keep the employees and citizens safe.

*Millage Rate/Proposed Rollback*

Chief Appraiser Joyce Merritt presented the PT32 form. Ms. Merritt explained how the rollback was calculated by stating last year's millage rate was 16.581 and this year proposed millage rate is 16.646. This does not mean an automatic increase in property taxes. It is determined whether the value of the property has decreased or increased.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to advertise and proceed with the proposed rollback millage rate of 16.646. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon second the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

*Special Call Meeting Date to Adopt the Proposed Millage Rate*

The Commissioners agreed to set the Special Called Meeting date to adopt the proposed millage rate for July 30, 2020 at 6:30 pm.

**Agenda Changes and/or add on:**

**Legislative Report:**

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon reported that she participated in an ACCG conference call with Governor Kemp. The main things that were said and stood with her were we need to educate people regarding COVID-19 and he is not going to mandate wearing a mask; however, we need to encourage everyone to follow guidelines such as wearing a mask,

washing hands, and practicing social distancing. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon stated it was a good informative conversation.

She said she also spoke with State Representative Clay Pirkle and he said, if anyone has any questions regarding what he voted on, please contact him.

**Public Comments:**

Tax Commissioner Barry Foster stated the Irwin County Tax Commissioner has COVID-19 and had to close the office. He doesn't want that to happen here, but we do need to be careful. The public needs to understand if someone gets COVID-19 in his office the office will have to close. He is asking for patience from the public and to follow guidelines to insure everyone is safe.

**Executive Session/Land Acquisition**

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to enter the Executive Session for land acquisition. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to close the Executive Session for land acquisition and re-enter the Regular Monthly Meeting. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Commissioner Daniel Cowan all voting for the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to allow County Manager Michael Dinnerman to negotiate on the land discussed for extra parking and pay to have the land paved and stripped for parking. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Chairman Steve Taylor all voting for the motion. Commissioner Daniel Cowan opposed the motion.

**Commissioner's Remarks:**

Commissioner John Mooney stated he is disappointed in the progress with the road and new school. He is very optimistic they will find a solution so things can work out.

**Meeting adjourned**

\_\_\_\_\_ Steve Taylor, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Donna R. Prather, County Clerk