



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING
102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2022 AT 5:00PM

T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
KINCHAFOONEE ROOM
WWW.LEE.GA.US

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Billy Mathis, Chairman	District 3
John Wheaton, Vice-Chairman	District 1
Luke Singletary, Commissioner	District 2
Rick Muggridge, Commissioner	District 4
George Walls, Commissioner	District 5

COUNTY STAFF

Christi Dockery, County Manager
Kaitlyn Sawyer, County Clerk
Jimmy Skipper, County Attorney

The Lee County Board of Commissioners and the Lee County Utilities Authority met for a Special Called Meeting on Tuesday, April 26, 2022 at 5:00PM. The meeting was held in the Kinchafoonee Room of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present from the Board of Commissioners were Chairman Billy Mathis, Vice-Chairman John Wheaton, Commissioner Luke Singletary, Commissioner Rick Muggridge, Commissioner George Walls (also a member of the Utilities Authority), County Clerk Kaitlyn Sawyer, Finance Director Heather Jones, and County Manager Christi Dockery. Those present from the Utilities Authority were General Manager Chris Boswell, Art Ford, Troy Golden, and Levent Gokcen. Also in attendance was Lisa Davis, Director of the Chamber of Commerce.

Chairman Mathis called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

INVOCATION

Chairman Mathis led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board and the audience said the Pledge of Allegiance in unison.

CALL TO ORDER

(A) **Discussion of water and sewer projects with the Lee County Utilities Authority.**

Chairman Mathis began the meeting by introducing and welcoming the newest Utilities Authority member, Levent Gokcen.

Chairman Mathis suggested beginning the discussion by having Utilities Authority General Manager Chris Boswell pull up maps showing the areas of proposed projects. To begin, Mr. Boswell displayed a map showing the holes in sewer service along US 19. On Hwy 82, there are also some holes in water service in the Hugh Road area. There is also a need for sewer to be extended on Fussell Road towards Ledo Road and water extended on Ledo Road towards Hwy 82 as well. There is a lot of approximately 60 acres in need of sewer and water for a potential future development. Mr. Boswell stated that these were the main areas in need of expansion in order to bring in commercial development.

Commissioner Singletary asked if it was common practice to build utilities first, or wait until these commercial developments agree to build, and then install utilities. Mr. Boswell replied that typically what happens is the developers build and deed the utilities over to the Authority; however, there is an exception to the policies and regulations of the Utilities Authority in that the County can put in infrastructure (water and sewer) wherever they deem necessary. Commissioner Walls stated that the most important project right now is the tie line on Hwy 82,

from Hugh Road to Ledo Road. This wouldn't be really to serve anyone, but just to help the system. There is no water on Hwy 82 from Ledo to Fussell.

Mr. Boswell then again pulled up a map of Hwy 19, noting the holes in sewer service in this area. The issue with putting sewer here is that these businesses already exist and are used to functioning with septic systems. However, we have missed out on a few businesses because there was not sewer; restaurants want sewer. Commissioner Singletary asked why, if there was sewer to the north and sewer to the south, the lines just couldn't be connected over the four lots that need it. Mr. Boswell stated that we could, it would just take money and with sewer, it would not be that simple logistically.

Commissioner Walls brought up the project to run sewer down Hwy 19 from Cedric Street to Renasant Bank. Commissioner Muggridge stated that he thought that was what came out of the previous meeting. Commissioner Singletary verified with Mr. Boswell that there was a lift station in that area and Commissioner Walls stated that was where they would tie into as that's where it all flows to. The force main sewer lines, however, you cannot tie into and at a certain level, this line gets put under pressure by the lift station. This line actually empties into the line near Boater's World.

Mr. Gokcen asked if we are expecting the area by Renasant Bank that is currently mostly pecan orchard to eventually be developed into a residential area. Mr. Boswell, Lisa Davis, and Chairman Mathis stated that it would be developed into a commercial area. Mr. Boswell stated anything developed could gravity flow lines to the lift station; however, this lift station is close to capacity. According to Mr. Boswell, it will take approximately \$336,000.00 to increase the capacity. Another force main line would also be necessary.

Mr. Gokcen asked if we traditionally had a push or a pull system when it comes to putting in utilities so people will come or developers asking for utilities to be put in, to which Chairman Mathis answered normally they are put in when they want to locate; however, if we're this close to completing an area, Chairman Mathis raised the question of why not finish it. Commissioner Walls asked everyone to keep in mind that we lack 100,000 gallons on that lift station until it reaches capacity. Chairman Mathis asked if the Glendale project helped with that any. Mr. Boswell stated that it didn't change anything. Commissioner Singletary added that we just moved valves and resurfaced the street, we did not touch the sewer system.

Lisa Davis added that when a business was looking into a lot on Hwy 19, an engineer figured approximately \$80,000.00 would be needed to tie the business into the existing sewer system. Commissioner Muggridge asked what an optimistic figure would be to fix the Glendale Subdivision, to which Mr. Boswell replied that sewer system is around 40 years old and runs between 10,000 and 20,000 gallons a day. Commissioner Walls added that with Glendale, he would like to move the lines from under to roadway and to the right of way. Chairman Mathis asked what the cost would be for that project.

Commissioner Muggridge stated that we should not build more residences on sewer until we have the funds to build a new lift station and save all sewer for commercial developments. Commissioner Singletary stated that it appears that sewer costs the County money and we'd probably be better off if we just ran water lines and everyone was on a septic tank.

Average flow to the treatment plant is 640,000 gallons and if the existing subdivisions in the area expand, this might hit 700,000 gallons. Once we hit that 700,000 gallons, we have to further treat the water and it will have to be a lot cleaner coming out of the treatment plant to go into the creek. Commissioner Walls stated that an expansion to the treatment plant costs \$20 million. Commissioner Singletary asked about the cost of the treatment plant built in Leesburg, to which Chairman Mathis replied that we provided \$5 million. Commissioner Singletary asked if it would be easier to just build a new treatment plant.

Mr. Boswell stated that these 1 million gallon capacity wastewater treatment plants work best when at 500,000 gallons. It is hard to run a 2 million gallon plant with 500,000 – 600,000 gallons. Commissioner Singletary suggested having one plant to service the west side of the county and one plant to service the east side. Mr. Boswell stated that sounded like a strong possibility. Additionally, the treatment plant located next to Creekside

Apartments was expanded and upgraded approximately 10 years ago. Commissioner Singletary asked if the main goal was to expand the system or to expand the plant. Commissioner Walls commented on the number of houses being developed and with the addition of the few commercial lots, the plant will be at capacity, therefore should be priority. Commissioner Singletary and Chairman Mathis asked what the difference would be in building a new plant versus expanding the existing one. Mr. Boswell stated the Utilities Authority had discussed that \$1,570,000.00 would be needed to get the plant back into good shape.

The discussion switched back to limiting sewer use to new commercial development, with Commissioner Muggridge suggesting a limit on the size of all future residential lots to 0.75 acre. Chairman Mathis suggested we look into the zoning ordinance and requirements for residential lots and added that we should ensure that lots should be limited in size so as to ensure use of septic tanks. Commissioner Singletary added that sewer is costly to the County, with the County funding a lot of it, and the revenue does not match the expense, pointing out that there is only enough money in the Utilities Authority budget to maintain the systems, not improve or expand. Mr. Boswell added that 50% of their budget is debt.

County Manager Dockery asked how many customers the Utilities Authority had, to which Mr. Boswell replied there are currently 2,600 sewer customers, with 148 being commercial, and 6,750 water customers, with 265 of those being commercial.

Mr. Boswell displayed current pictures of the treatment plant. Commissioner Singletary asked if the \$5 million requested would cover all improvements needed, including interior and exterior painting (est. \$400,000.00), to which Mr. Boswell stated it would. Commissioner Muggridge asked if we were to complete this project, where the funds would come from. Chairman Mathis asked Finance Director Jones the status of the \$2.9 million relief funds, to which she replied she believed they were to be expected in May or June; however, \$2 million of that is committed to the new Motorola radios. Ms. Jones continued that as it stands now, there is approximately \$400,000.00 unencumbered from the first of the relief funds received and after Motorola, approximately \$1 million will remain from the second round.

Chairman Mathis asked Ms. Jones to run figures on what it might look like if funds to cover Motorola were taken out of SPLOST, little by little, every month. Commissioner Singletary asked if the County was to give \$2.9 million, what would the Utilities Authority be able to provide. Chairman Mathis and Mr. Boswell discussed applying for a 20 year GEFA loan and how there is a little money set aside for emergencies. The priority is to expand the treatment plant and then limit residential developments to 0.75 acre lots with water, thereby allowing future sewer customers to be commercial. Commissioner Walls emphasized the plant as being the priority project, stating that without this, there is no need for any new sewer lines.

Mr. Boswell stated that there was the EIP Grant that had been used to fund projects in the past such as Walmart and Wendy's. Commissioner Walls stated the Authority was hoping to use some of the Care Act funding as well; however, those funds aren't guaranteed. Chairman Mathis asked Mr. Boswell to come up with a plan on how to tie the water systems together, primarily in the Hwy 82 area, to prepare for any possible future development.

Commissioner Walls asked Mr. Boswell how long the plant, with the 1 million gallon capacity, and the current intake of approximately 640,000 gallons, would last. Mr. Boswell stated that the current plant is 20 years old, and in that 20 years, the intake has increased about 400,000 gallons. Mr. Boswell added that residential customers use more sewer gallons than commercial developments. Commissioner Walls asked if the Board of Commissioners would place a moratorium on residential sewer, to which Chairman Mathis replied that a moratorium might not be necessary, but that the Board could amend the residential lot size requirement to be 0.75 acre as long as there is water. Mr. Boswell agreed. No opposition heard from members of either the Board of Commissioners or Utilities Authority.

PUBLIC FORUM

Citizens will be allowed to address the Board of Commissioners regarding any issues or complaints. Individuals should sign up prior to the start of the meeting.

No citizens took part in the Public Forum.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission meeting is ***April 26, 2022 at 6:00pm.***

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53PM.

Lee County is a thriving vibrant community celebrated for its value of tradition encompassing a safe family oriented community, schools of excellence, and life long opportunities for prosperity and happiness without sacrificing the rural agricultural tapestry.

Persons with special needs relating to handicapped accessibility or foreign language interpretation should contact the ADA Coordinator at (229) 759-6000 or through the Georgia Relay Service (800) 255-0056 (TDD) or (800) 355-0135 (voice). This person can be contacted at the T. Page Tharp Building in Leesburg, Georgia between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will assist citizens with special needs given proper notice of seven (7) working days. The meeting rooms and buildings are handicap accessible.