



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M.

T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
OPAL CANNON AUDITORIUM
WWW.LEE.GA.US

MEETING MINUTES
WORK SESSION

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Luke Singletary, Chairman	District 2
Chris Guarnieri, Vice-Chairman	District 4
Dennis Roland, Commissioner	District 1
Billy Mathis, Commissioner	District 3
George Walls, Commissioner	District 5

COUNTY STAFF

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

The Lee County Board of Commissioners met in a work session on Tuesday, June 11, 2024. The meeting was held in the Opal Cannon Auditorium of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman Chris Guarnieri, Commissioner Dennis Roland, and Commissioner George Walls. Staff in attendance was County Manager Christi Dockery, County Clerk Kaitlyn Good, and County Attorney Jimmy Skipper. Commissioner Billy Mathis was absent. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook Live. Chairman Singletary called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

CALL TO ORDER

INVOCATION

Apostle Malden Batten, The Church of Leesburg, led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- (A) **Consideration to approve the Board of Commissioners meeting minutes for May 28, 2024.**
Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve the Board of Commissioners meeting minutes for May 28, 2024. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.
- (B) **Consideration to approve the minutes from the Budget Workshop held May 14, 2024.**
Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the Budget Workshop held May 14, 2024. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Walls voting yea.

CONSENT AGENDA

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

- (A) **Lee County Republican Party members to address the Board regarding recent appointments and the mission statement.**
Mr. Alex McColman, the Chairman of the Republican Party introduced himself to the Board. Mr. McColman was joined by Ms. Keri Tanner, Vice-Chair and Ms. Allison Largeman, Secretary. Mr. McColman informed the

Board that on June 20, 2024 at 6:00pm, the Republican Party will be holding a meeting at the Library with the winning candidate of the run-off election. The Republican Party is here for the County and wants to help in any way that they can.

PUBLIC HEARING

- (A) **The Lee County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing regarding the proposed 2024-2025 Budget.**

The proposed budget has been available for view online, in the Clerk's Office, and at the libraries. Chairman Singletary opened the Public Hearing at 6:03pm.

With no comments or questions from the Board, staff, or the audience, the Public Hearing was closed at 6:04pm.

Chairman Singletary stated that there would be no millage increase from the County.

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

Planning, Zoning, & Engineering

- (A) **Consideration to approve an amendment to the zoning ordinance Chapter 70, Article III, Section 70-84 (T24-001) of the Lee County Code of Ordinances with respect to accessory building allowance for lots of five acres or more, located in Residential Districts. Planning Commission recommends approval with the following changes: (a) The maximum number of accessory buildings to be five for lots 43,561 square feet to five acres, (b) seven maximum number of accessory buildings for lots five acres to 25 acres, (c) seven maximum number of accessory buildings for lots 25 acres or more, (d) the accessory building square footage for lots 43,561 square feet to five acres to be 1,000 square feet for the first five acres, plus 750 square feet for each additional ½ acre, not to exceed a total of 7,000 square feet of floor area, (e) accessory building square footage on lots five acres to 25 acres to be 7,000 square feet for the first five acres, plus 250 square feet for each additional acre, not to exceed a total of 12,000 square feet of floor area, and (f) accessory building square footage for lots 25 acres or more to the maximum total allowable floor area shall be determined in accordance with AG-1 requirements. Public Hearing held May 14, 2024 and Second Reading held May 28, 2024**

Interim Planning Director Joey Davenport addressed the Board regarding the amendment to the ordinance and Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Davenport discussed the current ordinance, staff's proposal, and the Planning Commission proposal to the Board. Mr. Davenport stated this to identify an issue on limitations to buildings on residential properties, which came before the Board and was sent to the Planning Commission. It has been brought back to the Board for final decision.

Chairman Singletary discussed the difference he saw between the three proposals, which seemed to only be that the staff proposal has less on square footage and total number of buildings. Commissioner Guarnieri asked why the Planning Commission felt like they wanted to add square footage on their recommendation. Mr. Davenport answered that there was discussion back and forth. Initially, when it was brought to the Board, he believes it was Commissioner Mathis that made the statement that the number of buildings should be unlimited. However, there was concern with unlimited number of buildings on residential lots, even if the lot is over 50 acres. The compromise that they came back with, in the instances of over 50 acres, was to apply the agriculture zoning limitation.

Commissioner Walls asked how many accessory building you can put on a one-acre lot. Chairman Singletary stated it is up to three. Mr. Davenport stated that according to the current ordinance, you can have a maximum of three for up to an acre lot with the maximum square footage of 800 total. You can have three buildings, each 250 square feet on an acre lot. Commissioner Walls asked if that doesn't count sheds. Mr. Davenport stated that it does. Commissioner Walls stated that sheds weren't a building. Mr. Davenport informed him that a building is classified as anything that has walls and a roof. Commissioner Walls stated that he was referring to the open sheds that do not have walls, such as a pole barn. Mr. Davenport explained that pole barns have always been considered accessory structures.

Commissioner Roland asked if you have a 3,000 square foot house, you can't build a 3,000 square foot shed on an acre. Mr. Davenport stated that there are multiple ways in the ordinance to make that type of determination. This ordinance is lot based size and there is a house based size.

Commissioner Walls stated that he thinks sheds need to be taken out of the ordinance. Chairman Singletary stated that this is for residential lots that are an acre. It was reiterated that the current ordinance only allows for three accessory buildings. Mr. Davenport stated that he believes that the distinction Commissioner Walls is referring to is that he doesn't feel like a pole barn is an accessory building. Chairman Singletary asked if it would be a different part of the ordinance than what is being looked at. Mr. Davenport stated that it would apply. Mr. Davenport read the definition of accessory structure in the ordinance, which would encompass a shed and a pole barn.

Commissioner Walls added that shed do not require permits, to which Mr. Davenport stated that anything less than 200 square feet does not require a permit; however, it must still comply by code. Just because a permit is not required does not mean they are exempt from compliance with our ordinances and codes.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve the staff's proposal of an amendment to the zoning ordinance Chapter 70, Article III, Section 70-84 (T24-001) of the Lee County Code of Ordinances with respect to accessory building allowance for lots of five acres or more, located in Residential Districts. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. Commissioner Walls voted nay. The **MOTION** passed with a 3-1 vote.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES

- (A) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member to the Southwest Georgia Housing Task Force for a term of two (2) years. Current term expires 05/31/2024. New term expires 05/31/2026. Letter of interest in appointment received by Marian Grant-Whitlock (reappointment).**

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Marian Grant-Whitlock to the Southwest Georgia Housing Task Force for a term of two (2) years, expiring 05/31/2026. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Walls voting yea.

- (B) **Consideration to appoint one (1) member to the Hospital Authority for a term of three (3) years. New term expires 12/31/2026. The Hospital Authority provides the following nominees: Robert Davis, Rick Muggridge (reappointment), and Mary Ann Pollock.**

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to reappoint Rick Muggridge to the Hospital Authority for a term of three (3) years, expiring 12/31/2026. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Walls voting yea.

- (C) **Chief Appraiser Doug Goodin to discuss new legislation regarding the Tax Assessor's Office.**

Mr. Goodin presented a prepared PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Goodin informed the Board that assessment notices have been sent out. He also stated that the homestead grant that was given out last year would not be given out this year, this is from the Governor's Office not the County.

Mr. Goodin discussed HB 581, which is a referendum on the November ballot that includes creating a floating homestead for citizens that have that exemption by April 1, 2025. The value that citizens see on their current assessment notice will be their base value for the floating homestead, if citizens vote to approve it. This would affect the 2025 tax digest, such as millage rates and budget process for the County. This will be replacing the estimated taxes and the Board must have a certified estimated roll-back millage rate before assessments are sent out next year, which will be in May.

Mr. Goodin stated that anyone that has already applied for the homestead exemption would automatically be covered under this bill; citizens have until April 1, 2025 if this referendum passes to visit the Tax Assessor's Office and sign up. The three (3) things that can cause a change with the base year for homestead are if the property is sold, if there are renovations/additions to the structure, or if the homeowner opts out of the homestead. Mr. Goodin informed the Board that this referendum is statewide, meaning that even if Lee County

does not pass it, it can still pass through the State. However, Lee County can opt out but there will need to be three (3) public hearings in between January 2, 2025 and March 1, 2025 to explain to the public why Lee County will opt out.

Mr. Goodin said that if the County does opt in, the County can receive a \$0.01 sales tax that the County can use for anything, but this is split between the County and Cities. However, if one entity opts out, this sales tax will not be received. Mr. Goodin discussed what these changes mean for the Tax Assessor's Office. The Tax Assessor's Office will now keep three (3) books which are for the floating homestead, other properties, and the non-homestead residential properties. Their office will still have to continue to maintain the same functions for the Department of Audits.

Mr. Goodin stated that with the roll-back rate, there will be a penalty if the Board decides a roll-back rate on the assessments and it is not met. Every property has to be reappraised every three (3) years, 2025-2028 will begin the first three (3) year period. Proof of reevaluations are required, most commonly shown by timestamped photos. Mr. Goodin discussed another item, personal property tax is going from \$7,500.00 to \$20,000.00. In Lee County, that will affect around 2,900 accounts and will equate to around \$100,000.00 of revenue loss for 2025.

Chairman Singletary asked about taxed value ratios and how this equates if there are not changes being made to properties off the baseline year. Mr. Goodin stated that it has nothing to do with that, they still have to change the ratio to get them above the Department of Audits. Mr. Singletary asked how they would change the value if they are homesteaded at 2024. Mr. Goodin stated that they have to keep the two values, the floating homestead and the county wide value that meets the Department of Audits.

Mr. Sam Johnson asked if there is a proposed tax difference for Residential versus Agricultural. Mr. Goodin informed him of a tax relief program for conservancy and forest land.

COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS

(A) **Updates on County projects.**

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed ongoing projects in the County: (1) GEMA is in the process of aiding in the development of a Disaster Recovery Plan for the County; (2) Springdale Park is completed; (3) the concrete pad has been laid at Pirates Cove; (4) Callaway Park is in progress; and (5) the County has received the LRA funds.

(B) **Discussion of the General Obligation of Sales Tax Bonds for SPLOST VIII.**

County Manager Christi Dockery explained that sixty (60) days to submit by September 1. She stated that a decision is needed by June 25. The Board can do a conference call if necessary.

COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS

NONE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS

NONE

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NONE

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.

Sam Johnson – Road paving list and state of Old Leslie Road
Paul Clayton – Raised taxes and state of Old Leslie Road

Chairman Singletary asked if anyone else would like to speak.
With no further comments or questions from the audience, the Public Forum was closed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (A) Events for the **Juneteenth Celebration** will be held Thursday, June 13, 2024 – Sunday, June 16, 2024, with the **parade and festival being held Saturday, June 15, 2024 at 10:00am in Leesburg**. For the full schedule and more information, please visit www.georgiaroots.org or contact Mrs. Trish Batten.
- (B) The offices of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be **closed Wednesday, June 19, 2024** in observance of Juneteenth. County offices will reopen for regular business on Thursday, June 20, 2024. **Garbage services will not be affected.**
- (C) The next regularly scheduled County Commission Meeting is **Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at 6:00pm.**

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Walls voting yea. The meeting adjourned at 6:34PM.

Facebook video link: <https://www.facebook.com/leecountyga/videos/984954733042019>

ATTEST: _____
COUNTY CLERK

CHAIRMAN

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.