



**LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING  
102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 AT 6:00 PM  
T. PAGE THARP BUILDING  
OPAL CANNON AUDITORIUM  
[WWW.LEE.GA.US](http://WWW.LEE.GA.US)

MEETING MINUTES  
Work Session

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**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

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The Lee County Board of Commissioners met in a voting session on Tuesday, January 14, 2025. 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 Guarnier, Commissioner Billy Mathis, and Commissioner Dennis Roland. Staff in attendance were County Manager Christi Dockery and County Attorney Jimmy Skipper. Commissioner George Walls and County Clerk Kaitlyn Good was absent. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook Live. Chairman Singletary called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1. **INVOCATION**

- A) Apostle Malden Batten, The Church of Leesburg, to lead the invocation.  
Apostle Malden Batten led the invocation.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **CALL TO ORDER**

- A) Selection of a Chairman for 2025 and by virtue of office, Chairman will serve on the following boards:
- DARTS Policy Coordinator – meets quarterly
  - Southwest Georgia Regional Commission – meets monthly
  - Health Department – meets quarterly
  - WorkSource Southwest Georgia Consortium\* – meets annually

\* Chairman may appoint another Commissioner to serve as proxy.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to name Commissioner Singletary as Chairman of the Lee County Board of Commissioners for 2025. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea. Commissioner Luke Singletary is the Chairman of the Lee County Board of Commissioners for 2025.

- B) Selection of a Vice-Chairman for 2025.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to name Commissioner Guarnieri as Vice-Chairman of the Lee County Board of Commissioners for 2025. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Chairman Singletary voting yea.

- C) Chairman to make appointments to the County's 2025 Standing Committees, including naming Chairman to each:
- Budget & Finance Committee
  - Personnel Committee
  - Road Committee

- **Budget & Finance Committee:** Commissioner Guarnieri as Chairman and Commissioner Mathis as Vice-Chairman
- **Personnel Committee:** Chairman Singletary as Chairman and Commissioner Guarnieri as Vice-Chairman
- **Road Committee:** Commissioner Roland as Chairman and Commissioner Walls as Vice-Chairman

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A) Consideration to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2024 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2024 Board of Commissioner meeting. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA**

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

7. **PUBLIC HEARING**

- A) **(T24-018)** Harrell & Jackson Inc. has made a request to amend the AG-1 (Active Agriculture District) ordinance **Chapter 70, Article X, Section 70-312** of the **Lee County Code of Ordinances** with respect to adding "Surface Mining" as a permitted use. *Planning Commission recommends approval as a conditional use.*

Chairman Singletary opened the Public Hearing at 6:08pm.

Brain Jackson, Harrell & Jackson Engineering, stated that the use of surface mining that is being proposed is a common use in the state. According to EPD's website, there is currently eight hundred twenty-two active surface mines. Mr. Jackson said that averages to be about five per county out of one hundred fifty-nine counties. There is around seven in Dougherty, ten in Sumter, and two or three in Terrell and Worth. Some of the benefits to mines are competitive pricing for concrete, field material, and construction material. EPD keeps track of the surface mines with annual reporting and inspections.

Bobby Donley, Lanier Engineering, stated that they are here for an ordinance change to clean up some language. This would not be a permit by rule, meaning that every project would have to resubmit then go through the review and approval process. This would not be anything that is allowed without coming back before the Board. Commissioner Guarnieri asked that EPD regulates this process. Mr. Donley stated that they do, you have to go through a surface mining permit process. You have to have a plan and state at the end of the life of the surface mine what the closeout is going to be. There are annual reports that have to be submitted every year. EPD has a specific department that is just for permitting, regulating, and verifying. Commissioner Roland asked if they would just be mining sand. Mr. Donley said the only things that would be mined would

be sand or clay.

Jason Wiggins stated that it is the same thing that is across the creek, which is a 175-acre track, and they have put 500-acres in a conservation that backs up to the creek. This area would be to mine. Commissioner Guarnieri asked how far down you have to mine. Mr. Wiggins answered that if the material is 100 feet deep, but it is regulated by EPD and 25 feet is the deepest that you can go.

Arthur Ford stated that he is not against surfacing mining but is against adding it as a permitted use in AG-1. Surface mining should be a separate land use designation with criteria that would ensure land, streams, and residential areas around it would not be adversely affected. Mr. Ford stated that in his opinion, mining is not agriculture.

Jeff Kluball stated that he is representing himself as well as others from the Southwood Subdivision and he is very concerned about the consideration for surface mining. Their subdivision is close to the Kinchafoonee Creek, they are looking to develop Lee County with kayaking and recreation which would then be downstream from potential mines. He stated that the due diligence shouldn't be up to the constituents, but the due diligence should be done before the Board takes this step. You can look at other counties where they have surface mined and they left the areas uninhabitable. Mr. Kluball stated that the Kinchafoonee Creek is a very balanced ecosystem. He does not think we are prepared to take this step forward right now. Mr. Kluball said there are too many unanswered questions for the long-term effects.

Jay Howell stated that the county has been growing but this is something that would set us backwards. There is the Kinchafoonee Creek, the recreational facility being built, and other things to draw people in. Once you start mining, it will bring the property values down in that area. Once you do it, it is a done deal. You cannot get that land back for housing or anything else. Mr. Howell asked the Board not to do this, there are other things that can be developed in the county.

Bruce Melcher stated that the ones that are doing the surface mining would be his neighbors, but not sure that they would be good ones. He asked why this should be an amendment to agriculture zoning since this is not agriculture. If the Board moves forward with this, it should have its own designation. He stated he would like his property values to stay good and would like to see other development populate that area. Mr. Melcher stated that this is going to have an impact, and he doesn't see it being a good impact.

Daniel Evans stated that friends of his that live on the creek have a lot they have to go through to simply cut down a tree or plant grass. He asked if he cannot buy a house and plant a yard, how can they come in to mine and take all the minerals.

Kathleen Fiorito thanked the Board for doing the renovations to the Callaway Lakes Park. She thanked the Board for paving four roads in her neighborhood. She said that she would like to advocate for the homeowners that need their roads repaved. She stated that there are more roads getting created than there are older roads getting repaved. She discussed the House Bill 581, she would like to see the Board put out more information regarding their thoughts on this bill. Ms. Fiorito asked that before the Board does major projects, they include taxpayers opinions. She mentioned the bond for the Hospital, there is a chance for Medicare getting cut which would leave some uninsured and would leave the burden on the taxpayers.

Jackson Howell stated that he doesn't want Lee County to become barren. He doesn't want to go to his backyard and there be nothing there.

Carol Kluball thanked the Board for everything they are doing for the county. She stated that Pinewood cannot handle any more big trucks, they can hear the machinery and dump trucks on their road. Ms. Kluball stated that no one knows the damage they will do to the creek. They are giving a buffer, but will they encroach on that if they run out of sand. She asks that the Board please considers limiting the usage and let that land remain agriculture.

With no further comments or questions from the Board, staff or public, Chairman Singletary closed the public hearing at 6:36PM.

## 8. **DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS**

- A) **E-911** - Consideration to approve a change order from W.J. Kirksey for the E-911 Center Renovation project.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that this carpet has had flood events due to HVAC and other issues. This would help complete the major renovation to the building. She said they are asking to remove the carpet and lay the flooring that is going in other areas. Commissioner Mathis asked how many change orders this project has had and what the total cost of them is. Ms. Dockery stated that this is the second change order, the original bid was around \$55,000.00. They have added another office which was around \$7,000.00 and this will be \$13,000.00, this flooring will be for the back of the building. Commissioner Mathis asked Ms. Dockery to bring them the numbers for these changes.

- B) **E-911** - Consideration to award the bid for the E-911 Phone System.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that they received four proposals back for this bid. Staff is currently recommending INdigital, this will be to replace the current system Call Works that is being sunsetted. Commissioner Mathis said that he was told that it was not being sunsetted. E-911 Director Nikkie Celinski stated that it is currently in the process of being sunsetted. Commissioner Mathis asked what was exactly bid out regarding maintenance due to all vendors have five years in their bid except for INdigital which has six years. Ms. Celinski stated the RFP was for five years. Commissioner Mathis stated that INdigital was out of compliance with having six years instead of five years and it was around \$70,000 for the sixth year. He asked if the RFP only asked for five, but they bid for six, can they deduct the \$70,000.00 from their bid. He stated that he was unsure if they could accept this bid since it is not in compliance. Ms. Celinski stated that if they do not want to go with INdigital, she would recommend looking at WestTel. Commissioner Mathis stated that WestTel is in compliance with the bid and the lowest bidder, but he learned that Call Works has not been sunset and that they normally support their systems for five years after they are sunset at a cost of \$15,000.00 a year to maintain. Ms. Celinski stated that she has reached out to someone at Motorola, but they have not gotten back to her. They currently have a product that is not working up to standard. She said that she would not want it to get too far gone and not have something else in place. The WestTel system has a redundancy and are NENA compliant which is important for NextGen. Commissioner Mathis asked if there has been times when Motorola has not responded. Ms. Celinski stated that this last time and it was sent in the middle of December.

Commissioner Mathis discussed the options on what to do regarding the phone system. Ms. Celinski stated that she could look to see what support for Call Works would look like over the next couple of years. Commissioner Mathis stated that he doesn't think that they could deduct the \$70,000.00 from INdigital's bid. Ms. Celinski stated that she will do whatever the Board would like to do about the phone system. Chairman Singletary stated that he would like to learn more about the maintenance agreement for the current system. If Motorola can give support for another year or so, by the time that a new phone system is needed there may be something new. Commissioner

Guarnieri asked if Motorola offers a redundant system. Ms. Celinski stated that the VESTA system is redundant, no matter if it is purchased from Motorola or INdigital. She informed the Board that WestTel is also redundant. Commissioner Mathis stated that all the systems are the same regarding redundancy and you have to have a place for the equipment for there to be redundancy. Ms. Celinski stated that is a network system, twenty-three counties were shut down due to a fiber line being cut and could not reroute.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to table the bid for the E-911 Phone System. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

C) **E-911** - Consideration to award the bid for a recorder for the E-911 Center.

Chairman Singletary stated that the current bids are from Quality Recording Solutions for \$104,378.00 and REPLAY Systems at \$104,975.00. Ms. Celinski stated that right now they have two recorders, one records the radio and one records the phone. This would be one recorder for both the radio and phone. They currently have two recorders due to the radio recorder losing phone calls and cutting them off. Chairman Mathis asked if it would be better to buy all of this at one time if they eventually buy a new phone system. Ms. Celinski stated that the recorder with Quality Solutions works with every phone vendor. Commissioner Guarnieri asked how long the recorders usually last. Ms. Celinski stated she would get that information to them; the current ones are around five to six years old. Chairman Singletary asked if there is a problem with the current recording system. Ms. Celinski stated the only issue is that she has is the caller being low on the recording, but they ran a configuration to try and solve that. The main thing is combining the recorders so that they are not paying for two separate recorders. Chairman Singletary asked if it was a monthly fee and how much it is. Ms. Celinski stated that it was a yearly fee, and she can work to provide them with the exact number.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to table the bid for a recorder for the E-911 Center. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

D) **GIS** - Consideration to approve the Lee County 2025 GCIP Grant Award for GIS Internship.

GIS Manager Kacee Smith stated that on January 6th, Lee County was awarded with the Georgia County Internship Program Grant within the Association County Commissioners Georgia Civic Affairs Foundation. This is for a Geographic Information Science Intern for the GIS department. The amount awarded was \$1,759.50, this will cover one summer internship. Ms. Smith stated that seventy-five counties in Georgia applied, and Lee County was one of forty-five to be selected. This intern would help the department significantly with various projects that they are currently working on. Such as the revision of the address system, utilizing a way to incorporate our utility information for the county, data revision, and data compilation. Chairman Singletary asked what the cost to the county. Ms. Smith stated that the maximum hours that they can provide is 200, if they go with that amount then the county would be responsible for \$1,542.00.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to approve the Lee County 2025 GCIP Grant Award for GIS Internship. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland voting yea.

E) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve an amendment to **Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-66** of the Lee County Code of Ordinances changing the section title from

“Standards for the proper display of addresses.” to “Standards for proper assignment of addresses.” Further, amending subparagraph (a) of the section by adding standards for proper assignment of addresses and relocating subsections (b) through (g) to the amended Section 18-67; an amendment to **Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-67** re-designating Section 18-67 from “Enforcement and penalties for violation.” to “Proper display of address numbers.” Said section is further amended by the re-designation of subparagraphs (b) through (g) from Section 18-66, to now subparagraphs (a) through (e), to provide additional and amended requirements for the proper display of address numbers; an amendment adding **Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-68.** – Enforcement and penalties for violation., including subsections (a) and (b), relocated from Section 18-67. Further, amending wording in subsection (a) from “the E-911 coordinator or his designee” to “the address coordinator or their designee”; an amendment adding **Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-69** . – Street Naming standards. to include new subsections (a) through (c), to provide street naming standards; and an amendment to **Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-70** adding the definitions “Address Coordinator”, “Principle building”, and “Sub address”. *Planning Commission recommends approval. First Reading held December 10, 2024*

GIS Manager Kacee Smith stated that they are bringing this to the board because they need a more consolidated and constructive form of proper assignment of addresses and proper display. The proper assignment will help to fix some of the issues with the address system, it is currently not NENA (National Emergency Number Association) compliant. The addresses that the county has are older, they use an ABC formula which is not compliant with the new NextGen system. Ms. Smith stated that with this amendment, she would have more constructive backing to change those addresses because it is a public safety issue. With the display of addresses, they have changed it to only require the post be for new subdivisions which will have cluster mailboxes. You can either have the green posts or a wrought iron as long as it is reflective. Anything that is existing that cannot be seen from the road, the mailbox will be compliant.

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper stated that since the first reading there has been an amendment. He suggests adopting the amendment and then adopt the ordinance. The amendment is in 18-67, Paragraph C, Subparagraph 4.

Commissioner Roland asked that this only involves new houses. Ms. Smith stated that the post is only for new subdivisions that require cluster mailboxes. The postmaster is requiring cluster mailboxes for new subdivisions and the posts are required for them. Commissioner Roland asked about requiring people to change their addresses. Ms. Smith stated that the only ones that will have to change their addresses are the ones that are not NENA compliant, which are the houses that have ABC. Commissioner Mathis stated that there are quite a few addresses like that in the rural areas. He asked how many there are. Ms. Smith stated that she does not have a consolidated number, but she can look into it. Commissioner Roland asked if they have to change the addresses. Ms. Smith stated that they do, if this goes to legislation next year then the county would have to be NENA and NextGen compliant. Commissioner Mathis asked if they had to do it now. Ms. Smith stated that she would need to start working on it now if they are to get NextGen in 2026 then she would need at least a year to work on it. Commissioner Mathis asked if she could work on it without having to change addresses yet. Ms. Smith said that she can and get a range of areas that need to be changed. A 30-day notice would be sent to the homeowners to let them know that their address needs to be changed.

Commissioner Guarnieri asked how long they have to change the address once notified. Ms. Smith stated homeowners have 30 days. Commissioner Mathis asked to clarify that there is no state law that says they have to do this. Ms. Smith said no currently but they are taking it to the Georgia State Legislature in 2026. Commissioner Guarnier asked if they are currently experiencing problems now with the current addressing system. E-911 Director Nikkie Celinski stated that there was an incident

on Stocks Dairy Road with a man falling on the roof. This road has an address with ABC, they are on different sides of the road and not completely marked. They had to send someone to the end of the driveway to let them know which house it was. Ms. Smith stated that is why she said that it is a public safety concern, if you are unable to find a house then that is a liability issue. Ms. Celinski said that this has been done in the past to Chase Hill due to them having Fussell Road addresses.

Commissioner Mathis asked there are five houses on one dirt road driveway, how would that be fixed. Ms. Smith stated that they would have to reassign the addresses based on the numerical value on that side of the road. Ms. Smith reiterated about being in compliance with NENA, which does not allow ABC on addresses. Commissioner Mathis asked what happens if you are not in compliance. Ms. Celinski answered that as of right now there are no fines. Chairman Singletary clarified that until the state adopts the policy, there is no penalty if the county is not in compliance but it's a concern about not finding the addresses. Ms. Smith stated that is correct, but she has received complaints regarding addresses due to things not being delivered and being too similar to surrounding addresses. Commissioner Guarnieri asked if they can send out letters to homeowners regarding this. Ms. Smith said that they will work on sending letters out. Commissioner Mathis asked for a list of those not in compliance.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve an amendment to Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-66; Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-67; Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-68; Chapter 18, Article III, Section 18-69; and Chapter 18 Article III Section 18-70. None seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** failed.

- F) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Review of the December 5, 2024 Planning Commission meeting minutes.

The minutes were reviewed as presented.

- G) **Public Works** - Consideration to award the bid for the renovation of the Public Works office building.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to award the bid to WJ Kirksey Construction for the renovation of the Public Works office building for \$124,500.00 from ARPA funds. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

- H) **Public Works** - Consideration to award the bid for the Animal Control/ Code Enforcement office building.

Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk stated that they had two contractors bid on this project, but one backed out. This is for a building at Public Works, it will be up to the bidder to pay for the design work for this. Commissioner Mathis asked what the original cost estimate for this project was. Mr. Sistrunk stated that he was not here at that time but was told it was around \$125,000.00. Commissioner Mathis asked what the new cost is. Mr. Sistrunk stated it was \$197,500.00. Commissioner Mathis stated that he recalled a change order from a few weeks ago for renovating offices for Code Enforcement in the E-911 building. He asked if they approved that change order, why are they doing a building. County Manager Christi Dockery stated that this building will be for three Animal Control officers and three Code Enforcement officers. This will allow the Animal Control officers to be closer to the Animal Shelter. This would allow their old office in the E-911 Building to be used as storage, the storage area in Elections was given to them during renovations. Ms. Dockery stated that a backup system for E-911 could be placed in the new office. Commissioner Mathis stated he was confused regarding the change order for the Code Enforcement

offices in E-911. Chairman Singletary clarified that the change order was for the front office at E-911. Ms. Dockery stated that was for the offices for the E-911 Director and E-911 Training Coordinator.

Mr. Sistrunk stated that offices are going to be set up to have six people. He asked to house them together since one of the Animal Control officers has Code Enforcement experience and certification. This would allow him to help Code Enforcement when needed. Mr. Sistrunk stated that the price increase from what the original quote was may be due to originally, they were looking at doing an aluminum building but now they are doing an office style to match. Chairman Singletary asked if this would be paid by ARPA funds and if there is enough to cover it with the price increase. Ms. Dockery stated that there is enough to cover it. Commissioner Mathis asked for the new total and the original. Ms. Dockery stated that the new cost is \$197,500.00. Finance Director Heather Jones stated that the original pricing was \$81,043.96.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to award the bid for the Animal Control/ Code Enforcement office building to WJ Kirksey Construction for \$197,500.00 from ARPA funds. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

I) **Public Works** - Discussion of the bid for speed tables.

Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk stated that a bid was put out and they only received one response, this contractor does work with Albany. He bid for a 14-foot concrete table for \$9,236.54, the contractor stated that he would keep these prices for a year if he got the bid. Mr. Sistrunk stated that they would not have to put a bid out every time they would like to place a speed table while he keeps this price. Commissioner Mathis asked if they could do this when a road is being resurfaced and get a better price from the contractor doing the resurfacing. Mr. Sistrunk stated that he believed so, he spoke with Oxford Construction, and they believed it would be simpler for them to do it. Commissioner Mathis asked to get quotes from resurfacing companies on what it would cost for them to do it and possibly with asphalt instead of concrete. Mr. Sistrunk stated that it is cheaper to do it with asphalt, especially when resurfacing.

Chairman Singletary stated that if they go forward with speed tables then there needs to be a selection criteria with possibly a speed detection device. Commissioner Guarnieri stated that he has received several requests in the past month, and it seems to be a growing problem with speeding. He asked if Mr. Sistrunk had a recommendation on a threshold to meet to install speed tables and if there is a speed tracking device to use on the roads. Mr. Sistrunk suggested a speed sign trailer that flashes when you are speeding and tracks data, it does not video record anything. This could be helpful when someone calls for a speed bump, instead of just placing a speed bump down immediately, the speed sign can be placed to see if it is needed. Speed bumps are not designed for long term. The trailer is around \$15,000.00 and it can be used by the Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Mathis asked how many would be needed. Mr. Sistrunk stated that he would like two of them.

J) **Public Works** - Discussion of carpeting and flooring in the DFACS Building.

Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk stated that this is a part of the renegotiated contract with DFACS. Everything else requested by them has been completed, the two things remaining is the decals and the flooring on the second floor replaced. Due to the quotes received for this, it needs to be put out for bid. Commissioner Mathis stated that he believed this was all taken into the price of the lease for it to be cost neutral. County Manager Christi Dockery stated that was correct. Mr. Sistrunk said that it be below the cost due to Public Works staff doing some of the work. The



Commissioners agreed for this to be placed out for bid.

9. **CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES**

- A) Consideration to nominate three (3) persons for **each of the two (2)** upcoming vacancies to the **Hospital Authority** for a term of two (2) years. Current terms expired 12/31/2024. New terms expire 12/31/2026. Letters of interest in appointment received by Cole Williams, Dana Hager (reappointment), and Ryan Carr.

Chairman Singletary stated that they can only nominate these three for one position. Commissioner Mathis asked County Attorney Jimmy Skipper if they can send these nominations to the Hospital Authority and the two that they don't appoint be sent back for the other vacancy. Mr. Skipper stated that they could as long as they get another nominee since you have to have three.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to nominate Cole Williams, Dana Hager, and Ryan Carr for a vacancy to the Hospital Authority. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland voting yea.

- B) **Tax Commissioner's Office** - Consideration to adopt a resolution for matters related to the collection of taxes.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that this is resolutions for Tax Commissioner Wendy David's new term. This gives her the ability to not have to charge on amounts owing a dollar or less. Tax Commissioner Wendy David stated that for property taxes, anything outstanding you can write it off for less than a dollar.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to adopt a resolution for matters related to the collection of taxes. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland voting yea.

- C) **Tax Commissioner's Office** - Consideration to adopt a resolution to authorize the Lee County Tax Commissioner to waive certain amounts of taxes owed.

Tax Commissioner Wendy David stated that she is not waiving any fees right now, but she has to have a resolution to do so. If it is post marked, then it can be waived.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to adopt a resolution to authorize the Lee County Tax Commissioner to waive certain amounts of taxes owed. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

- D) **Tax Commissioner's Office** - Consideration to adopt a resolution for approving the waiver of certain penalties and interest by the Lee County Tax Commissioner.

Tax Commissioner Wendy David stated that this resolution is to be able to waive the 5% interest. Every 120 days there is a 5% penalty that maxes out at 20%, if it is post marked then it can be waived.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to adopt a resolution for approve the waiver of certain penalties and interest by the Lee County Tax Commissioner. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

- E) **Tax Commissioner's Office** - Consideration to adopt a resolution for electing not to require mobile

home decals.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to adopt a resolution for electing not to require mobile home decals. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

Tax Commissioner Wendy David stated that there is one more resolution not listed. The tax sale is coming up in March, but there are some mobile homes that can be taken and sold for \$1.00 to be recycled instead of sold at the tax sale. Chairman Singletary asked when the tax sale is. Ms. David stated it is the first Tuesday in March.

Commissioner Roland asked about twenty-five acres near Woodgrain Mills. Commissioner Mathis stated that the property has some environmental issues. Ms. David stated that she can look into the property.

## 10. COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS

### A) Updates on County projects.

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed the following updates to County Projects: (1) the Smithville Fire Station Tower, they have ordered the radio equipment and expect to have it installed in February; and (2) Windstream is around 30% done with the fiber project and plan to be finished in June 2025.

### B) Discussion of a quote to replace the bridges in Pirate's Cove Nature Park.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that the bridges were damaged during the hurricane. It is \$21,000.00 to replace one bridge with a floating bridge, instead of buckling during a flood at Pirate's Cove it will float to keep from damaging. Chairman Singletary asked how long the bridge is. Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk said there were two long bridges and a short one that was around 40 feet long. When it flooded, the bridge couldn't handle the height of the water, and it popped in the center. He stated that he asked for recommendations on what to do and was told about a floating bridge. This bridge will have poles in the ground and as the water rises, the bridge will rise with the poles. Mr. Sistrunk stated that they have a few people call and complain about the two bridges not being open. These bridges have been repaired but keep getting damaged by dead trees falling on them. At this time, Public Works does not have the equipment to go in and cut back the trees to prevent this. The contractor suggested placing floating bridges in these two areas, if a tree limb fell then the bridge would be able to bounce down and come back up under the weight of the limb. They could also go in and try to trim the trees back. He stated they were quoted at \$63,000.00 for two long bridges.

Commissioner Mathis asked if this was put out for bid. Mr. Sistrunk stated that it was not, he was just receiving a quote for it. Commissioner Mathis asked how many bridges and how long. Mr. Sistrunk answered that there are two very long bridges and the one that the quote is for is around 30 to 40 foot long. Commissioner Mathis asked that this be placed out for bid. Commissioner Guarnieri stated that he has received calls of citizens having concerns about the bridge being repaired. He asked if the contractor could trim back the trees when they place the bridge. Mr. Sistrunk stated that they can, they have machines that can walk in the water without disturbing anything to trim the trees.

Commissioner Roland asked about getting a price for a box cover for the pipes that get clogged on Bud Drive. Mr. Sistrunk stated that they have to go there every time it rains to clear the pipes. They have added more pipes to it that has seemed to help but it is still a problem.

Mr. Sistrunk informed the Board that they are finishing up the bridge on Smithville Road within the next four to five weeks.

- C) Consideration to declare vehicles and equipment surplus.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that these are from the Sheriff's Office.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to declare vehicles and equipment surplus.

Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri voting yea.

- D) Discussion of ARPA funds.

Commissioner Mathis stated that not everything has been approved to spend ARPA funds on. He asked that as the issues come up, they approve them as they go. Chairman Singletary asked that as the items come up to communicate with the Board regarding it. Commissioner Mathis said that as the issues come up, bring it to the Board and they decide which funds to use.

## 11. COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS

- A) Discussion of House Bill 581: Homestead Exemption. *HANDOUT*

Chief Tax Assessor Doug Goodin stated that the Board has until March 1st to either opt in or opt out. If nothing is done, then it is an automatic opt in. Chairman Singletary asked if we opt in, then would our existing homeowners be based off the base for 2024. Mr. Goodin said only if they qualify for homestead. The requirements for a homestead are residing in the house, nothing rented on the property, and it can't be a commercial business. The Tax Assessor's Office requires to go by their office and fill out the homestead exemption and be approved by April 1, 2025; you must show a photo ID with the current address that you are voting from. If you own rental property, you will not qualify. Chairman Singletary asked if we have reevaluations, are these properties be exempt from the reevaluation. Mr. Goodin said that reevaluations are required by the legislation every 3 years and if the value of the property has a significant change, then that new value becomes their base value. Chairman Singletary asked that it doesn't necessarily lock the homeowners into the 2024 rate. Mr. Goodin answered that it doesn't, only if they did something to increase it structural wise. If the market is going up, then yes, it is locked in. If the owners added major permitted projects, then it would change on that year. They would not have to do a reevaluation because the permit process would generate to go out there and it would be changed then. It is not a set in stone value, it's going to fluctuate and move. If the house is sold, then the value is what is on the tax digest at that time.

Commissioner Roland asked if Lee County opted out and the schools opted in; what does this mean for the taxes. Mr. Goodin replied that their taxes would be based on their homestead values; however, the schools have already opted out and had their first hearing. Commissioner Mathis added that if the school board opts out, it's the current system now and nothing will change.

Mr. Goodin said if you opt out, it doesn't mean that you're done with this, it just means you didn't accept it the way it's written in this referendum. You can create a county-wide homestead exemption based on what you wanted it to be. If you opt in, then you will be in it until they put something else out to vote on for you to repeal. Chairman Singletary asked if they could create a county homestead. Commissioner Mathis stated that he spoke with Mr. Skipper, and they don't know the answer to that yet. Mr. Goodin said that he was informed you can create it, there's just a process to create it. Commissioner Mathis said from a legal standpoint he wants to be sure, but he thinks it's very important that the citizens understand this law.

He stated that they can opt out, which means we will just stay with current system. If they don't opt out then the county goes under the new law, which is if you have a homestead exemption, your taxes and evaluation won't go up anymore than the rate of inflation. Commissioner Mathis provided an example, if his house is worth \$100,000.00 and the CPI is 3%, then his homestead exemption goes from \$100,000.00 to \$103,000.00 which means he doesn't pay any more taxes than the year before. If the next year if it goes up to 5%, the value goes up 5%, and his homestead exemption goes up 5%; he won't pay any more taxes than he did two years ago. Mr. Goodin stated that the taxes go with the millage rate. Commissioner Mathis said that they can raise the millage rate at any time. However, this law says if you have a homestead exemption, your taxes are not going to go up unless you sell your home, add onto your home, or if the Commissioners vote for a millage increase.

Commissioner Mathis stated that when the county did a reevaluation, they rolled the millage rate back 12%. He said that they have never increased taxes because of evaluations. All this is going to do is give the taxpayers of Lee County that have homestead exemptions a break on increases of taxes in the future, unless the Board raises the millage rate. Commissioner Mathis said they had one 6-month period after the reevaluation where values in this county increased 30%. What this law does is gives taxpayers in a county like this certainty of knowing that their taxes are not going to increase because of the situation where a lot of people are trying to buy a house. He said that they are not going to recoup any new taxes from the taxpayers or people who have homestead exemptions because of an increase in value of their home. Mr. Goodin said they are in the process because they are out of compliance with the Department of Revenue. Chairman Singletary asked how that continues if you have this Department of Revenue requirement that you be at 38% to 43%. Mr. Goodin stated that he has to keep books for the Department of Audits, with the current value and the frozen value. Chairman Singletary said the frozen value does not affect the amount they pay on taxes and that doesn't affect the ratio.

Mr. Skipper said the actual homestead is floating because the homestead exemption becomes the difference between what the value is if we were under the old system versus the example of \$103,000.00. The exemption itself is what floats, if you have a house that last year was worth \$100,000.00 and after the reevaluation it's \$200,000.00, then the exemption amount that you don't pay taxes on is the \$200,000.00 minus the \$103,000.00. The current exemption is \$2,000.00, if the county decides to opt out then there is a lot to do between now and March 1st. Commissioner Mathis said if they opt out, then the current system is what they will go by. He stated that they don't rely on increased values to raise tax revenue but rely on growth. Commissioner Mathis asked if they want to tax based on the increased values of their home or not. However, if they follow the new law then that's what they have to do from now on.

Chairman Singletary said the future growth and reevaluation wouldn't capture the tax revenue off of increased home value, which would be a downside for the revenue standpoint if there was an increase in home value. Commissioner Mathis stated to not levy the one-cent sales tax if they go with the new system. Chairman Singletary said that the Board has some things to think about. Mr. Skipper stated that if they decide to opt out, the deadline to decide would be their next meeting. They will need to have three hearings to inform the public that they will be opting out along with other requirements. Commissioner Mathis asked Mr. Skipper if he could get them an answer on the local legislation.

B) Discussion of a moratorium on car washes.

Chairman Singletary stated that there has been discussion of having car washes under conditional use. Commissioner Mathis said that he doesn't know if a moratorium should be placed on car washes, but there needs to be a meeting to discuss the zoning.

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

13. COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS

14. EXECUTIVE SESSION

15. PUBLIC FORUM

Sam Johnson - List of roads to be paved and resurfaced. Public Works did a good job on Leslie Road.

Paul Clayton - Discussed the paving of Old Leslie Road.

With no further comments or questions from the public, staff or the Board. The Public Forum was closed.

16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A) The next meeting of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be January 28, 2025 at 6:00pm.

B) The offices of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be **closed Monday, January 20, 2025** in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday. County offices will reopen for regular business on Tuesday, January 21, 2025. **Garbage collection services will not be affected and will run as scheduled.**

17. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:14PM.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK