



LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING

102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

Tuesday, March 11, 2025 AT 6:00 PM

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, March 11, 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 Guarnieri, Commissioner Dennis Roland, Commissioner Billy Mathis, and Commissioner George Walls. Staff in attendance were County Manager Christi Dockery and County Attorney Jimmy Skipper. 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. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **INVOCATION**

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

Apostle Malden Batten led the invocation.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A) Consideration to approve the minutes from the February 25, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the February 25, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA**

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

A) Jennifer Stephens, Behavioral Health and Intellectual Development Disabilities Specialist for ASPIRE, to address the Board regarding Intellectual/ Development Disabilities Month.

Consideration to adopt a Proclamation declaring March 2025 as Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month, on behalf of ASPIRE Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.

Jennifer Stephens, Behavioral Health and Intellectual Development Disabilities Specialist for Aspire, addressed the Board regarding Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month and this

year's theme of "The Power of Possibilities". Ms. Stephens stated that this theme is the hope that people will look beyond what is possible for someone that has a developmental disability and see what the possibilities are for them, because they have infinite possibilities.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to adopt a proclamation declaring March 2025 as Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Month. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

- B) Consideration to approve a professional services agreement with FlintRiver Consulting for Hazard Mitigation.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that an application was submitted to GEMA to fund this study and will receive \$26,667.00. Staff would like to hire Mr. Mike Talley with FlintRiver Consulting to conduct this study.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to approve a professional services agreement with FlintRiver Consulting for Hazard Mitigation. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Roland voting yea.

- C) Discussion of Ivy Lane Drainage Study.

Mike Talley, FlintRiver Consulting, addressed the Board regarding the Ivy Lane Drainage Study. When Hurricane Helene came through, even though it had weakened by the time it got to Lee County, there was still heavy rain. A house on Ivy Lane experienced flooding, which is not common in that area. Mr. Talley said that the Board directed him to do a study to see why that house flooded. The report presented to the board explains his findings and there was a lot of rain in a short period of time. Based on National Weather Service data, it was a twenty-five-year storm over a six-hour period. Using that data, Mr. Talley was able to use a model to show what had happened. This model showed why the house on Ivy Lane flooded and not the neighbor's house, but the model revealed that the neighbor's house was very close to flooding. Mr. Talley said that the neighbor's house could not have flooded due to finished floor elevations. He stated that part of this contract was the infrastructure survey and compared the floor elevations of the two houses to the flooding levels on the model. Mr. Talley said that there is a cheap and expensive fix to this problem. The cheaper fix is that there is one inlet in the back of the property and most houses have multiple inlets. Public Works could set two more inlets there and that would allow water to get into the pipe faster. This could also help if one inlet is blocked; it has two more inlets to drain into. Mr. Talley discussed the more expensive option. There is currently a pipe capacity issue and there are three different pipe links. There is 42' pipe that if you upgrade it to 48' pipe, then you will see the water drop up to a foot in the area. This would not be a cheap investment, but it would provide added measures of protection if a similar storm occurs again. Mr. Talley stated that if the County was to get a twenty-five-year storm, then the area would flood due to most infrastructure standards being for a ten-year storm. Commissioner Mathis asked if adding two additional inlets would help greatly. Mr. Talley stated that until you get to the bigger storms, it will definitely help. Since you are not aware of the inlets being blocked until the storm, the hope would be at least one is open.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to add two additional inlets to Ivy Lane. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

- D) Lisa Davis, Chamber of Commerce Director, and Payton Harris, Deputy County Clerk, to present information regarding the upcoming Lee County Bicentennial. (**HANDOUT**)

Lisa Davis, Chamber of Commerce Director, addressed the Board. She stated that the committee has been working around six months to plan for this upcoming celebration. The current date they are looking to do the celebration is Friday, June 6th. Ms. Davis said that they will be talking about the history of Lee County by highlighting agriculture, businesses, infrastructure, railways, and other areas of the County. They plan to have fireworks to end the night. There will be merchandise including hats, shirts, coffee mugs, and Christmas ornaments. She said that it will be held in front of the Courthouse and there will be food vendors. Payton Harris, Deputy County Clerk, added that the celebration is planned to be from 6:00pm to 9:00pm.

7. **PUBLIC HEARING**

A) Public input on Multi-Family Development in the County.

Chairman Singletary opened the Public Hearing at 6:11pm.

Lee Walton, WSP, stated that this public hearing is to receive public input on multi-family development and R-2 zoning. This involves looking at the Comp plan which has policies. Zoning ordinance, R-2 district. Mr. Walton stated that in the process of evaluating policies and zoning, public input is important and a requirement. This was brought about by a moratorium that the Board put into place. They have been conducting analysis, interviews and reviewing data.

He stated that the moratorium has them looking with respect to land disturbance permits, subdivision approvals, and rezoning. These are the policies and regulatory drivers at county level for multi-family development. As far as development is concerned in Lee County, policy is established by the comprehensive plan, which was last updated around a year ago. This comprehensive plan provides a coordinated policy for the County, City of Leesburg, and the City of Leesburg as it is a joint plan. There is a policy regarding providing a range of safe, affordable, inclusive and resource-efficient housing. Another policy is encouraging a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities. Also, ensuring the availability of adequate workforce housing. One area that they are looking at is differentiating policies between the County and municipalities. The comprehensive plan is a living document. It is required to be updated every five years, but you are not limited to only every five years. You can amend or do a minor update to the comprehensive plan. This is to be considered a minor amendment to update policy on multi-development to be consistent.

Mr. Walton discussed the various districts. He stated that in R-2 you can have single-family housing, duplexes, town homes, and apartment complexes. Requirements for R-2 include that the development be adjacent to arterial/ collector roads, connect to public water/ sewer, and compliment any adjacent single-family developments. There are several points in the current R-2 ordinance that lack clarity and are too open for interpretation. Mr. Walton stated that one of the factors in the moratorium was the topic of economics concerning multi-family housing and development in the County.

Bryan Ray, WSP, stated that looking at the economic factors, the existing Utilities Authority capacity has no additional sewer capacity for Lee County. The Utilities Authority passed a resolution limiting additional connections for residential uses. This may effectively prohibit new connections to the sewer system other than in the instances where they may pass a waiver. The data on the affordability index shows that while Lee County may not be burdened by housing costs, there are significant transportation costs. This is a factor in getting housing in locations where there is access to better transportation options or closer to destinations. Mr. Walton added that they were surprised to see that the estimate is that transportation cost consumes a higher percentage of the household income than the actual housing cost. Mr. Ray stated that they looked at information regarding parcel value. They looked at the values per acre, per-unit basis, and per square-foot basis.

When you look at the value per acre, the multi-family has the greatest value per acre. The value per unit, the multi-family housing, has the lowest cost per unit. Mr. Ray stated that they looked at possible Code Enforcement issues within multi-family housing. He said that they discussed with the school system, they found that students that live in multi-family housing do not stay in the school system as long. Mr. Walton stated this was a brief overview of some of the key issues, there is currently not a recommendation at this time.

Mike Sabot stated that back in 2018, the County paid for a land use report. The cost of services that the taxpayer has to pay. This report showed that for a family with 2 children that attend the school system, the break-even point for the cost of services is 792,000.00 for the house. If the county is going to do multi-family, the taxpayers will have to pick up the tab, which is not fair.

Sam Johnson asked how they could bring the lot sizes down to 60 when the Planning Commission agreed on 80 feet. Chairman Singletary clarified that if Mr. Johnson is referring to the projects in the City. The Board does not regulate that, it is the City Council. Mr. Johnson stated that with houses like that, it will have a greater impact on the school system. He stated that many times people don't buy these homes but rent them, which means they don't have to pay school taxes. This puts more burden on the farmers and citizens.

Johnny Golden clarified that he does not represent any board or entity. Mr. Golden read Ordinance Chapter 70, Article 6, R-2 Multi-Family Residential District, Section 199, Single-Family and Duplex Developments. He then read Ordinance Chapter 70, Article 6, Section 201, Planned Unit Development. Mr. Golden stated that he is pointing this out due to his major concerns. In terms of the infrastructure, he has seen all the growth, but the infrastructure, public safety, water, sewage, and school system will be impacted. Mr. Golden said that storm drainage will be impacted, and he personally has an issue with this at his property. He stated that he believes there will be an increase in budgets with the infrastructure, which will lead to a tax or millage increase. This will impact the taxpayers and landowners. He is asking that the numbers in the ordinance be reduced and the setbacks increased.

Commissioner Mathis stated the purpose of this conversation is to have orderly growth. Chairman Singletary stated that there have been discussions about projects in the City of Leesburg and this happened to coincide with that, but this is completely independent. Commissioner Roland asked Mr. Walton if any communities that he knows of has banned R-2 housing. Mr. Walton stated there are other communities that do not currently allow housing with sewer connections, which means that the lot sizes need to be larger for Health Department approval. They are seeing this more frequently since expanding sewer capabilities is expensive. Commissioner Mathis asked to see a model ordinance to allow to continue to build zero-lot line housing, but not something where there are a bunch of apartments being built. He stated that zero-lot line housing is usually owned and better kept in most cases. Chairman Singletary stated that those usually have deed-restrictive covenants to maintain them. He suggested maybe having the zero-lot line option but with a minimum square footage. Commissioner Mathis stated that they want to avoid duplex developments as the study showed a high call volume to Public Safety.

Commissioner Roland asked if they deal with impact fees in any of their studies. Mr. Walton stated that they do; the state law governing impact fees is separate from zoning. He stated that the county has an impact fee program in place, though it is very limited. They are seeing an increased interest in impact fees around the state and doing impact fee studies. Many communities have had impact fees in place since the late 1990's and early 2000s. Many put a hold on their impact fees during the recessions but are looking to revisit them. Growth and development requires infrastructure investments and impact fees are a way to ensure that new development pays the fair share of

expansion cost. Commissioner Roland stated that he recalls when they use to have many impact fees, but did away with it due to developers stating that they could not build with them. Commissioner Guarnieri asked if there was a recommendation to help improve the Code Enforcement side of this. Mr. Walton stated that Code Enforcement is a challenge for any county that he has worked with. He stated that in communities that have various types of housing and business have Code Enforcement challenges. He said that he is not aware of any decencies in Code Enforcement, there are just challenges. Mr. Walton suggested to continue providing them with support.

With no further comments or questions from the public, staff, or Board members, Chairman Singletary closed the Public Hearing was closed at 6:35pm

8. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

- A) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Review of the February 6, 2025 Planning Commission meeting minutes.

The minutes were reviewed as presented.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES

- A) Consideration to appoint **one (1) member** to the **Housing Authority Board** for a term of one (1) year. Current term expires 03/31/2025. New term expires 03/31/2026. Letter of interest in appointment received from Sabrina Mason (reappointment).

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to reappoint Sabrina Mason to the Housing Authority Board for a term of one (1) year expiring on 03/31/2026. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

10. COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS

- A) Update on County projects.

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed the following updates to County projects: (1) the Georgia Department of Transportation has opened the Westover roundabout; (2) Georgia Department of Transportation is replacing a bridge on Smithville Road; (3) the Smithville tower has been constructed, but they are still awaiting the FCC license and equipment to be installed; and (4) Windstream has laid around 80% of fiber and hope to be finished by June 2025.

- B) Consideration to adopt a resolution to submit an application to obtain FY2025 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds for Water System Improvements.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that they are going after a million dollars for this application, which is due April 4, 2025. The Utilities Authority will put in \$50,000.00 and the County will put in \$50,000.00 for a match. The County matched this amount when applying for the CDBG for Palmyra and Greenview, which were successful projects. Ms. Dockery stated that they will be notified by December 2025 if Lee County is awarded this grant.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to submit an application to obtain FY2025 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds for Water System Improvements. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and

Commissioner Walls voting yea.

11. **COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS**

A) Discussion of Old Leslie Road.

Commissioner Roland stated that Mr. Clayton and Mr. Johnson have been coming to the meetings for some time. The Board is currently doing some joint projects for various things, and he would like to do a joint project and pave Old Leslie Road. He stated that Mike Sistrunk, Public Works Director, could do it for around \$900,000.00. Commissioner Mathis asked County Manager Christi Dockery to go over the list of roads that were approved to be paved. Ms. Dockery stated that they did Hickory Grove, part of New York Road, and English Road with LRA funds. The LMIG funds have been allocated to Ledo Road. Coston Road is on the list to be paved as well. Commissioner Mathis asked how much TSPLOST money has been used and how much is left. Chairman Singletary stated that the total encumbered number is 4 million, but for spend, it's 7.6 million. Commissioner Mathis asked if Coston Road is on that list, but it has already been approved. Chairman Singletary stated that they only approved engineering and design work for Coston Road. Commissioner Mathis stated that they may have to have a discussion regarding this another time. Chairman Singletary stated the same for Old Leslie Road, until they can make sure that they can secure the right-of-way for it. Commissioner Walls stated that they are currently working on the right-of-way. Chairman Singletary said that it turns out that securing the right-of-way costs as much as paving the road, then he doesn't know that he would be in favor of it. Commissioner Mathis asked staff to get details about the roads that they are currently discussing, as well as what it costs to get engineering and paving for them. He asked for a number for TSPLOST for those projects. Commissioner Walls stated that there was \$925,000.00 set aside for Coston Road. Commissioner Mathis asked for a breakdown on each district for them to see what was spent. Commissioner Roland stated that he did not think that right-of-way was needed for Old Leslie Road since the road was big enough. Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk stated that they still need to find what the right-of-way is to be on the safe side. Ms. Dockery stated that they are doing research for the right-of-way and will follow up with the Board.

12. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

13. **COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS**

A) Discussion of a Hookah Ordinance within the County.

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper stated that the Sheriff's Office had a raid on a hookah lounge not too long ago. The County currently does not have any control over these lounges. After research, they found various ordinances and adapted them to suit Lee County. Mr. Skipper stated that the ordinance is like an alcoholic beverage ordinance, but the subject matter is a hookah lounge. He asked that they review the ordinance presented and for the Sheriff's Office to let them know if there's anything they need to add.

Commissioner Mathis asked if this is trying to make things that are legal now illegal in the County. Mr. Skipper stated that it is not making anything illegal, it is regulating it. It is the same theory as an alcoholic beverage ordinance, such as controlling where it is located and the lounges being grouped together, which could generate illegal activity. Commissioner Mathis stated that he has a problem making an ordinance that makes something illegal that is not illegal. There are laws in place for illegal activities. However, if they are talking about singling people out for legal activities, there is a problem. Mr. Skipper stated this regulates the sale and distribution of what is defined as non-traditional tobacco paraphernalia. Commissioner Guarnieri stated that this is a good ordinance and would like to proceed. Some regulatory control over this would be positive. Chairman Singletary

said to read through this ordinance and asked the Sheriff Reggie Rachals for his input regarding this possibly at the next meeting.

B) Consideration to approve a Quit Claim Deed with Artesian Holdings LLC.

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper stated there was a survey done on a property on Highway 82, and they are trying to do development. When they initially surveyed the property, they found a reservation for a 60-foot proposed right-of-way in the middle of the lot. The county has no legal interest in this short area of the lot. Mr. Skipper said that since the County has no interest in this right-of-way, the request is to authorize a quit claim deed to clear the title. Chairman Singletary said that this can be decided on at the next meeting.

C) Consideration to extend the Multi-Family Moratorium until May 30, 2025.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to extend the Multi-Family Moratorium until May 30, 2025. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

15. **PUBLIC FORUM**

Paul Clayton - Thanked for the sand on Old Leslie Road. Discussed the paving on Old Leslie Road.

Sam Johnson - Discussed the paving and deeds on Old Leslie Road.

With no further comments or questions, the public forum was closed.

16. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A) The next meeting of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be March 25, 2025.

17. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:04PM.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK