

# HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

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

MONDAY, JULY 10, 2023 AT 5:30 P.M.  
T. PAGE THARP BUILDING  
KINCHAFOONEE ROOM  
WWW.LEE.GA.US

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## Board Members

Rick Muggridge, Chairman  
Bruce Houston, D.O., Vice-Chairman  
Jennifer Heyer, Secretary  
Dana Hager  
Randy Carr

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The Lee County Hospital Authority met in a work session on Monday, July 10, 2023. The meeting was held in the Kinchafoonee Room of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Rick Muggridge, Vice-Chairman Bruce Houston, Secretary Jennifer Heyer, Dana Hager, and Randy Carr (entered the meeting at 5:40). Staff in attendance was County Manager Christi Dockery and County Clerk Kaitlyn Good. Also present were Development Authority Chairman Greg Crowder, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Lisa Davis, and Lee County Commissioner Dennis Roland. Attorney Jimmy Skipper was not present.

## CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Muggridge called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

Chairman Muggridge asked to add the following items to the agenda for discussion: (1) A by-law change to allow for virtual, legal meeting attendance; (2) the introduction of Mr. Matthew Davis. With no objection from the authority members, the aforementioned items were added to the agenda.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- (A) **Consideration to approve the minutes for the Hospital Authority meeting for March 14, 2023.**  
Dana Hager made the **MOTION** to approve the Hospital Authority meeting minutes for March 14, 2023. Dr. Bruce Houston seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Jennifer Heyer voting yea.

## NEW BUSINESS

- (A) **Discussion of how to move forward regarding the Lee County Medical Center.**  
Chairman Muggridge began the discussion by stating that he would like to see the hospital project move forward, but under the direction of the County, to include the completion of the CON (owned and driven by the Hospital Authority), design, finance, construction, and management, rather than that of a private firm. The (third) CON extension has been denied by the Department of Community Health. The need for a hospital is still there.

Mr. Greg Crowder added that there are communities with similar sized hospitals within driving distance and encouraged the Authority to reach out to them to see what worked and what didn't. The CON would not allow any more money to be spent than was originally applied for, which does not account for inflation. There would be additional fees for adopting the architect's plans, quickly adding up to six figures. Chairman Muggridge added that the current Lieutenant Governor is in support of getting rid of the CON process altogether and it appears that Senate is ready to do it. There are currently House Study Committee meetings occurring regularly about the subject.

Member Randy Carr entered into the meeting at 5:40pm.

Chairman Muggridge stated that if it was the will of the Hospital Authority that he as Chairman would notify the Lee County Board of commissioners about their desire to move forward with the project, asking for their blessing

and support. Previously, the project had been connected with a private vendor (Eddie Alexander) and was a for profit hospital; now it is not for profit.

Chairman Muggridge distributed copies of the feasibility study stating that this study is for the old project, not the new project. The Authority would like to see market studies because it is a common belief that the vast majority of Lee Countians go elsewhere for healthcare, such as Tifton, Columbus, Valdosta, Tallahassee, etc. Dr. Bruce Houston stated that as a physician, he sees that Albany is no longer the medical hub it once was, adding that in a few years' time, there will be no private practices in Albany because the new, younger doctors are no longer coming and staying here. Dr. Houston voiced support for continuing in pursuit of the hospital project.

Randy Carr mentioned that when the first CON was completed, Phoebe took out a five year moratorium and asked if they are outside of that timeframe, to which Dr. Houston replied that yes that five years had passed. Mr. Carr then asked if the other members felt that Phoebe would fight the project again and to what extent the County was willing to fight them if necessary. Chairman Muggridge stated that by state statute, a County has a right to build a hospital and the difference is that last time, Eddie Alexander owns the plans and was building a hospital on behalf of the County. Chairman Muggridge stated that any fight would be through the Department of Community Health. Randy Carr also voiced support for continuing in pursuit of the hospital project.

This project will most likely have to be publicly financed as the private money is just not out there. County Commissioner Dennis Roland asked if this was to be a for profit hospital, to which Chairman Muggridge replied that it would not be a for profit hospital with any excess revenue being held by the Hospital Authority for maintenance and additions, etc. The assumed cost of the project is between \$150 and \$200 million, with the goal that the hospital will end up paying for itself.

The desired model for the project would be if an existing entity leased the hospital (e.g. Piedmont, etc.), with the lease payments repaying any bonds. Chairman Muggridge added that another option would be for the Authority to run the hospital with the help of a professional consultant and an experienced CEO, with any revenue received going to repay the bond. Greg Crowder reminded the Authority members that there is a cost associated with legal work surrounding the CON and start of the process in general that they need to be prepared for. Additionally, the bonds do not go into effect until construction begins on the hospital, so there is a need for funding upfront. Chairman Muggridge stated that it may be a good idea to consider a general obligation bond as well. Dr. Bruce Houston provided a summary on the current CON law and how the Albany area has been affected.

Dr. Bruce Houston made the **MOTION** to authorize the Chairman to do the following: (1) Notify the Lee County Board of Commissioners of the Lee County Hospital Authority's desire to pursue a CON, design, finance (via HA Bonds), build and manage a 60-bed hospital within Lee County; (2) request the endorsement of the Lee County Board of Commissioners for same; (3) develop an RFP for Hospital Management/Consulting Groups for proposals for Management Consultation from current status through CON process, design, build and 12 months operation; and (4) solicit partnerships and/or management contracts and/or consulting from existing Hospital Systems in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama from current status through CON process, design, build and 12 months operation. Randy Carr seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Dana Hager and Jennifer Heyer voting yea.

(B) **Consideration to approve a by-law change to allow for virtual, legal meeting attendance.**

Chairman Muggridge summarized the proposed by-law change to allow members to attend meetings virtually as long as there is one member running the meeting in a public, properly advertised space, to include Zoom or telephone calls. County Manager Christi Dockery added that the law allows the Board of Commissioners to only do that twice and the quorum must be in person; we would need to check the state law in this instance as well. Chairman Muggridge added that he acknowledged a conversation would need to take place with County/Authority Attorney Jimmy Skipper.

Jennifer Heyer made the **MOTION** to approve requesting the Lee County Board of Commissioners change the by-laws of the Lee County Hospital Authority to allow for Electronic/Digital attendance of meetings by board members as long as the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman) is in an announced location within Lee County and the public can hear all meeting business. Dana Hager seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Dr. Bruce Houston and Randy Carr voting yea.

(C) **The introduction of Matthew Davis.**

Chairman Muggridge introduced Matthew Davis, The Davis Companies, who has expressed interest in being involved in the development of the hospital and serving on the Hospital Authority. The Board of Commissioners is the only entity that can allow the inclusion of a new member onto the Hospital Authority.

Mr. Davis stated that The Davis Companies is a commercial real estate development firm with local projects including Fuzzy's, Seven Brew Coffee Shop, and ASU East student housing. Developments are across the country, mostly in the Southeast, including 15 medical projects. The typical fee for a major project is 10% of the total costs; however, Mr. Davis would like to offer development services for this project for free, with a request to have any out of pocket expenses, including costs for additional personnel, reimbursed.

Chairman Muggridge ended the discussion by stating that he wished the Authority members to think on it as a decision is not needed tonight.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

NONE

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28PM.

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