

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday, March 4, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., in the Commissioners Meeting Room, located at the Brooks County Administration Building, located at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Ms. Myra Exum; Mr. Willie Cody; and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Mrs. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; Mr. Jason Kemp, County Attorney; and various residents.

1. PUBLIC HEARING – NONE

2. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

Prayer & Pledge of Allegiance – Pastor Nick Hampton, Brooks County Ministerial Association, led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko, the Board unanimously approved the following minutes as read:

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| A. Regular Monthly Meeting | February 5, 2024 |
| B. Special Called Meeting | February 12, 2024 |
| C. Special Called Meeting/Work Session | February 26, 2024 |

4. INVITED GUESTS – (2 MINUTES)

A. Julie Swann – Camellia Show Report – Camellia Show President, Mrs. Julie Swann, appeared to provide a report on the annual Camellia Show held in February. She thanked the Board for the use of the Ag Building Annex. The Camellia Show began in 1950, has been held every year for several years at the Ag Building. They have been recognized by the Sanctions of American Camellia Society. This year they had 485 blooms, 36 exhibits, and there were 13 categories from local growers. Mrs. Swann stated that the Camellia show may seem like a little show, but it is a big deal. She thanked the Board for what the show draws to the area.

B. Cathy Parker – Founder/CEO - Philanthro Films – Founder/CEO of Philanthro Films provided information regarding the growing film industry in Georgia. She informed the Board of the HB1180 bill that is under review by General Assembly of Georgia. Mrs. Parker stated she was allowed to speak at the House Committee on Ways & Means meeting. The production company shall be allowed a tax credit equal to 20% of the base investment in the State of Georgia and shall be allowed an additional tax credit equal to 10% of such base investment, which equals to 30% tax credit for being qualified interactive entertainment production company. Out of the nine criteria required, Philanthro Films qualify for six of the criteria. Mrs. Parker commented on the impact of jobs the industry will have for Brooks County.

C. Stephanie Williams – Director – Development Authority – Solar Moratorium – Mrs. Stephanie Williams commented on the potential transformation that solar has on the agenda for communities, causing water contamination and other issues. A Decommission Bond is not enough, the bonds are for 30 years and could be over one million dollars. Mrs. Williams further stated that solar violated plans and asked the Board to look favorably on the Solar Moratorium request.

5. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES & DEPARTMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. Brooks County Fire Department – Chief Weeks – Provided report for February 2024 for activities/projects with the Brooks County Fire Department:

- Responded to total of 70 calls for service, 21 medical calls, 11 canceled/nothing found, 2 structure fires, 15 brush fires, 17 MVA, 2 vehicle fires, controlled burns 7, and 6 other calls.
- **Training:** Firefighter Health & Safety, Communications and Water systems
- **Update:** No new updates.
- **New Pumper:** The contract has been signed and the financing should be completed soon. Look forward to having the truck sometime in March.
- **Employee Update:** William Jones is fully recovered and back on shift.
- Ethan Wade is still recovering at home.
- Trevor Kellogg Yocum is back and has been on light duty for three weeks following knee surgery.
- **Morven:** Spoke with Police Chief Yates on February 27th, he indicated that Morven is still not ready to separate from Brooks County Fire Department. He expects it to be another two months before they are ready.
- **New Projects:** submitted the application for the Fireworks Grant on February 28th for five sets of Turn out Gear. Still preparing the AFG Grant for a new tanker, it should be submitted by next week.
- **Annual Maintenance:** completed the Hydrant flows for 2024 in Barwick, Pavo, and Morven. Completed cleaning and painting the hydrants that needed attention, and hose testing is under way for 2024 and should be complete by March.

B. Brooks County Road Department Report – David Kress – Provided report for February 2024:

- Mr. Kress introduced the new Project Manager, James Warren Associates, Kyle Christian. Mr. Christian stated he will be providing the monthly reports for the meeting going forward.
- BCT Gin Road is open.
- Mr. Cody inquired if Old Thomasville Road has been looked at and emphasized that the problem has been ongoing since 2013, the same problems continue, and asked Mr. Kress and Mr. Christian to look at it.
- Trawick, the company putting in the fiber optic for Windstream, has caused damage to BCT Gin Road, Peacock Road, Pedrick Road, Connally Road, Morrison Road, and Rolling Hills Road.

- 142 roads were reported for grading and ditching. Six repairs/installation of culverts and driveways. 24 pipes/outfalls were cleaned, one tree call, 41 Beaver dams, 11 potholes repaired, 8 other road calls, and 5 signs repaired/replaced.

C. Brooks County 911/EMA – Director LaToya Hampton – Ms. Hampton provided an update for 911/EMA for February 2024:

- There were 1,633 calls received.
- Two employees have been approved by POST and will go to class in April and completing two more applications to send to school in May.
- GECC Conference in Athens for Dispatchers leave March 24 through March 28th.
- Dispatchers and Director are continuing education online on duty.
- EMA: One call for service in February, a hydraulic fluid leak on Troupeville Road.
- Friday marked six months post Hurricane Idalia, a great progression for the County.
- As of March 1, 2024, our CAT A project (largest debris) was updated, and we were advised we are in the final stages of 4 stages of internal work. Now in the CRC Consolidated Resource Center expecting to hear something soon.
- Our CAT B (donated resources project has been accepted as well.
- Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church is the only historical site damaged during Idalia and that is why they want to restore it.
- A citizen that lives on the same road as Bethlehem Church has an old house in decent condition, was built during the same time as the church, has donated the house to the County.

6. CONSENT AGENDA – NONE

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Acoustics for Ag Building Bid – Sound Panels - The bid was opened during the February meeting, but no action was taken by the Board. The bid was in the amount of \$110,000.00. Mrs. Exum recommended getting some insight from suggestions. Mrs. Exum stated she had spoken with Barker Construction, and he provided a name. Administrator McKinney received a quote from AVS for rectangular panels \$26,400.00. After discussion, Mr. Larko made the motion to table this item for further inquiry and competitive bids, and place it on the agenda for April, Mr. Cody seconded. Mrs. Exum commented that making a call or visit with other companies that may provide or offer options to get a bid. The vote was unanimous.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Georgia Opioid Settlement – Participating Local Government Voting Delegate for GOSAC & RAC – As part of the settlement, Participating Local Governments are required to vote on three GOSAC (Georgia Opioid Settlement Advisory Commission) representatives and the RAC (Regional Advisory Council) members. Each Participating Local Government will receive one vote as part of the process. The vote will be held at regional, in person meetings, and the voting delegate must cast his or her vote on

behalf of the Participating Local Government. Mrs. Exum motioned that the Chairman sit on the panel, Mr. Maxwell seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

B. Funding Approval from Inmate Commissary Account – Sheriff Mike Dewey – Sheriff Dewey appeared for Board approval to use funds from the Inmate Commissary Account to purchase 12 cameras for patrol cars, a Van for the Jail, and computers. The Van is used with 65,000 miles and the cost is \$53,900.00 and is equipped. The department needs approximately \$13,715.00 to pay for vehicle repairs from accidents that are not covered by insurance. Sheriff Dewey stated the approximate amount needed is \$193,080.00 from the Inmate Commissary Account. Currently, the balance in the account is \$242,494.04. County Attorney, Mr. Jason Kemp, confirmed/advised the Board that the Sheriff has the authority to use the funds as requested. The Board did not need to take any action.

C. Reallocation of Funds for CID Renovations – Previously, funds had been allocated to GMC Architectural Firm to design an Administrative Building in the amount of \$69,00.00. and designated to come from the ARPA Fund Account. Due to the urgency of renovations needed for the CID Building, the Board discussed reallocating the funds to assist with renovations of the CID Building. The total amount for the renovations has been quoted at \$101,200.00 by Scott Hockenberry. The remaining balance of \$32,200.00 was allocated and unanimously approved to come from ARPA funds on the motion by Mr. Larko, seconded by Mrs. Exum. Mr. Larko also motioned to waive the three-bid requirement process; Mrs. Exum seconded. The vote was unanimous.

D. Ratification of Washington Street Gym – Historical Property Ordinance – During the February meeting, a public hearing was held, and the Board approved an Ordinance the designate of Washington Street Gym as a Historic Property. Now the Ordinance needs to be ratified by the Board. Mr. Maxwell made a motion to approve the Ordinance to Designate Washington Street Gym as Historic Property, seconded by Mr. Cody. Chairman called for the vote. The vote was 4 to 1. Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Cody, Mr. Larko, and Mr. Folsom voted in favor. Mrs. Exum opposed.

E. Solar Moratorium – County Attorney informed the Board they can impose a Solar Moratorium for six months. They cannot rule out any business. They have an Ordinance in place, if it is not working or serving the County, they can put a moratorium in place for further review of the Ordinance; and can conduct Town Hall meetings for the citizens and industry to tell what they want and to regulate solar in the future. Mr. Maxwell made the motion to institute a Solar Moratorium for six months, Mr. Larko seconded. Mrs. Exum abstained from the vote and stated that she is neutral and has no opinion. The motion passed with 4 votes in favor.

F. Ameris Bank Financial Services – Administrator McKinney presented information to the Board regarding financial services offered by Ameris Bank. She stated that she is trying to find ways to make the money work for us and to make money more

transactional to help prevent fraud. The administrator requested the County Clerk to inquire with local banks regarding services; and Ameris Bank had most to offer in financial services and a higher interest rate. Administrator and County Clerk met with Ameris Bank representatives and was presented information about the services to include Wires, ACH Positive Pay & Payee Match Check Positive Pay, Remote Deposit services for online banking. Currently, we have no fraud protection in place and can add it for \$100.00 per month. The Merchant Services can eliminate credit card use, has no interest, and will earn points. We have six accounts in other banks with a low interest rate. Ameris Bank offers 4.27% interest annually, and we will lose \$92,311.00 if we leave those six accounts in the other banks. Mr. Maxwell motioned to approve the moving of all the citizens of Brooks County funds to Ameris Bank, Mr. Cody seconded. The Board vote was unanimous. Mrs. Exum requested a copy of the information from Ameris Bank.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. Peggy Howard – Solar Moratorium Until Noise Mitigation is Resolved – Mrs. Peggy Howard submitted a request to appear to ask the Board to consider a Solar Moratorium until the noise mitigation has been resolved. Also, to revisit and recommend changes to the Solar Ordinance to further protect the county.

B. Kevin Bagnall – Bridge Repair/ Road Repair on Bethlehem Road – Mr. Kevin Bagnall requested to address the Board on the bridge repair/road repair on Bethlehem Church Road. Mr. Bagnall stated the road has been closed for weeks and inquired about the timeline for the repair.

C. LaVon S. Williams – Old Thomasville Road – Making Road Accessible to Residents – Ms. Lavon Williams addressed the issues on Old Thomasville Road. There is problems with gutters, trees has fallen across the road and it needs road work. Ms. Williams further stated that the residents should have service and is requesting service.

10. ADMINISTRATION/ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATES

A. County Administrator Updates

- The RFP for EMS has been released to the website, Quitman Free Press, and sent to interested parties.

B. Commissioners Notes/Comments

- **Lee Larko (District 1)** – Thanked all in attendance and stated it takes involvement and should be involved in all activities. Commented on the movie industry stating he is looking forward to it, it will build our community.
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)** – No comment.
- **Willie Cody (District 3)** – Stated that Old Thomasville Road issues have been ongoing since 2013 and brought before this Board many times since he has been on the Board.
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – Commented on good seeing attendees and appreciates their interest in the County, we live here and play here.

- **James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)** – Thanked to Board for designating Washington Street Gym as Historic Property. Former students are excited and are coming to take photos in front of the Gym.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Maxwell motioned to go out of regular meeting into executive session at 6:25pm, Mr. Larko seconded.

A. Personnel – After executive session adjourned, the Board voted in open session. Commissioner Larko moved to give the County Clerk a 3% merit-based pay increase, Commissioner Cody seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Maxwell moved to give the County Administrator a 3% merit-based pay increase. Commissioner Cody seconded. The motion was carried 3-2 with Commissioners Exum and Larko opposing.

B. Real Estate - No action was taken.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Maxwell moved to adjourn the regular meeting; Mrs. Exum seconded.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman
Mrs. Jessica J. McKinney, County Administrator
Patricia A. Williams, County Clerk