

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday, May 2, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., in the Courtroom at the Brooks County Courthouse, located at 100 East Screven Street, 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; Mr. Jason Kemp, County Attorney; and various residents.

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS – SIGN-IN SHEET PROVIDED

- A. Special Exception – Family Fun Event Venue for Community to be held Quarterly – Amy Britton** – Ms. Sherry Davidson, SGRC, presented request for a Special Exception to establish a community event venue on a portion of 4.33 acres, which is her family residence. Applicant is proposing to have an event quarterly, especially around holidays, to provide fun and unique events for families in the community. The property is located at 16440 Valdosta Highway in unincorporated Brooks County. The Applicant has limited liability with a large insurance policy to cover the event. Planning Commission met March 29, 2022 and approved the request. SGRC Staff recommends approval of the Application. No one was present or signed-in to speak for or against the request.
- B. Variance – Special Use Permit – Charles Swilley** – Ms. Sherry Davidson, SGRC, presented the petition by Charles and Rachael Swilley for a variance to the development standards of the Zoning Ordinance to allow them to place a manufactured home in an R-1 District. The Swilleys lost their home over 43+ years to a house fire, which was a total loss. The property is located at 143 Church Street, Dixie, GA. The Applicant has met the hardship requirements per the ordinance due to a house fire and not the result of their actions. SGRC Staff has reviewed the petition and recommends approval.

A neighbor spoke in favour of the request. The daughter of the Swilleys expressed the hardship on her parents who are in their late 70s and requested the Board's consideration.

- C. Comprehensive Plan for Brooks County and Cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo and Quitman – James Horton** – James Horton, SGRC, presented the FY 2023-2027 Comprehensive Plan Update to review and transmit to the Department of Community Affairs for review. The Plan is renewed every five years, includes cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo and Quitman and is considered a road map. There were four work shops held involving elected officials, residents were invited to attend and participate in the planning effort. Mr. Horton informed the attendees that copies of the plan are available for public review at the Brooks County Commission office, at the cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo and Quitman on the respective websites.

Chairman closed the Public Hearings to go into the regular meeting at 5:27 pm.

2. CALL TO ORDER

Prayer & Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman called the Regular Meeting to order. Mr. Rodney Tennery, Brooks County Ministerial Association, led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

Chairman asked for a motion to amend the agenda to add Executive Session. On the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Cody, the Board approved to amend the agenda for May 2, 2022 to add Executive Session. Vote was unanimous.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion by Mr. Cody, seconded by Mr. Maxwell, the Board unanimously approved/accepted the minutes of the following meetings:

- Regular Monthly Meeting April 4, 2022
- Special Called Call-In (Zoom) April 11, 2022
- Special Called & Work Session & Executive Session April 25, 2022

4. INVITED GUESTS

A. Thomas Simpson – GA Department of Community Affairs – Georgia Rental Assistance Program – Mr. Simpson is the Outreach Coordinator for the Rental Assistance Program for the State of Georgia. The program assists renters with Landlords, unpaid rent and keep from getting evicted. He appeared to inform the Board of the rental assistance program available to citizens of Brooks County and that they can contact a local agency and one in Atlanta.

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

A. Debra Lewis – Zoning & Code Enforcement – Ms. Debra Lewis is the newly hired Zoning & Code Enforcement Officer for Brooks County. She is busy getting issues resolved and has received four complaints she is currently working on. Ms. Lewis stated she wanted to let the Board know what she is doing.

B. Jason Montesano – Building & Permits – Mr. Montesano is new hire for Building Inspections and Permits and is working closely with Ms. Lewis so things can go smoothly and get back to a normal state.

C. Fire Chief Catlett – Brooks County Fire Department – Chief Catlett stated he started seven months ago with a goal of three phases to complete for the fire department; and Phase 1 is almost complete. Once he got in, it was worse than he thought. He has 26 Volunteers and five suppression fire fighters, there are three paid at the Jackson Road Station. The majority are support fire fighters building up to suppression fire fighters.

D. Matt Connolly – Road Department Superintendent – Updated the Board on Road Department activities/projects for April 2022:

- Provided the Board a list of road projects and their status.

- Graded 266 roads, 127 trees removed, replaced 23 new road signs and cautionary signs.
- Cleaned up 11 Beaver dams, cleaned and repaired seven culverts; and worked on ditches.
- Put down lime rock.
- Three ditchers have been working ditching all month.
- Have new Motor Grader, three ditchers and three blades going at one time.
- Informed that the county will not receive FEMA funds for downed trees.

E. Stephanie Williams – Development Authority – Provided the Board with the minutes from the summit held March 4, 2022 and the scheduled date for the next summit on June 10, 2022. She is trying to set the pace for quarterly meetings to create a strategic economic development plan. Ms. Williams stated she is working closely with the municipalities. She is working with six prospects around the county and will share more as things move forward.

6. CONSENT AGENDA - NONE

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Brooks County Historical Preservation Board – Ordinance – A proposed draft of the ordinance for the newly created Brooks County Historical Preservation/Society has been presented to the Board during the April regular meeting and was put on the table for 30 days, sponsored by Mr. Larko. County Attorney, Mr. Jason Kemp, stated the Historical Preservation Ordinance is in line with the model ordinance by the State and is ready for action at the pleasure of the Board. The Ordinance to Establish the Brooks County Historical Preservation Board was approved unanimously by the Board on the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko. Vote was unanimous.

B. County Facility Usage Agreement – Administrator provided in draft form the County Facility Usage Agreement for all County facilities available for private use for Board review during the April regular meeting. The policies are meant to be a guideline for public use of available County owned buildings. Ms. McKinney recommended laying the Agreement on the table for 30 days for Board review until the May regular meeting. Ms. McKinney advised the Board she had spoken with our insurance carrier regarding insurance for individuals using the facility. She inquired to the Board as to how they want to proceed. Mr. Larko recommended laying on the table for another 30 days before approval. Mr. Cody made the motion to approve the Facility Use Agreement as is and amend as needed, Mr. Maxwell seconded. After discussion, Mr. Cody rescinded his motion and Mr. Maxwell rescinded his second. Mr. Cody made another motion to approve the Agreement, add in what is recommended by insurance carrier, amend as needed when an issue arises, Mr. Maxwell seconded. Vote was unanimous.

C. Timber Ordinance – During the April regular meeting, Mr. Larko sponsored the Timber Ordinance and it was laid on the table for 30 days until the May regular meeting to include the edits of Chief Appraiser and the Road Department. County Attorney has made the requested edits; and the Ordinance is ready for Board approval. The Timber Ordinance is an amendment to the existing Timber Ordinance. On the motion by Mr. Larko, seconded by Mrs. Exum, the Board unanimously adopted the Timber Harvesting Ordinance, Ordinance No. 2022-02, to amend Article II of Chapter 18 of the Code of Brooks County, GA relating to timber harvesting.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Special Exception – Family Fun Event Venue for Community held Quarterly – Amy Britton – On the motion by Mrs. Exum, the Board approved the request of Amy Britton for a Special Exception to establish a community event venue on a portion of 4.33 acres, located at 16440 Valdosta Highway, Mr. Larko seconded. Vote was unanimous.

B. Variance – Special Use Permit – Mr. Cody made the motion to approve the request of Charles and Rachel Swilley for a variance to the development standards of the Zoning Ordinance to allow them to place a manufactured home in an R-1 District, located at 143 Church Street, Dixie, GA, with the condition that if Charles and Rachel Swilley cease to live in the manufactured home for any reason it will have to be moved off the property, Mr. Maxwell seconded. Vote was unanimous.

C. Appoint Board Members – Brooks County Historical Preservation Society – Administration received a request from Dr. Marie Horne for consideration of the Board to appoint Board members to the Brooks County Historical Preservation Society. There were five names submitted for consideration: Dr. Marie Horne, Jacqueline Harper, Jennifer Edwards, Nancibeth Shealy, and James Maxwell. Discussion by the Board was initiated by Mrs. Exum who inquired whether the Board will be allowed to afford names of others who may be interested in serving on the board. Mr. Maxwell stated that time is of the essence, and do not need to wait. The Board need to be appointed to receive funding. Mr. Maxwell inquired as to who could serve better than the ones that have been working on establishing the Historical Preservation Society? County Attorney recommended each Commissioner vet and interview people according to the ordinance with initial terms for each district. Mrs. Exum made the motion to table this item until the June regular meeting to appoint board members, accept applications/resumes and perform interviews, Mr. Larko seconded. Chairman called for the vote. Mr. Cody and Mr. Maxwell voted no. Mrs. Exum and Mr. Larko voted yes. Chairman did not vote. The motion failed. After further discussion, Mr. Larko made a motion to table the issue for 30 days, get list of interested persons; and revisit at the next meeting in June, Mr. Cody seconded. Vote was unanimous.

D. Appointment – Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council (Effective July 1, 2022) – Administration received notification from Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging regarding the appointment on the Aging Advisory Council. Currently, Mrs. Exum is serving on the Aging Advisory Council. On the motion by Mrs.

Exum, seconded by Mr. Maxwell, the Board unanimously appointed Mr. Larko to serve on the Aging Advisory Council effective July 1, 2022.

E. Health Insurance Quotes – (Motion to Vote Allowing Administrator to Proceed) – Administrator was authorized to obtain quotes for the County health insurance, which renews July 1, 2022. Mrs. McKinney stated she has received quotes from other companies. There is not enough time to put out an RFP, the month of June is open enrollment. The Board unanimously authorized County Administrator to get quotes for health insurance, and compare with new rates coming in, on the motion by Mrs. Exum and seconded by Mr. Maxwell.

F. Budget Requests/Justification – Administrator informed the Board that she has started meeting with Department Heads, Constitutional Officers regarding their FY2022-2023 Budget and budget requests. She has advised them they would need to appear before the Board for additional funding requests to provide justification their request. There were two present to make their justification to the Board.

1. Stephanie Williams – Development Authority – Requesting an increase of .7 mill or at least .6 mill for FY2022-2023.

2. Machasia Dowdy – Extension Office – Budget Requests – Increase for Teachers Retirement or ORP for retirement. The county's percentage will increase from 19.81% to 19.98% for FY2022-2023. Equipment cost share for IT equipment approximately \$850.00. Requesting a second Ag truck, there are two ag agents in the county, and currently have one county truck. Ms. Dowdy stated they really need two vehicles. The current truck works for in-county visits, but it is critical to have a more dependable truck that can haul the 5th wheel county livestock trailer. There is a vacancy for 4-H program to be filled. To support an Agent position, UGA Extension is asking for increase in support from Brooks County in amount of \$2,535 annually, including benefits.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. Jim Davis – Road Closure – Portion of Old Pavo Road – Between Tallokas Road and Pleasant Hill Church Road – Administration received an agenda request from Mr. Jim Davis for road closure of a portion of Old Pavo Road between Tallokas Road and Pleasant Hill Church Road. Mr. Davis stated there are issues with illegal dumping and excessive traffic. To abandon the road would take the burden from the county. Inquiry by the Board of the cost and who pays for the survey? Mr. Davis also stated he has the equipment to maintain the road. Mr. Davis was advised of the process to close/abandon a road.

B. Tim Brady – Road Closure – Giddens Road – At Intersection of Dewey Road – Mr. Brady appeared to request road closure/abandonment of Giddens Road at the intersection of Dewey Road due to trash being dumped, parking at the cul-de-sac. He stated he is willing to pay the cost and allow access to utility companies, etc. Mr. Brady was advised there is a process to abandon a road.

C. David Monds – 360 Fee Culvert Installation at 800 DeVane Road and 818 DeVane Road – Mr. Monds requested to have a 360 feet culvert install at 800 DeVane Road and 818 DeVane Road to eliminate erosion and water settling in the ditch for mosquitos to breed. After discussion, the Board advised Mr. Monds that the county will look at this further and get back with him.

D. County Administrator Updates - None

E. Commissioners Notes/Comments

- **Lee Larko (District 1)** – Thanked everyone for attending.
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)** – No comment.
- **Willie Cody (District 3)** – Thanked everyone for coming.
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – Thanked everyone for attending. Addressed the issue of comments regarding the meeting she attended with Fire Chief and a candidate. Further stated she serves in the best interest of the count as Commissioner representing District 4.
- **James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)** – Thanked everyone for coming and reminded to vote.

Mr. Larko made the motion to go into executive session at 7:36 pm, Mr. Cody seconded.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Maxwell made the motion to go out of executive session and return to the regular meeting at 8:56 pm, Mr. Cody seconded. No action was taken.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Maxwell made the motion to adjourn regular meeting at 7:16 p.m.; Mrs. Exum seconded.

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