

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING**  
**MARION COUNTY, GEORGIA**  
**VIA VIDEO and TELECONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**  
**December 8, 2020 – 5:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Those present on the video call (ZOOM meeting ID 963 7362 1503) were Chairman George Neal, Commissioner Steve Young, Commissioner Norman Royal, Commissioner Matt Gunnels, Commissioner Jody Grimsley, County Manager Justin Strickland, County Clerk Sylvia Russell and Deputy County Clerk Martyna Currington-Jenkins. County Attorney Wayne Jernigan joined the call at 6:43 PM

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Neal called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM and gave the invocation.

**APPROVE MINUTES:**

Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 10, 2020, Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION – DEPARTING COMMISSIONER STEVE YOUNG:**

The Commission presented Commissioner Young with a plaque commemorating his eight years of service to Marion County. All expressed their appreciation for being able to work alongside him and wished him well.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a. **Public hearing for the FY2021 Marion County Proposed Annual Operating Budget:** Chairman Neal called to order a Public hearing at 5:16 PM for remarks on the FY 2021 Marion County Proposed Annual Operating Budget. No one spoke for or against the proposed budget. Chairman Neal concluded the public hearing at 5:18 PM. The Commission made plans to call a meeting in one week to adopt the budget.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

- a. **Gerald Mixon, RVRC – Comprehensive Plan Draft:** Mr. Mixon presented a five-year plan that has been reviewed with citizens as well as the Development Authority and other County leadership. The plan will be finalized in February 2021.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- a. **Thomas Livingston – 64 Sunnyside Drive:** Mr. Livingston noted that he has lived in the Marion County for 9 years. The roads in his subdivision, Sunnyside Drive and Sunnyside Lane, are private roads and maintenance has been lacking in recent years as the property management office changed personnel. Erosion has progressively gotten worse and he hopes the Commission can get something done to improve roads. Mr. Livingston will work with County Manager Strickland on potential ways to get private maintenance improved.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. **Alcohol Sales on Sunday:** Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve A Resolution Of The Board Of Commissioners Of Marion County For The Purpose Of Amending Chapter 6 Of The County Code Of Ordinances On Alcohol; To Effectuate Referenda On The Sale Of Alcohol On Sundays effective January 1, 2021. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion. Commissioners Grimsley voted to approve the motion. Commissioner Young opposed the motion. The motion passed with a 3-1 vote.
- b. **2021 LMIG Project Priorities:** County Manager Strickland reported that he drove some of the proposed roads after this was reviewed in November. He agrees that Fort Perry can be taken off the list if the Commission agrees. Mr. Strickland added Marvin Moore Road and a section of Slaughter Road to the list. He recommended Buffalo Road and Johnny Miller Road be considered as top priorities. Chairman Neal noted that the budget only allows for one road to be completed in 2021 and asked for feedback. Commissioner Gunnels agreed Buffalo Road is in terrible shape and recommends it be made the priority. Commissioner Grimsley suggested not removing Fort Perry Road from the list completely. Commissioner Gunnels agreed. Commissioner Royal was not familiar with Buffalo Road but agreed with the consensus of the group. Commissioner Young agreed with making Buffalo Road the priority. Chairman Neal reported he has received more calls on Johnny Miller Road, but will support making Buffalo Road the priority based on feedback from others on the Commission. Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to make Buffalo Road the priority road for paving in 2021 through LMIG. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gunnels pointed out that Dr. Brooks Road is a County road from GA Hwy 355 to GA Hwy 41 and he asked that the Road Department not lose sight of the need for repairing potholes on the road. Chairman Neal suggested efforts should focus on repairing all potholes on the road rather than just responding to individual complaints. County Manager Strickland agreed.

- c. **Land Lease Agreement for Private Hangars at the Marion County Airport – Brad Powell/Woodland Works, Inc. & Joe Rayl/Covenant Assured Finance:** County Manager Strickland reported that Mr. Powell plans to build a 50x50 hangar and Mr. Rayl plans to build a 70x70 hangar. Lease terms are proposed to start January 2021 and fees are based on square footage of the acreage to be used for hangars (\$.15 per square foot since it is unimproved land). The lessees will pay the County annually in January. The County administration office will look at market values each year to adjust the rent based on the consumer price index. The lessees will cover all construction costs for the hangars. Marion County will pay half of the set up cost for utilities which is estimated at about \$3,500.00. Leases will have a 30-year term after which ownership of hangars will revert to the County. There is an option to extend the agreement by 10 years if all parties agree.

Commissioner Grimsley asked about the going rate of \$.15 per square foot being the same as if we leased it for corn crops. He would like to do more research to determine if the return on investment is a good financial decision. Joe Rayl spoke on behalf of himself and Brad Powell and noted they are spending about \$100,000 each on hangars that the County will eventually own. They are also investing in business in the County and will be buying fuel from the County. His aircrafts are worth \$450,000 and \$170,000. They sell and buy aircraft as well as use the aircraft for other subsidiaries of the company. He pays a land lease rent of \$200.00 per year at another airport where he has many more amenities and services available. He believes the traffic to our airport will increase monumentally and that it is a great opportunity to prosper the County. This is the beginning of the return on investment. Commissioner Grimsley asked if it is a deal breaker if the Commission does not approve these

agreements tonight. Mr. Rayl said he has a lease in Columbus and it has been very convenient but using the Marion County airport will save him a 40-minute ride. He has been in Marion County in some way since 1996. If this arrangement is not approved tonight, he will withdraw.

Commissioner Young stated he believes the potential is great for the airport and that is why airport project phases 1 and 2 were completed. Commissioner Royal agreed that this has been in process for years and if the County does not approve this, the airport will not bring in any revenue. Commissioner Gunnels asked why there is so much interest in placing hangars at the airport now. Mr. Rayl stated the fuel pumps will provide 24/7 availability of fuel and it's the last stop before going over the reservation (Ft. Benning military facility). For example, when flying from Miami to Nashville, you are over active air space a large part of the time but have to bypass Ft. Benning, which adds to the amount of fuel you use. Increased traffic and fuel usage will create opportunity for significant funding from other government entities, like FAA and DOT. As people start coming into Buena Vista, they will notice opportunities for investing.

Commissioner Young made a motion to approve a land lease agreement for Land Lease Agreement for private hangar 50x50 at the Marion County Airport – Brad Powell/Woodland Works, Inc. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion. Commission Gunnels voted for the hangar. Commissioner Grimsley abstained from voting. The motion passed with a 3-0 vote.

Commissioner Young made a motion to approve a Land Lease Agreement for private hangar 70x70 at the Marion County Airport – Joe Rayl/Covenant Assured Finance. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion. Commission Gunnels voted for the hangar. Commissioner Grimsley abstained from voting. The motion passed with a 3-0 vote.

- e. **Peterbilt Dump Truck Repair Estimate (Rush Truck Center \$18,022.87):** Chairman Neal asked Billy Davis from Clearwater if he believes it is worth it to repair the truck. Mr. Davis said he believes it is a good truck and a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) is not required to operate it. County Manager Strickland noted it is a 2014 model. Commissioner Young asked what a new truck would cost. Chairman Neal believed it would be \$60,000.00-70,000.00. Commissioner Young made a motion to approve the repair by Rush Truck Center at the quoted cost. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- f. **Marion County Road Renaming Policy:** County Manager Strickland stated the intent of this policy is to give clear guidelines for the administrative office to use for considering whether a renaming request should be brought to the Commission. Commissioner Young made a motion to approve the Marion County Road Renaming Policy. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- g. **Broadband Ordinance:** County Manager Strickland said if this ordinance is put in place Marion County will be considered "Broadband-Ready" and among the first communities to receive any funding approved for this initiative. Providers who prepare to implement broadband service will know that we have adopted the Georgia Department of Community Affairs guidelines. Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to approve the Broadband Ordinance. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- h. **Board of Tax Assessors Appointment:** Commissioner Young made a motion to approve reappointment of Barbara Powell to the Board of Tax Assessors for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2021. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- i. **Marion County VITA:** Commissioner Young made a motion to approve allocating \$4,000.00 for Marion County's portion of financial support for Marion County IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA). Commissioner Royal seconded the motion. Commissioners Gunnels and Grimsley opposed because they have questions about the program. Chairman Neal voted to approve the motion. The motion passed with a 3-2 vote.

#### **REPORTS:**

- a. **Elections Update – Sandra Brown:** Sandra Brown reported that the November 3rd election is finalized. Her certification was dropped off at the Georgia State Patrol office this morning in Americus, GA. Her team is preparing for the runoff election scheduled for January 5, 2021. Early voting starts on Monday, December 14, and will continue for the next three weeks every weekday except for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years' Day.
- b. **Public Works & Water Department Report – ClearWater Solutions:** ClearWater Supervisor Morris Andrews presented an update on road work and water services performed in November.
- c. **County Manager's Report – Justin Strickland:** County Manager Strickland reviewed his monthly report and highlighted the following:
- Fuel tanks are scheduled to arrive this week for the airport.
  - The restriping project was suspended for two weeks and will resume the week of December 14.
  - Oakland Volunteer Fire Department is back in compliance with the State of Georgia and will start responding to calls again.
  - He recently completed the requirements to become a Certified Local Government Finance Officer.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 PM. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.