

MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING
MARION COUNTY, GEORGIA
VIA VIDEO and TELECONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS
January 12, 2021 – 5:00 PM

PRESENT: Those present on the video call (ZOOM meeting ID 943 2477 0773) were Commissioner George Neal, Commissioner Marshall Fontaine, 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 5:15 PM.

CALL TO ORDER:

Parliamentary procedure requires the County Clerk to facilitate the first meeting of each year until officers are elected for the year. County Clerk Russell called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and gave the invocation.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2021:

- a. **Chairperson** – Commissioner Royal made a motion to elect Commissioner Neal as Chairperson for 2021. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- b. **Vice-Chairperson** – Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to elect Commissioner Royal as Vice Chairperson for 2021. Commissioner Fontaine seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

County Attorney Wayne Jernigan joined the call.

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES:

- a. Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve minutes from the *December 8, 2020, Regular Meeting and the December 21, 2020, Called Meeting* of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- a. **Marie Berlanga – VITA Closeout 2020:** Marie Berlanga shared several statistics about the 2020 VITA program. The VITA office served 4,177 customers in 2020 by assisting with income tax reporting, budget counseling, and stimulus payments.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **Marion County Health Board** - Commissioner Royal made a motion to appoint Commissioner Fontaine to the Marion County Health Board to replace former Commissioner Steve Young. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- b. **CDBG Engineering Services/Hofstadter & Associates** - Commissioner Royal made a motion to enter a contract with Hofstadter & Associates to provide engineering services for the CDBG 2021 if funded. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION:

- a. **GPS on Motor Graders** – Commissioner Gunnels mentioned the Commission previously asked about GPS on motor graders and asked for a status. County Manager Strickland noted that had not been pursued but can be if the Commission agrees. Commissioner Grimsley asked that the request be evaluated for cost, pros and cons. Chairman Neal agreed this was something that should be explored.

- b. **Monthly Fuel Reports** – Chairman Neal asked that County Manager Strickland give an update on how the new system is working. County Manager Strickland noted that each employee has a fob that must be used to dispense fuel. PIN numbers are unique to each fob/employee. This allows us to track fuel by department each month with increased efficiency and accuracy (previous method was on paper). Allocation of fuel expenses by department is now accurate and there is no fuel unaccounted for. We saved about 4% in fuel costs when comparing 2020 to 2019. While some of this savings could be attributed to fuel prices, it is fair to assume the savings can be attributed to improved tracking and accountability.
- c. **Loader Repair or Replacement** – Budget to purchase a new loader is in 2021 SPLOST funds. \$163,081 is the lowest bid from Yancey for a 2021 CAT loader. The current loader has had significant work done in the past and is a 1996 model. Commissioner Gunnels asked if there was a trade-in allowance. County Manager Strickland said it was not considered but can be requested. Chairman Neal noted we likely could not sell it in its current condition and trade-in is the best option.

Commissioner Fontaine pointed out there is a lot of equipment listed as in the shop. He asked about getting a list of each piece of equipment with the current condition. County Manager Strickland agreed this can be provided. ClearWater Project Manager Daniel Enfinger noted the side mower was able to be patched and John Deere has us on the waiting list to be permanently fixed.

Commissioner Royal made a motion to purchase a new CAT loader from Yancey at a cost of \$163,081. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Gunnels noted that he wants us to pursue a method for transporting the loader rather than driving it all over the county. Commissioner Royal agreed and asked that it be pursued. Mr. Enfinger noted we obtained a quote on a pintle hitch but also need to have a trailer and will obtain a quote on that as well. County Manager Strickland noted he believes this information can be gathered in time to be on the agenda for February.

- d. **Building/Zoning Office Procedures** – Commissioner Grimsley mentioned he has heard of issues with a power meter and with issuing 911 addresses. He asked about who is handling inspections at this point. Building Official Jake Kemp noted he is handling all electrical and plumbing inspections. ClearWater is still handling mechanical and building.

REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Department Update** – Recreation Director Sarah Allen presented concerns with limitations of the current recreation facility. There are not enough fields to support the number of participants for regular practice and games. Teams are not able to practice in one location, parking is not adequate, and due to airport regulations, we are not able to install lights need at two of the fields. The Recreation Board recommended purchasing land with adequate room for all activities and parking. They have located a 106-acre tract that can be purchased for approximately \$1,000 per acre and they are pursuing grants through several channels and a 25% match by the County will be required. The Recreation Board asked how much the County is willing to match for this type of project. County Manager Strickland noted that SPLOST funds cannot be used because Recreation was not placed on the most recent referendum. He recommended it be included for the next round of SPLOST funds. Meanwhile, matching funds could come from general fund reserves. (A budget amendment would be needed for this year and it could be planned in future budget years.) Another option is a general obligation debt bond which would require approval by voters and likely require millage rate adjustments along with sales tax funding. This option is desirable because the cost would be spread over several years and future users of the program would contribute to paying for the facility. Also, the County has no debt at this time. He recommended the land purchase be completed and more specifics be worked out before making a final decision on funding. He would like to explore further with the Department of Natural Resources before making a solid recommendation. Commissioner Royal noted we will likely be required to have the land before grant requests can be submitted. Jan Whitley spoke on behalf of the Recreation Board and pointed out that they are planning

fundraiser activities as well. Chairman Neal assured the Recreation Board that the Commission would support the project as much as possible.

- b. Public Works & Water Department Report – ClearWater Solutions:** ClearWater Project Manager Daniel Enfinger presented an update on road work and water services performed in December. He noted no water services were disconnected for non-payment in December because of the holiday season. He also pointed out that water loss percentage has continued to decrease due to efforts to repair leaks and identify usage that has gone unmetered. A meter change-out program is starting soon to replace aging residential meters that are not accurate.
- c. County Manager’s Report – Justin Strickland:** County Manager Strickland reviewed his monthly report and highlighted the following:
- January 5 election for Marion County was a smooth process.
 - South Water Plant cleaning and painting project is on the SPLOST budget for 2021 at around \$250,000.
 - Courthouse exterior restoration is being pursued based on a SPLOST budget of \$100,000 for 2021.
 - 2021 LMIG application has been submitted to the Georgia Department of Transportation.
 - A new service truck for the Water Department should be delivered this month.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Personnel:

Commissioner Royal made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The Board of Commissioners went into Executive Session at 6:46 PM.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board came out of Executive Session and Chairman Neal called the Regular meeting back to order at 7:01 PM. The Commission briefly discussed

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 PM. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman George Neal, Jr.

Attest:

Sylvia Russell, County Clerk