

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING**  
**MARION COUNTY, GEORGIA**  
**VIA VIDEO and TELECONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**  
**February 9, 2021 – 5:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Those present on the video call (ZOOM meeting ID 980 6772 4034) were Commissioner George Neal, Commissioner Marshall Fontaine, 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 5:14 PM. Commissioner Norman Royal was not able to participate due to a family emergency.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Neal called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and gave the invocation.

**ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES:**

- a. Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve minutes from the January 12, 2021, Regular Meeting and the January 21, 2021, Called Meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Fontaine seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- a. Public hearing and consideration of rezoning request for parcel 52-20B (located off GA Hwy 41 S between Armageddon Gear and the Marion County Airport) to change from Agriculture to Commercial. This request is contingent on purchase of the land by Gaston Dillon.

Mr. Gaston Dillon Spoke in favor of the rezone. He has secured a warranty deed per instructions from the Zoning Committee. Commissioner Grimsley asked what Mr. Dillon has planned for the property. Mr. Dillon responded that he will build a music venue that is expected to bring 100,000 people through the County in a year. When no music is scheduled, they will schedule an outdoor family movie opportunity for \$10 per car and they will offer the venue to rent for private events. Commissioner Fontaine mentioned concern about a forthcoming request for an alcohol license and he is concerned about sales of alcohol near the Recreation Complex. Commissioner Gunnels shared the same concern and also mentioned concern about interference with airport traffic.

*County Attorney Wayne Jernigan joined the call.*

County Attorney Wayne Jernigan pointed out that the Commission needs to take this opportunity to address any concerns before any further action is taken.

Mr. Weaver from Pond Engineering mentioned the Commission should consider the potential for interference if an incoming plane has an emergency.

Mr. Dillon noted that the concerts will have security to prevent interference at the airport from the patrons. The movie screen will not be placed where it interferes with airport traffic. Additionally, there will not be an event at the location every day and evening.

Commissioner Grimsley inquired about fencing requirements for commercial establishments. Mr. Dillon said he plans to install a 6' fence on the highway side of the property, but questioned the validity of requiring fencing on the interior sides. County Manager Strickland clarified that protective screening is required between commercial and residential zones.

Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to deny the request for rezoning parcel 52-20B (located off GA Hwy 41 S between Armageddon Gear and the Marion County Airport) to change from Agriculture to Commercial. Commission Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **Marion County-Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan:** Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve a Resolution for Adoption of the Marion County-Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- b. **Service Delivery Strategy:** Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to approve a Resolution Extending and Re-Adopting the Marion County Service Delivery Strategy. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- c. **Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan:** Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve a Marion County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan as required to receive FEMA funding. Commissioner Fontaine seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- d. **Hospital Authority:** The Commissioner was asked to appoint a representative to the Marion County Hospital Authority to replace Walter Hicks. Commissioner Fontaine recommended Anthony Murray. No other recommendations were offered. Commissioner Fontaine made a motion to submit Mr. Anthony Murray to Hospital Authority for consideration to fill their vacancy. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- e. **Timber Harvesting Ordinance:** The Commissioner reviewed a Timber Harvesting Ordinance to support recent changes in state statutes. The amendments require the State Forestry Commission to create a notification website for providing notice of timber harvesting operations to local governments. The legislation also changed surety bond and letter of credit requirements, and provides procedures for making and adjudicating claims against bonds, including appeals. County Attorney Jernigan noted that he is in favor of the ordinance. Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to approve the new Timber Harvesting Ordinance. Commissioner Fontaine seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- f. **Surplus Old Ambulance:** Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve the sale of a surplus ambulance currently (2009 International) listed in Water Department inventory. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- g. **Digital Radios for Volunteer Fire Departments:** County Manager Strickland pointed out this a budgeted expense in SPLOST VI. Funds are allocated for the Fire Departments each year. Chief Shaun Raulston mentioned the fire departments are the last public safety entity in Marion County to switch to digital. They have had communication issues with other entities because analog radios will not communicate with digital radios. The radios will be a capital investment for the County. Combining all departments gives them better buying power and will save about \$3,000.00 as compared to each department buying them individually. Commissioner Gunnels asked that Chief Raulston take steps to ensure equitable distribution. Chief Raulston noted that they will coordinate with all departments to allocate fairly and track radio assignments. The radios will be County property, not fire department property. Commissioner Fontaine asked if other quotes were obtained. Shaun Raulston noted this is the only quote and Georgia Two-Way is a trusted vendor with a reputation for providing the lowest price and best service. Commissioner Grimsley asked if radios affect the ISO rating for a fire department. Chief Raulston noted this does affect the rating. Every truck is required to have one and each firefighter also. Commissioner Gunnels asked that Fire Departments use discretion when assigning radios to ensure the vehicles they are placed in are functional

Commissioner Gunnels made a motion to approve the purchase of handheld and truck mounted radios that are digitally capable for the Marion County Volunteer Fire Departments at a cost of \$22,770.00. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION**

- a. **Litter on County roadways:** Chairman Neal noted that the Sheriff's Office utilizes trusted inmates to pick up litter on roadways during months where weather permits it. He suggested placing reminders on the website. Commissioner Grimsley suggested placing signs on roadways where it is a problem. Chairman Neal asked Clerk Russell to order signs and coordinate placement.
- b. **Courthouse Repairs:** County Manager Strickland mentioned there is the opportunity for a state grant. Repairs to public buildings are budgeted in SPLOST VI. He agrees some of the interior work needs to be done and wants us to focus on obtaining grants to help with costs.
- c. **South Water Plant – Tower Project:** County Manager Strickland suggested funds remaining in SPLOST V be spent on this project. The bid is already out for this project. He asked the Commission for ideas on design for paint on the tower. One idea was to paint the tower white with red platform and handrails, then place an "M" and image of an eagle on the side of the tank. Commissioner Fontaine asked if there is a savings to paint the tower one color. He asked when the tower was last painted. Hayes Hofstadter from Hofstadter & Associates stated the tower was drained and inspected in 2014. Commissioner Gunnels asked if there other concerns with water facilities that need to be addressed before the tower project is completed. County Manager Strickland noted the tower rehabilitation was budgeted in SPLOST VI for 2021 as well as replacement of \$40,000 of meters.
- h. **GPS in Motor Graders/Equipment:** County Manager Strickland presented a proposal for GPS devices from Verizon. He recommended placing the devices in motor graders in 2021 and consider placing in the budget for all vehicles in 2022. Houston Black from ClearWater noted that having devices in vehicles can also help verify the nature of any damages. Commissioner Gunnels asked if the Commissioners would have access to the software and County Manager Strickland stated they can. Chairman Neal asked what the goal is for this software. Commissioner Grimsley noted it will help validate where they have been and when, and improves accountability for the operators. Commissioner Fontaine noted the history will also help prioritize remediation. Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to proceed with placing GPS devices in motor graders. Commissioner Gunnels seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- d. **Work Session Schedule (4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday each month)** – Chairman Neal stated this will help in the absence of a county manager and suggested scheduling a work session in two weeks and discuss a regular schedule at that session.
- e. **Driveway Permits** – Commissioner Gunnels stated he asked for this to be added and he believes we should have an ordinance requiring permits. A driveway was installed recently that he believes will create an erosion issue on the right of way. He believes the County should hold everyone to the same standard. Chairman Neal asked who would be in charge of inspection. Commissioner Strickland stated he thinks it is a good idea to manage what happens in the County right of way and it could be inspected by either the Roads Superintendent or Building Official. Chairman Neal agreed this was something the Commission can consider going forward.

## **REPORTS**

- a. **Public Works & Water Department Report – ClearWater Solutions:** Chief Financial Officer Houston Black introduced newly promoted Project Manager Morris Andrews. He stated that Project Manager Gary Hyché from Alabama will be assisting Morris during the transition and he is also working on a plan to replace old meters. Project Manager Andrews reviewed activity for the month of January. Chief Financial Officer Houston Black reiterated that he believes replacing meters will have a huge impact on water loss percentage. Commissioner Grimsley stated he recalls several conversations over the last two years about testing meters and asked if any testing results have substantiated a 48% loss. CFO Black noted he believes we have situations where individuals are stealing water from locked meters. Commissioner Fontaine asked what actions specifically are being taken to identify and address water loss. CFO Black said there are several options for resolving it, one is to have an outside firm come in to help. Commissioner Grimsley asked if we have any testing to prove we have meters misreading. Chairman Neal noted there is a shelf life on meters and most have been in place for over 20 years. CFO Black stated the process and expense for testing individual meters is cost prohibitive.
- b. **County Manager's Report** – County Manager Strickland reviewed his monthly report and highlighted the following:

1. Firetower Road
  - a. Application for Emergency LMIG funding has been submitted. Waiting for GDOT to review.
  - b. Remains closed to thru traffic.
2. South Water Plant Cleaning/Painting
  - a. Out for bid. Proposals due on 03/16/21.
3. Courthouse
  - a. Upper fascia out for bid. Bids due on 02/12/21.
4. 2021 LMIG
  - a. The County received funds for the 2021 LMIG project on February 9th. I will work on getting the specs completed before my final day.
5. State of the County Report
  - a. Will have finished by Friday and send to Commissioners and post on County Website.
  - b. This will include the unaudited financial report.
6. Airport Beacon
  - a. Final part of Phase II
  - b. Has been bid out and low bid came in at \$49,250.00.
  - c. This is required to be done in order for the FAA to continue to authorize night landings.
  - d. GDOT is hoping to fund part of it. Their funding will rely on how much funds are left over from Robinson's final fees on their portion of the Phase II work.
7. Water Tool Truck
  - a. Has been delivered and outfitted with flashers and a digital radio.
8. EMS
  - a. Have received and put Lucas Device into service (automatic CPR)
  - b. Ordered two new tough books
9. Recommendations moving Forward for Marion County
  - a. Pass Finance Rules & Regulations
  - b. Pass a Personnel Manual Update
  - c. Approve the South Water Plant Project once low bidder found (if reasonable cost)
  - d. Keep working on the relocation of the Recreation Facility
  - e. Keep working on roads (remediation, resurfacing, paving, bridges, etc.)
  - f. Keep on top of good accounting and financial practices
  - g. Keep reviewing, updating, and following the Capital Improvement Plan
  - h. Long Term – New Annex for all of County offices, EMS station, jail, courthouse, etc.

*Commissioner Gunnels left the meeting at 7:00 PM.*

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION – Personnel & Real Estate:**

Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel and real estate. Commissioner Fontaine seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The Board of Commissioners went into Executive Session at 7:09 PM.

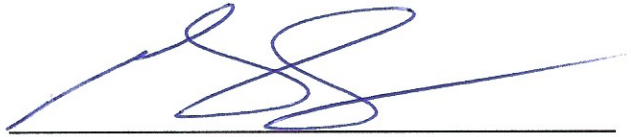
#### **PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board came out of Executive Session and Chairman Neal called the Regular meeting back to order at 7:28 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 PM. Commissioner Fontaine seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Keith Abraben, a resident of Lambert Estates, was on the ZOOM call and asked how to get on the agenda. Chairman Neal noted that he should call the Commissioners' Office.



Chairman George Neal, Jr.

Attest:

  
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Sylvia Russell, County Clerk