

**Baldwin County Planning Retreat**  
**June 30, 2022**  
**9:00 a.m.**  
**Middle Georgia Regional Commission**  
**175 C Emery Highway**  
**Macon, GA**

**Members Present**

Henry Craig  
John Westmoreland  
Kendrick Butts  
Emily Davis  
Sammy Hall

**Others Present**

Carlos Tobar  
David McRee  
Dawn Hudson  
Cindy Cunningham

**Call to Order – Chairman @ 9:00 a.m.**

**Commissioner Hall Delivered the Invocation**

**Administrative / Fiscal Matters**

Financial Update – Assistant County Manager Dawn Hudson reported departments are operating slightly under budget at this time which is six months into the fiscal year. She stated the calendar for setting the millage rate and the budget process will be developed and distributed to Commissioners in the near future. Assessment notices are scheduled to go out today beginning the 45 day appeal period, and work will begin on getting preliminary digest figures during these 45 days. Chief Appraiser Williams has told her that 1/3 of properties were re-evaluated this year and revals will continue next year on other types of property. There is real growth in the digest but as always, we will have to rollback.

Chairman Henry Craig stated there is potential for additional revenue with the re-evaluation. Even when tax bills go out we can't present our information to State until appeals are at a certain percent. Tyler is working with us to get some problems worked out.

Discussion was held on the effect high fuel prices have on the County budget.

Commissioner Hall asked that the budget be done earlier this year in order for Commissioners to have more time to evaluate it. He also requested that a budget report outlining departmental budgets, expenditures and balances be submitted to Commissioners on a regular basis.

Ms. Hudson reported the audit and all reports were submitted June 24, 2022.

Discussion was held regarding water usage, transition of City customers to County water distribution as a result of Service Delivery and water fund debt. Commissioner

Hall discussed the Sinclair Water Authority issue of a recent chemical imbalance which did not affect the safety or quality of water; however, flushing was necessitated and there was associated waste for tainted water.

Assistant County Manager discussed the use of SPLOST funds for capital improvements in the water department and the status of GEFA and FHA loans for waterline replacement and expansion; water storage; and meter replacement.

ARP Update and Strategy – Chairman Craig reported the County has received \$8.4 million in ARP funds. Discussion was held regarding expenditures for various projects, i.e. water improvements in Erin Shores, stormwater improvements, offset of Sheriff Office salaries, bonus for employees, and \$250,000 to SWA. These offset expenditures in the general fund to help with cashflow. Ms. Hudson reported \$2 million has been drawn from the \$7 million Tax Anticipation Note, and the uses of ARP funds kept the County from making more draws on the TAN.

Chairman Craig stated ARP regulations require the money be spent by 2024 or obligated by 2026. Commissioners discussed the review of the general operating budget to determine how use of the money would help with general fund expenditures in turn assisting with cash flow. Chairman Craig stated the County can consume all of this money through GF operations. The expectation is that using this money through General Fund will reduce our TAN requirements and help with cash flow.

Discussion was held regarding potential use of the ARP money for various type projects as well as including these various projects in the next SPLOST. County Manager Tobar discussed a possible sewer line extension on Log Cabin Road for future development. Ms. Hudson stated it could benefit the County to run lines because other properties would hook onto the line. Commissioners concurred that conceptually the County will go forward with the project. Discussion included a bond and/or deposit as guarantee from developer for the project.

Aquatics Facility – County Manager distributed a concept plan of a proposed Water Park, Phase 1. Chairman Craig stated today provides an opportunity to discuss proposals and options for this project. County Manager Tobar stated a number of facilities were toured when discussion of the project began, and he felt a design like the City of Dublin is best. He discussed options for developing different phases of a water park, lazy river element and a pool. Mr. Tobar stated the splash pad and a certain depth of water does not require lifeguards. Discussion was held regarding construction costs as well as maintenance costs which will be ongoing. Ms. Hudson stated the County must have good estimates for operating costs in order to determine fees to be charged. The main costs are for installing infrastructure and having it in place for expansion. Assistant County Manager Hudson recommended that the County select a company to work with on this project in order to develop an estimate to bring back to the Board. Commissioners suggested starting with pool construction and then add other phases such as a splash pad, slides and lazy river. The goal is to have something open for next summer. County Manager Tobar stated he will bid out the project in phases – base bid for pool; alternate – slides; alternate – lazy river; alternate – splash pad; alternate – pavilion. Chairman Craig requested the County Manager be read to go out for bid no later than July 15<sup>th</sup>.

T-SPLOST Update –Assistant County Manager reported the deadline is approaching on having T-SPLOST on the upcoming ballot. If we want to have TSPLOST on the November ballot, we will have to move forward now. Commissioners discussed whether to move forward at this time with a proposed T-SPLOST.

Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) - Discussion was held about the method and percentage of LOST distribution with the City. Assistant County Manager Hudson has been working with the City Manager on financial information and options for the distribution of the LOST. She stated a meeting must be held with the City to come to agreement on the split. It was decided the County Manager and Assistant County Manager will continue to work on LOST and TSPLOST in order to meet a deadline for the joint meeting.

County Manager Tobar discussed the Smith Sibley concept plan and mitigation costs for wetlands and streams.

Update on Employees' Cost of Living Increase – Commissioners discussed the current rate of inflation and expressed opinions for providing adequate resources to County employees. Commissioners asked Assistant County Manager Hudson to look at percentage options for providing a cost of living increase to employees. Commissioners concurred the County must retain good employees in order to provide best services to the community. Assistant County Manager stated the current pay scale was implemented in 2013, and the scale should be brought up to the point that the County is competitive in the market to hire people. She reported there are a number of vacant positions throughout County departments; and at least for this year, a portion of the increase can be paid within in the budgets they have because of vacant positions. Assistant County Manager Hudson stated she will continue to look at various percentages that can be accomplished within the budget.

Commissioners requested staff present employee appreciation ideas to the Board. Commissioners discussed group / discounted gym memberships for employees and challenges to improve health of employees. County Manger Tobar reported 13 defibrillators have been ordered for County buildings.

Fire Department Strategy for DBHDD Settlement – County Attorney McRee reported there has been no further discussion between Attorney Welch and the Attorney General's office on the suit or settlement. He reported Mr. Welch is moving forward with an additional legal point that there was actually a settlement offered by the State and the County's response was one of acceptance. Commissioners' opinions are that if money from suit is received that it be used only for Fire / Rescue.

COVID Policy Continuation – Commissioners and staff discussed whether there is a need to continue COVID leave policies for employees. Consensus is there is no need to continue a COVID leave policy.

Other Business – Administrative staff discussed a program to assist residents with water bills if there is a catastrophic leak. Staff members were asked to provide additional information to the Board regarding this matter.

County Attorney McRee discussed increasing responsibilities on election officials such as law suits, time consuming responses to open records requests and lack of people willing to serve on Boards of Elections and to work at polling places. He reported there is a statewide law suit from someone across the State that is involved with republican primary election.

Assistant County Manager Hudson discussed the matter of having an elected county surveyor. She stated the County can request legislative action to change the county surveyor from an elected position to appointed position; however, it must be introduced during the upcoming legislative session in order to be on the 2024 ballot. Commissioners requested she bring information about this matter before the Board at a Regular Meeting.

Discussion was held regarding possible amendments to the County's Personnel Policy to include whether Juneteenth would be added as an official holiday and inclusion of a policy outlining a flexible work schedule. Ms. Hudson suggested such a policy be developed and included in the Personnel Policy so it is in place when questions arise on this matter.

County Manager Tobar reported the County previously adopted a utility ordinance including the use of master meters, and staff have been switching people over. One mobile home park owner has expressed opposition to this. If the Board wishes to revisit portions of the ordinance, an industrial rate could be utilized rather than a per unit cost.

County Manager Tobar reported the zoning map will be completed soon.

Assistant County Manager Hudson reported she has received a number of calls regarding the deteriorated condition of the railroad crossing on Gumm Cemetery Road. Chairman Craig recommended correspondence to the railroad company be escalated.

Discussion was held regarding availability of the gym on weekends; midnight basketball; disk golf; events at the Collins P Lee center; use of the County Extension / 4-H Club building and charges for community events held at County facilities.

**Adjournment @ 2:50 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Henry R. Craig  
Chairman



Cynthia K. Cunningham  
County Clerk