



**BALDWIN COUNTY
WORK SESSION**
December 14, 2023
1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220
4:30 PM

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Emily Davis
John Westmoreland
Kendrick Butts
Sammy Hall
Henry Craig

OTHERS PRESENT

Brandon Palmer
Carlos Tobar
Dawn Hudson
Cindy Cunningham

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Emily Davis called the Work Session to order at 4:30 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE 1 FISCAL MATTERS

Discussion with Legislators

Representative Mack Jackson and Representative Ken Vance were welcomed by Commissioners.

Representative Jackson provided information on the following: legislators have just finished with a special session to answer the Federal Judge's ruling that legislative district maps do not support the voting rights act. Legislators have completed revisions and submitted the maps to the Judge for approval. If the Judge does not approve maps prepared by legislators, a Special Master will be appointed who will then prepare new district maps. Representative Jackson discussed a tax cut recently announced by the Governor. He discussed tort reform, increase in rural tax credit for hospitals from 75 million to 100 million which sunsets in December 2024 and wants to see this pass to continue from 2024 - 2029. He discussed the importance of physician recruitment for rural areas and the importance of broadband availability to these communities.

Representative Vance expressed his appreciation to Representative Jackson for his valuable help to him. He stated as a new representative he has relied on the experience and knowledge which Representative Jackson has so graciously given. Mr. Vance agreed that rural counties must be equipped with physicians, hospitals, educational opportunities and broadband. He stated he felt the upcoming session would address increased mandated training for law enforcement officers. He stated the officers must be equipped with appropriate training such as resiliency training and funding needs to be available to help officers with PTSD. Mr. Vance stated he doesn't agree with the school vouchers program since we should be concerned with funding public education. Representative Vance stated he feels education should teach fundamentals to prepare students with life skills. Mr. Vance concluded by saying he is honored to represent the people of the district along with Representative Jackson.

Commissioner Sammy Hall asked the Representatives to review the ACCG Legislative Update because he feels ACCG has identified serious concerns to Counties. Representative Jackson stated he and Mr. Vance would keep in touch with the Commissioners; however, he asked Commissioners to communicate with them also. He said they do not want to do anything

detrimental to counties. Commissioner Hall requested the legislators to consider counties when they make laws of mandated services with no funding from the State. He asked the legislators to provide funding for these mandates.

Commissioner Kendrick Butts asked for further clarification regarding proposed district maps.

Commissioner Henry Craig stated funding is needed for more training to assist with PTSD. He stated he is part of the rural hospital stabilization committee, and he encourages legislators to make money available to rural hospitals. Rural communities have the most difficult time to deal with mental health. Commissioner Craig state tort reform is definitely an issue. He stated Georgia is the easiest state in country in which to sue. Frivolous lawsuits create enormous problems for communities as long as we have no laws that regulate these.

Representative Jackson discussed the need for a data base for persons with mental health issues so that their information can be available to law enforcement when these individuals are encountered. It should be known that the person requires medical assistance rather than being taken to jail.

County Manager Carlos Tobar reported that Baldwin County in collaboration with Windstream received funding to provide broadband to underserved areas. He also stated that mental health issues are very serious in this community. He thanked legislators and stated how valuable letters of support provided by our Representatives have been to the County in receiving grants.

Vice Chair John Westmoreland recommended this informational meeting should become an annual event taking place before and after the General Assembly meets each year.

Chair Davis asked that Agenda Item # 3 — Staggered Elections be discussed before Item #2 — Board of Elections.

Staggered Elections

Attorney Brandon Palmer presented an outline of points for suggested local legislation for staggered terms for the Board of Commissioners. Once the Commissioners approve the outline, it can be submitted to Senator Williams who will submit it to the Office of Legislative Counsel. He stated Commissioners who hold office on the effective date of the act will continue to serve for the terms of office that were elected. Commissioners elected from Districts 1 and 2 at the general election held in November 2024 shall each serve a term of four years beginning January 1, 2025 and ending December 31, 2028. Commissioners elected from Districts 3, 4, and 5 at the general election held in November 2024 shall serve a term of two years beginning January 1, 2025 and ending December 31, 2026. Thereafter each Commissioner will serve a term of office of four years.

Commissioner Hall stated this needs to be done as soon as possible since qualifying is March 4-8, 2024. Attorney Palmer responded that if Commissioners adopt the outline, he will forward the outline to Senator Williams and send Representatives Jackson and Vance a copy of the minutes showing the Board's action.

Board of Elections

Attorney Palmer reported he, committee members Westmoreland and Butts, and Judge Blackwell have held meetings to discuss the establishment of a Board of Elections. Mr. Palmer presented the proposed outline including the composition of the initial Board being the current Board of Registrars, staggered elections, appointments of successor members, removal / vacancies of members and the Supervisor of Registration an Elections which incorporates changes made by the Board at the last meeting.

Discussion was held regarding how to handle a possible situation of there not being a majority vote by the Board of Commissioners to appoint a member and a timeline for the submission of other names and a timeline for the Commissioners to make the appointment.

Judge Todd Blackwell stated the reason there should be staggered terms of four and six years is that members would not see the entire cycle of elections otherwise. He recommended creating a board that functions well and that continues with successful elections. He recommended keeping the Board as identical as we have now to keep everything running

smoothly. The goal of having four- and six-year terms is to have members go through total election cycle.

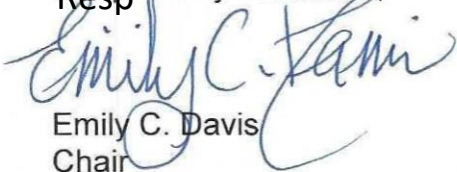
Discussion of the matter will be continued during the 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

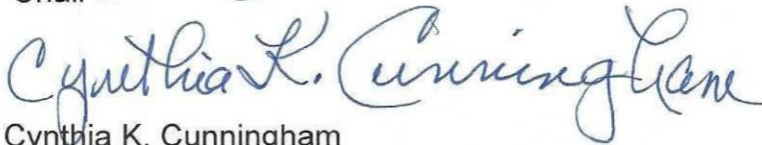
Commissioner Kendrick Butts made a motion to adjourn the Work Session at 6:00 p.m. Vice Chair John Westmoreland seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Resp



Emily C. Davis
Chair



Cynthia K. Cunningham
County Clerk

Cynthia K. Cunningham