



BALDWIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RETREAT

February 20, 2025

Middle Georgia Regional Office

Macon Mall Suite MB 102

3661 Eisenhower Parkway

Macon, Georgia 31206

9:00 AM

RETREAT MINUTES

PRESENT

Andrew Strickland, Chairman

Scott Little

Sammy Hall

Kendrick Butts

Emily Davis

OTHERS

Carlos Tobar

Dawn Hudson

Andy Welch

Brandon Palmer

Bo Danuser

Greg Boike (MGRC)

CALL TO ORDER

Commission Chairman Strickland called the retreat to order at 9:00 AM.

AGENDA

LAND CODE

Commissioner Little made a motion to amend the order of the agenda to discuss the Land Code and Map at the beginning of the retreat to take advantage of the presence of Greg Boike, the MGRC employee who worked on the Land Development Map. Commissioner Kendrick Butts seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Greg Boike explained that he worked on Baldwin County's proposed Land Use Ordinance and the process and time frame for developing the ordinance, he stated the zoning ordinance and the map had been put on hold. He discussed land use regulations and subdivision regulations and the state laws that would have to be followed to adopt a Land Use Ordinance and Map.

Mr. Boike left the meeting at 9:12 AM.

TSPLOST and SPLOST

County Assistant Manager and Finance Director Dawn Hudson passed out TSPLOST, SPLOST and CIP Report spreadsheets and discussed how each of the funds were being spent. She stated that the estimated collections had been exceeded for the past 9 months.

There was a discussion about holding a certain amount of the taxes in a fund for special projects. There was a discussion about the estimated \$5.86 million for identifies road repairs.

Commissioner Davis came into the meeting at 9:23 AM and was marked present.

Ms. Hudson discussed the projects being completed with SPLOST funds and stated they were ahead of projected collections.

Ms. Hudson discussed the CIP Report and reviewed the items that were purchased with grants which included vehicle purchases and E-911 communication equipment. She explained how they projected the need for items and planned purchases according to the tax collection.

There was a discussion about the proposed SPLOST projects which included reroofing county buildings.

There was a discussion about upgrading the sewer pump stations and sewer lines.

County Manager Tobar included Water and Sewer Director Jason Kidd in the meeting via telephone to discuss the sewer system. Mr. Kidd discussed the bad condition of the pump stations and gravity sewer wells; doing a water quality report; installing a filtration system and storage tanks. Mr. Kidd discussed the SCADA system, first explaining what the system was and how it worked and then how it helped determine where leaks were, he stated the current SCADA system was outdated.

There was a discussion about having a water and sewer rate study done and increasing water and sewer rates in increments.

Mr. Kidd stated he had gotten proposals for filters and replacements would help reduce the fines and would remove the "forever" chemicals and carcinogens. Mr. Kidd left the meeting.

The discussion about the water system continued, including leaks, line flushing, having a rate study done and offering a leak protection program.

The commissioners took a break from 10:26AM to 10:33AM.

Upon returning from break, the commissioners discussed implementing impact fees, installing street lights, building a fire station and the ISO rating.

LAND DEVELOPMENT - continued

County Attorney Andy Welch came into the meeting at 10:43. He handed out information and explained zoning in general, including types of zoning, purposes, pros and cons of zoning, and procedures for following a zoning ordinance, including the approval of variances. He stated the county already had some element of zoning in the code.

The commissioners and Mr. Welch discussed implementing a zoning map, including on Log Cabin Road. There was also discussion about getting the public involved in the process by having town hall meetings;

land owners retaining freedom of use, creating zoning classifications, non-conforming uses, administration of an ordinance including establishing planning meetings, public hearing requirements, signage and public notification.

There was a discussion about the current process for approving building permits.

The Commission took a lunch break from 12:15 to 12:54.

Mr. Welch left the meeting during the lunch break.

FLOATING LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX

Assistant County Manager Dawn Hudson discussed the Floating Local Option Sales Tax created by House Bill 581. She also discussed negotiating an IGA with the City of Milledgeville on the tax distribution and rolling back residential property taxes. She stated FLOST would help with cash flow and may eliminate the need for a TAN note.

There was a discussion about scheduling an election and calling a joint meeting with the city.

FIRE RESCUE AND STRATEGIC PLAN

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed the Fire Rescue Plan which included buying a new fire engine and building a new fire station.

There was a discussion about consolidating fire stations, the public safety communications system and E-911, making the purchase of land for a new fire station top priority for the county attorney, planning the new fire station for future expansion to include large bays and a helipad.

There was discussion about requiring two firefighters on the trucks, upgrading and purchasing firefighting safety gear, providing medical training, bidding out the design for the new fire station, purchasing a ladder truck, funding fire services by creating a special fire district with a millage rate on tax bills.

SOLAR DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed a pending 2,000-acre solar farm and adopting guidelines to include prohibiting solar farms.

There was a discussion about the cost of dismantling and disposing of solar panels and enacting a moratorium to prohibit solar panel farms.

OCONEE RIVER GREENWAY

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed the extension of the Fishing Creek trail in the Oconee River Greenway and applying for a grant to enhance trail by removing invasive species.

There was a discussion about extending the trail along Fishing Creek.

HANCOCK COUNTY

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed Hancock County's interest in joining the communication system.

There was a discussion about the Sinclair Treatment Plant, water rates, and having an environmental study done.

There was a discussion about Hancock County closing the Car Station convenience center, them moving toward curbside pickup, and cost sharing for the convenience center.

SHORT TERM VACATION RENTALS

There was a discussion about increasing the fees for short term vacation rentals to help offset the salary of someone to enforce the ordinance, putting caps on bedrooms and limiting the number of people boarded at the vacation rental. There was a discussion about adopting rules for short term rentals, enforcing the codes on weekends and establishing occupancy limits.

WALTER B WILLIAM PARK/LITTLE FISHING CREEK GOLF COURSE

There was a discussion about the economic impact sports had in a community.

There was a discussion about making improvements to the Little Fishing Creek Golf Course based on recommendations from golfing professionals – the golf course made money and the golf carts paid for themselves, other parts of the recreation department did not pay for themselves.

There was a discussion about creating a master plan for the recreation department and the property surrounding the recreation department to maximize the impact of recreation in the community which included having a campground, a music area, and paths.

There was a discussion about providing a travel van for the track team.

There was a discussion about starting a junior lifeguard training program.

PRIORITIES

There was a discussion about setting the priorities for the County Attorney.

There was a discussion about a garbage transfer station on Linda Drive and recycling being a component of the transfer station; bidding the solid waste contract; the recent pet adoption event; improving communications; and moving CSHLRA down the list of priorities.

After discussion, items that were ranked to be high on a project list were:

- Waste management contract,
- Purchasing property and building a fire station on Lake Laurel Road
- Airport Advisory Committee
- House Bill 581
- Short term rental definitions
- spay and neuter ordinance
- district based land use/map
- updating of employee handbook
- solar farms
- short term rentals

There was a discussion about the hospital and the services they were contracted to provide.

There was a discussion about changing the social media policy to disable public comment as a result of the county's Facebook page becoming a platform of hate, and that it should only be used as one of the methods the county used to disseminate information.

There was a discussion about instituting safety protocols for the commission meetings.

There was a discussion about having a golf pro to address commission.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Little made a motion to adjourn the retreat at 4:20 PM. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The retreat was adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted


Andrew Strickland, Chairman


Bo Danuser, County Clerk

