The scheduled Workshop Session of the Tift County Board of Commissioners was called to order by Chairman Grady Thompson on Tuesday, April 5, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioners’ Meeting Room of the Administrative Building. Members of the Commission present including Chairman Thompson were Vice Chairman Robert Setters and Commissioners Buck Rigdon, Sherry Miley, Melissa Chevers, Donnie Hester and Mike Jones.

Proclamation: Chairman Thompson presented a Child Abuse Proclamation to Greg Millette declaring the Month of April as Child Abuse Awareness.

Appointments:

1. Tommy Daughtrey requested to address the Board on the Game Warden Programs. Jeff Swift, Region Supervisor gave a power point presentation to show a little about what the Department of Natural Resources offers to the citizens of the State and most specific to Region 5 District which is out of Albany and covers Tift County. Their mission is to protect Georgia’s Natural Resources and the public safety by enforcing laws, rules and regulations concerning game and non-game. They will be enforcing the baiting laws. From the public safety aspect they respond to hunting and boating incidents. And provide reports. They are the State’s First Responders to lost wilderness and hunters incidents and a host of other incidents. They provide law enforcement support. They are a lot more diversified than most people think. They do a great deal of public education programs and are at ABAC and Paradise Lake her in Tifton. They have the latest and greatest technology available for their use in public safety.

2. Brian Tankersly with the County Extension was present to give the Board yearly updates. They have several new programs that are grant funded and members of his staff were present to present those programs. The first is a three year grant program called SAAF (Strong African American Families) and it deals with 6th & 7th grade students. Tift County was chosen to participate in this program that consists of Tift and Turner counties. The brief overview stated it is designed to strengthen families and is geared toward African American families. It is designed to make sure parents know how to communicate with their children. We are going to bring in some money into the economy here in Tift County while we strive to enhance the African American families into the community. The program will be housed in the African American community where they will feel comfortable to come and learn. It is designed to entice 6th and 7th graders to start setting goals and start being more involved in the community in hopes to decrease the dropout rate. The impact this program will have in the community will be beneficial to everyone.

The second program is an Energy and Weatherization Program. The purpose of this program is to provide energy education and weatherization services to clientele that have low income and senior citizens. We go in the homes and educate them on these issues and are striving for a 30% reduction in utility billing. So far they have been in 61 homes in Tift County and are looking to do 85. Through Coastal Plains citizens can inquire about the program and they hold seminars in various locations and take the citizens information to see if they qualify for the program. This program is federally funded.

Mr. Tankersly stated that we have seen stronger commodity prices this year and are seeing land that has not been in cultivation use before now is happening. He showed a poster of education on planting cantaloupes and cotton together. We are able to harvest the antelope crop, spray the vines with roundup and then harvest the cotton crop. With this cotton inter planting use before now is happening. He showed a poster of education on planting cantaloupes and cotton together. We are able to harvest the antelope crop, spray the vines with roundup and then harvest the cotton crop. With this cotton inter planting we were able to increase the returns about $250 per acre and the research has been shared all over the country.

He brought several outstanding students that are in the 4-H Program. He introduced the students in the areas of livestock, showmanship and the shooting programs. The BB Air Rifle Team has qualified to go to National Competition in Arkansas. This weekend at Rock Eagle they will be competing against 80 teams. The National Poultry Judging Team was held last fall and some to this team was present. He introduced some of the other students present that participated in other fields and introduced the 4-H Council Officers. They are all outstanding young leaders of tomorrow.

Public Comments:

Three convenient store owners were present and addressed the Board in reference to gaming machines. We are still in the process of revising the Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance. The County Attorney has been working on it, has met with Sheriff Department staff and has the City’s Ordinance and hopes by next month he can render an opinion on some needed changes in it. The owners, Mr. Patel did address the Board on the gaming machines. The city of Tifton has ban the machines but they are allowed in the County and it is not fair for some stores to have them and others not. They would like for it all to be the same. The County will make changes to the Ordinance that is enforceable and lawful in the State of Georgia.

Public Hearings:
A. TC-SE-11-02: Petition by Tommy Stone for a Special Exception to create one (1) substandard lot for a Rural Farm Homestead on Map 072 Parcel 024 located at 375 Tifton Eldorado Road: Todd Miller gave the explanation of the request and the staff recommendation. This parcel is an existing single family parcel and it consists of 1.2 acres and has an established yard. This request meets the requirements of a Rural Farm Homestead lot and comes to the Board with a recommendation of approval from Planning and Zoning with one condition that a variance is granted by the Commission Board of a 13.87’ variance from the required 210” minimum lot width requirement.

The County Manager asked the Board’s consideration of an amendment to the Agenda to add an item under the letter “O”. This is the Annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Recreation Facility and Craig Sowell just got the information in his hands yesterday. It will be further discussed at the end of the already listed Agenda items.

Items to be discussed for Regular Session on April 11, 2011:

B. Vehicle Policy Text Amendment: Craig Sowell is the appointed Safety Coordinator for the County and he gave the explanation for this needed Text Amendment. Under the required criteria to be eligible for the discounts on the Insurance Premiums, the new wording needs to be added for the County to be in compliance. The Policy needs to include wording that addresses any equipment that comes equipped with seat belts. Old Wording: Seatbelts must be worn by the driver and passengers at all times when the vehicle is in motion, except when other approved traveling positions are necessitated. New Wording: Seatbelts must be worn by the driver and passengers of County Vehicles and Equipment where seatbelts are available at all times when the vehicle is in motion, except when other approved travel positions are necessitated. County Vehicles/Equipment includes: Riding Mowers, Motor Graders, Trucks, Cars, Dump Trucks, Dirt Pans and Excavators.

C. Return to Work Policy & Procedures: Craig Sowell gave the brief explanation of the required Return to Work Policy and Procedures that needs to be in place as one of the criteria items to be eligible for the discounts on Workers’ Compensation Premiums. These requirements have been set forth by ACCG and LGRMS and our documents have been reviewed with the County Attorney.

D. Verification Form for eligibility for discounts on Insurance Premiums: The County Manager advised that each year ACCG offers incentives to be eligible to receive discounts on insurance premiums. The County must meet the required criteria in order to receive the discounts and County staff works real hard to see that we are in compliance. Items B and C of this Agenda will need to be approved before you authorize the Chairman to sign the Verification Form that we are eligible to receive the discounts.

E. Road name Change Request: The County Manager advised that a petition to change South Park Avenue to Melvin D. McDaniel Avenue has been received. County staff has research the names on the petition and found that there is a lot of rental property on that street and that the majority of the names are the renters, not the actual property owners. Also as customary, staff has discussed the road name change with E-911 and the Road Department. The road is part in the City and part in the County so it would require action from both governing bodies. While staff appreciates the desire of residents to memorialize Rev. McDaniel’s service to the community it is not recommended to change the road name. Commissioner Hester stated that he has talked with the residents that got up the petition and it is their desire to have an honorary name added under the original street name of South Park Avenue. Staff will check on this and advise the Board at the Regular Meeting. The fee would still apply for the purchase of the sign.

F. Declare a Moratorium on issuing Alcohol License: The County Attorney is in the process of reviewing the Alcohol Ordinance. He stated that we are respectfully requesting a 90 day Moratorium of issuing license until we can complete this process and come up with an enforceable Ordinance and issuing process.

G. Appointment to the Hospital Authority to fill a vacancy due to a resignation: the County Manager advised that a letter has been received from the Hospital Authority requesting the replacement of Mr. Sandro Blalock who has resigned. The Hospital Authority has submitted names in order of preference for the Board’s consideration as: 1. Mr. Wasdon Grayon; 2. Mr. Arno McKinnen; and 3. Dr. Homer Day.

H. Surplus of two Mobile Home Units in Recreation Department: Jason Jordan told the Board that there are two mobile home units with the Recreation Department, one located on Victory Drive and one at Mott-Litman Gym. The one at Victory Drive is in bad shape; roof leaks and the one at Mott-Litman recently caught fire and for its worth and what it would cost the County to repair it, is not feasible. An insurance claim has been filed on the one that caught fire and they have paid approximately $25,000 for the unit. Staff recommends that the Board declare both units surplus and allow them to be listed with Gov Deals for 10 days to see if they sell and the purchaser would be responsible for removal. Otherwise, Tift County will have to remove them and haul to the landfill and pay for the expense of disposing of them.

I. Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Family & Children Services: Leigh Jordan briefly explained the yearly renewal with this Agency. The County pays the maintenance of the building throughout the year and at the end of the year calculates a monthly rental fee for the upcoming year based on the prior year’s actual cost to maintain the building. It is a dollar for dollar exchange.

J. Memorandum of Agreement with Department of Health: The County Manager advised that in March of 2008, the County entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Human Resources/Public Health to participate in a Strategic National Stockpile in the event of a manmade or natural disaster that may
deplete local medical supplies. The Department of Health is requesting the renewal of this Agreement due to a staff replacement in the District Office. Dr. Lynne Feldman, District Director has retired and the position has been filled by Dr. William Grow. All documents need to reflect this change thereof this Agreement needs to be adopted and signed.

K. Telecom Audit: Al Stephenson reminded the Board that some months ago the County entered into an Agreement with RDA Consulting Services for the purpose of conducting an internal telecom audit. RDA has completed its telecom audit and has provided a list of recommended changes that represent a cost savings to the County. He has given Option A and Option B and staff at this time recommends implementing Option A and realize those savings while we work to continue with upgrades which is Option B to migrate to a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Al also advised the Board that our phone system is so antiquated that he has been told by the providers it will reach the end of life in about a year.

L. Resurfacing of Chula Brookfield Road: Jason Jordan advised the Board that three roads were submitted under the LMG program to GDOT for resurfacing. One of the roads, Chula Brookfield was only partially funded by GDOT, from 319 to Hall Mixon Road. Staff recommends the Board consider approving the remainder of the road which is 1.6 miles so that the entire road will be resurfaced. There are SPLOST III funds available and the contractor has agree to do the work at the same cost level they quoted GDOT.

M. Resolution for Engineering & Administrative Services for TC Gordon Project: Jason Jordan explained to the Board that this is another Resolution that needs to be approved to be submitted with the County’s Grant application for this project. Darrell Wiggins and staff have review and gone through the selection process as outlined by DCA and recommended that Watkins and Associates be awarded the engineering contract and that Bob Roberson and Associates be awarded the Administrative Contract. If this Resolution is approve it will be submitted with our application and gets us some strength for points on the application and we receive a point toward our grant considerations.

N. Budget Work Sheet as generated by Finance Software: Chairman Thompson gave a statement regarding the finances of the County. He and Commissioner Rigdon had previously discussed this when they took office and decided that the county needed to work to get 6 months money in reserve. So here we are 6½ years later and we are still maintaining the 6 months money. We have enhanced and built County roads to a first class level and we have cleaned up Tift County. We have provided quality employment, turned Tift county into a great recreation community, we have dedicated resources into infrastructure and economic development which advantageously has positioned Tift County for growth when the economic turnaround starts. We have done all of this without raising taxes but most important we have achieved all of this through the careful management of staff working in conjunction with a Board that is engaged and supportive. With all of this we are all familiar with and concerned with the upcoming budget and we would like to see that that staff continues what they have done in the past and present us with a balanced budget for this next year. Six years ago we had very little in reserve and we got all the departments to buy into our plan to get us to that 6 months reserve level. The County is in good financial shape and through the economic breakdown the County is still maintaining. We have good people in place and they are looking out for the best interest of the County, we need to continue our support of a staff to think “bottom line” and keep the County in good financial shape. We are looking at some new software in the finance department which is greatly needed. Request for Proposals are being prepared and that will come before the Board in the very near future.

O. Annual Easter Egg Hunt at Puckett Park: This is the same agreement that historically the County does annually. The Egg Hunt will be held at Puckett Park and we will be providing the tables and chairs for the event. They have obtained all the required permits and this park is joint ownership and the City of Tifton will be handling traffic, security as well as trash service for this event.

County Manager Items: Requested a short Executive Session for personnel.

Commissioners Comments: None

Executive Session: Motion to go into Executive Session for Personnel was made by Commissioner Chevers, seconded by Commissioner Hester. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Thompson adjourned the meeting.

Chairman Grady Thompson, District 7
Vice Chairman Robert Setters, District 3

Commissioner Donnie Hester, District 1
Commissioner Melissa Chevers, District 2

Commissioner Sherry Miley, District 4
Commissioner F. W. (Buck) Rigdon, District 5

ATTEST:

Commissioner C. Michael Jones, District 6
County Clerk