

**WORKSHOP SESSION
TIFT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2017**

The scheduled Workshop Session of the Tift County Board of Commissioners was called to order by Chairman Grady Thompson on Tuesday, August 8, 2017 at 6:00 pm in the Commissioner's Meeting Room of the Charles Kent Administration Building. Members of the Commission present in addition to Chairman Thompson were Vice Chairman Robert Setters and Commissioners Greg Wood, Donnie Hester, Fred "Buck" Rigdon, Stan Stalnaker and Melissa Hughes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Johnny Lindsey, Mitchell Store Road, thanked the Tift County Road Department for patching the potholes on Mitchell Store Road.

Charlotte Bedell, Former County Commissioner, encouraged Commissioners to put SPLOST on the November 2017 ballot.

Hal Baxley, 73 Eagle Drive, stated that he wants SPLOST on the November ballot. Mr. Baxley stated his concern regarding the lack of cooperation between the County and the City of Tifton. He further stated that more money needs to be allocated to the Sheriff's Department for additional deputies.

Hayward Fowler, 1018 N. Park, urged the Commissioners to make peace with the City of Tifton. He also expressed his desire for SPLOST to be voted in.

Lyn Bennett asked that the County seek additional ways to get information to the citizens; perhaps through a Facebook page.

APPOINTMENTS:

There were none to report.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were none to report.

ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT REGULAR SESSION, AUGUST 14, 2017:

- A. **Agreement with Vesta Pallas for E911 Phone System Maintenance:** County Manager Jim Carter stated that this agreement was for the maintenance of the phone system at the E911 Center. This is a budgeted item. Mr. Carter stated that the phone system is coming to its end of life within the next couple of years. The Board indicated its desire to place Item "A" on the Consent Agenda.

At this time, Commissioner Donnie Hester thanked everyone for their comments. He stated that he appreciated each and every one.

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- B. Approval of Tax Refund for Big Lots:** Tax Assessor Teresa Lupo stated that Big Lots filed a return in 2016 reporting taxable inventory and fixtures in the Tifton store. The amount reported met the statistical tests and was accepted. In 2017, Big Lots changed their accounting firm and internal audits of Big Lots discovered over-reporting of inventory amounts. The refund request was made to almost all counties within the State. The Board of Assessors is not authorized to issue a refund when the taxpayer failed to file an appeal. The taxpayer correctly addressed the refund request to the Board of Commissioners. As the amount of the refund requested is so small (\$11.92), it is not cost effective to audit this account to confirm the reporting error. County Attorney Anthony Rowell stated it is not within the County's authority under the statute to extend the refund. The Board indicated its desire to place item "B" on the Regular Agenda.
- C. Emergency Purchase of Ambulance:** County Manager Jim Carter stated that over the last few weeks, we have had mechanical issues with several ambulances. Some of these problems are currently being repaired. Chief Alver Horton stated that one of the ambulances should be ready this Friday. At this time, we are only running four (4) ambulances. Our level of service should be seven (7) ambulances. After reaching out to several ambulance suppliers, we were able to find an ambulance that we can have up and running in our fleet by August 28, 2017. This will be a remountable truck. The ambulance will be paid for with SPLOST V monies. Since finding this ambulance, another supplier has notified us that they have an ambulance they were building for a customer and that customer no longer wants the ambulance. This request will come before the Board at a later date. The Board indicated its desire to place item "C" on the Consent Agenda.
- D. Vehicles to be Designated as Surplus:** County Manager Jim Carter asked that this item be removed from the agenda. There are several departments that have expressed desire to use some of the vehicles to be surplus.
- E. Contract with Southern Regional Commission for Comp Plan Update 2020:** County Manager Jim Carter stated that the Comp Plan update has to be adopted by the Commission no later than June 2018. Part of the update involves updating the land use element. SGRC will assist the County, Tifton, TyTy and Omega with this process. The cost for their services is \$10,000. The County will invoice the cities a prorated share of the work. The kick-off meeting and public hearing for the Comp Plan update will be September 11, 2017. The Board indicated its desire to place item "E" on the Consent Agenda.
- F. Paying the Railroad to Upsize Their Storm Drain Pipes Under the Railroad Tracks in South Tifton Next to Southern Avenue:** Public Works Director Jason Jordan stated that the storm drain under Southern Avenue between Golden Road and US Hwy 41 has two (2) 60-inch concrete culverts that allow the storm water to run off. The railroad that runs parallel with Southern Avenue only has one (1) 15-inch and one (1) 24-inch culvert under it constricting the water flow. In the past, this constriction has caused water to back up and flood some of the houses that are located along the drainage area. Norfolk Southern has agreed to fix this problem; however, they will require Tift County to pay for it. The cost of the project is \$99,900 and will be paid from SPLOST V. The Board indicated its desire to place item "F" on the Consent Agenda.

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- G. **Paving of Springhill Church Road and Sand Hammock Road:** Public Works Director Jason Jordan stated that these two roads were approved to be designed for paving back in 2013. We ran into design issues which have now been resolved. We are ready to move forward with the project. County forces would be used to build this project except for the curb and gutter. Mr. Jordan will solicit bids for the curb and gutter work and will bring that before the Board. The County will do the grading, drainage and base. The Board indicated its desire to place item "G" on the Consent Agenda.
- H. **New VOCA Grant Position for Victims Assistance Program:** Jodie Spooner, Director of Victims Assistance, stated that new VOCA grant funds are available for a new victim assistance program position. No match will be required with this grant. Unlike current VOCA grant, new grant will reimburse County at 100% for salary & fringe up to \$60,000. As with current grant, quarterly expenditure reports will be required. These reports have been submitted timely and reimbursement has been delivered via direct deposit. The Board indicated its desire to place item "H" on the Consent Agenda.
- I. **Tax Appeal Administrator Supplement for Clerk of Superior Court:** County Manager Jim Carter stated that Georgia Law mandates that the Clerk of Superior Court serve as the Tax Appeal Administrator providing oversight, facilities and administrative assistance to the Board of Equalization. Additionally, the Law requires that the Clerk receive a salary supplement for performing these duties, but it does not dictate a requisite amount. The Clerk of Superior Court has requested consideration of this salary supplement in the amount of \$3,883.08 which is the same supplement amount the Clerk receives for serving as clerk to juvenile court and state court and for providing jury management. The Board indicated its desire to place item "I" on the Consent Agenda.
- J. **Appointments to the Following Boards: Airport Authority, Dangerous Dog Board and Keep Tift Beautiful:** County Clerk Miriam Jordan stated that these three (3) boards/authorities have members with expired terms. Each of these members have been contacted and are willing to serve another term. Ms. Jordan also stated that a list of all boards/authorities with its members was provided for their information. The Board indicated its desire to place item "J" on the Regular Agenda.
- K. **SPLOST Discussion:** Commissioner Melissa Hughes addressed the Board as follows – Too often, when there is a lack of communication, misunderstanding can occur. And I strongly believe that this is what has happened in regards to placing SPLOST on the ballot. It saddens me that our two governments are not effectively communicating with one another. I truly, truly believe in mutual transparency. It has been indicated that the County does not want to put SPLOST on the ballot. The question has been asked several times - why do commissioners not want to put the SPLOST on the 2017 ballot? Speaking from my perspective and my perspective only, my answer to that very important question is that if the two sister governments - the city and the county - can sit down at the table and agree on how the funds will be allocated, I will be in full agreement to put SPLOST on the November 2017 ballot; however, as of tonight, neither government has made the effort to come to the table to discuss how the funds will be allocated

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to enhance our community. Because this discussion has not occurred, I do not want to vote for SPLOST at this time to be on the ballot and later risk, later risk the possibility of facing unspoken challenges. Mr. Chairman, I hope this opens some communication between our Board and the City. It is very important for our community to be able to say they have the ability to go to the polls and vote but it is going to take both of our sister governments – us and them – being able to communicate and I think that is what has happened we have lost communication with each other. I hope we can discuss this. That is the why I ask for it to be put on the agenda so that we can talk about this openly. Thank you.

Commissioner Donnie Hester stated again that he agrees with the citizen comments tonight regarding SPLOST. He stated that he will not be the one to hold back the citizens when they want to vote on something. He stated that we need to come together for the citizens. He stated that SPLOST is a “win-win” for everyone. Commissioner Hester asked if the County Manager could contact the City of Tifton and schedule a meeting with the City of Tifton officials to meet with County officials. Commissioner Hester inquired as to when the deadline is to place SPLOST on the November 2017 ballot. County Attorney Anthony Rowell to talk with the Board of Elections to obtain a deadline for placing SPLOST on the November 2017 ballot. Once that is obtained, he will create a timeline and send it out to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Fred “Buck” Rigdon stated that he is in accord with the email sent out by County Manager Jim Carter on April 19, 2017 that stated in light of the TSPLOST in May 2018 that only two potential dates remain to hold the local SPLOST referendum – November 2017 and November 2018. Mr. Carter furthered stated in the email that he preferred the November 2017 date option in light of TSPLOST. Commissioner Rigdon stated he agreed with Mr. Carter’s point of view and wants to hold the SPLOST vote in November 2017.

Commissioner Robert Setters stated until we can reach an amicable distribution of funds from the SPLOST and a SPLOST budget is developed then I am all for putting it on the ballot as soon as possible. Commissioner Setters also stated that we owe the public due diligence in preparing the projects list.

Commissioner Stan Stalnaker stated that the responsible thing to do is to get some of these issues worked and in a methodical manner come up with a project list that is agreeable to everybody. He stated that he didn’t see the point in rushing through this process when there are multiple times next year to put SPLOST on the ballot.

Chairman Grady Thompson stated that one concern he has with SPLOST on the November 2017 election is that with it being an odd year then SPLOST would be the only thing on the ballot for the County which would be an additional expense. If held in May or November 2018, then the County already has to have elections during those times so there would be no additional expense. County Manager Jim Carter to find out how much it would cost the County to have the election in November 2017.

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COUNTY MANAGER'S COMMENTS:

There were none to report.

COUNTY CLERK'S COMMENTS:

There were none to report.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:

There were none to report.


ADJOURN:

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.


After adjournment, Hal Baxley stated his displeasure with the County. He stated that the City already has their SPLOST list prepared. He stated that he understood that this was all about the water department. He doesn't feel this has anything with it. He stated this was a bottomless and poor excuse for inaction. He stated he was disappointed. He said that if it wasn't on the November ballot it will be because the County decided to drag their feet.



Chairman Grady Thompson, District 7



Vice Chairman Robert Setters, District 3




Commissioner Donnie Hester, District 1



Commissioner Melissa Hughes, District 2



Commissioner Stan Stalnaker, District 4



Commissioner Fred "Buck" Rigdon, District 5



Commissioner Greg Wood, District 6

ATTEST: 

September 18, 2017