

A Work Session of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, January 10, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. in the Conference Room of the Community Center at Oconee Veterans Park.

Members Present: Chairman John Daniell
Commissioner Mark Thomas
Commissioner Chuck Horton
Commissioner W. E. "Bubber" Wilkes
Commissioner Mark Saxon

Staff Present: Jeff Benko, CPA, Administrative Officer
Kathy Hayes, County Clerk
Tracye Bailey, Executive Assistant/Deputy Clerk
Daniel Haygood, County Attorney
Allen Skinner, Director, Property Tax Appraisal
Bruce Thaxton, Fire Chief
Karla Hulseley, EMA
Catlyn Vickers, Director, Animal Control
John Gentry, Director, Parks & Recreation
Lisa Davol, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation
Emil Beshara, Director, Public Works
Merry Howard, Director, Senior Center
Rhea Hebert, Director, Library
Malinda Smith, Director, Human Resources
Wes Geddings, Director, Finance
J.R. Charles, Director, Economic Development
Wayne Haynie, Director, Utility Department
B.R. White, Director, Planning & Code Enforcement
Alex Perschka, Director, Tourism
Shawn Wheeler, Director, Civic Center
Marvin Poe, Director, Facilities & Operations
Paula Nedza, Director, Information Technology (IT)

Chairman Daniel called the meeting to order at 9:58 a.m.

Approval of the Agenda: On motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Horton, the agenda for the January 10, 2017 Work Session was unanimously approved as presented.

Overview and Purpose of Work Session:

Chairman Daniell stated the Work Session will be the same format as the previous Work Session on Friday, January 6, 2017.

Old Jail Lease Agreement:

Administrative Officer Jeff Benko updated the Board regarding the current lease agreement on the Old Jail space with the Probation Office. The lease payments began on January 1, 2011, and are on a month-to-month lease at \$500.00 per month.

Chairman Daniell recommended that the Board issue a notice to terminate the lease with the probation services in order to evaluate using the space for county government offices.

On motion by Commissioner Horton and seconded by Commissioner Saxon, the Board unanimously agreed to terminate the office space lease with the Probation Office and allow 30 days for the office to move to another location.

Property Tax Appraisal Office:

Chairman Daniell stated that the main goal is to continue with enhancing technology for the Property Appraisers. Commissioner Wilkes asked if another Property Appraiser was approved in the budget. Chairman Daniell stated that the position was approved, but has not been filled. This item will be discussed at the Board's Agenda Setting Meeting on January 31, 2017.

Fire Department and EMA:

Chairman Daniell discussed the Fire Department, EMA and EMS are under the same department at present, and the Board may need to discuss separation of these functions. Technology upgrades are needed to enable reports to be completed in the "field." The Board needs to discuss moving forward construction of a new station for Fire Station 8 and the position of a Fire Inspector.

Commissioner Saxon asked about EMA Director applicants and interviews. Administrative Officer Benko stated that the EMA Director position is responsible for emergency management and emergency medical services. Applicants for the position were interviewed by a committee and a final list was completed. An applicant has not been selected, but all applicants have been notified that a determination has not been made. Direction is needed by the Board as to separating the services within this department or having the services remain under one department. At present, Karla Hulseley, EMA, is handling the day-to-day operations of the department. Chairman Daniell stated the Board will discuss at its Agenda Setting Meeting on January 31, 2017, how the Fire Department and EMA/EMS will function.

Commissioner Horton asked if Ms. Hulseley is being compensated as an Interim Director. Administrative Officer Benko stated that she is not. Commissioner Horton would like to see this changed and Mr. Benko agreed Ms. Hulseley's compensation should be changed.

Animal Control:

Chairman John Daniell stated that facility upgrades will be a topic for the next several months. He would like to have Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in place to outline the department's operations and procedures.

Administrative Officer Benko stated that the consultant's report regarding the facility should be available soon. He will send the report to the Board. When the report is received, Mr. Benko asks that Director Catlyn Vickers send it to the Animal Control Citizen Advisory Board. He would like for the Advisory Board to review at its February meeting.

Commissioner Horton asked if the report will recommend a new location. Administrative Officer Benko stated that the report will evaluate the current site and make recommendations regarding additions to the current building or building a new shelter. If the recommendation is for a new shelter, the Board of Commissioners will decide the location.

Public Works:

Chairman John Daniell stated a county-wide transportation plan is needed and that road policy updates need to be considered. Policy updates will be an item at the Board's Agenda Setting Meeting on January 31, 2017, with action at its Regular Meeting on February 7, 2017.

Chairman Daniell stated that a study may need to be considered in order to plan for future road projects and requests for state funding. He would like to proceed with evaluating what is needed to convert the old landfill on Marshall Store Road in Farmington into a practice range for the Sheriff's Office.

Parks & Recreation:

Chairman John Daniell discussed several items regarding: Evaluation by a third party regarding the programs, operations and budget; formulating a master plan; and, completing field space at Veterans Park in the upcoming FY2018 budget to relieve stress on the current fields.

Commissioner Horton stated the Board should plan for future use of park facilities and look at alternative funding. Fields outside of county facilities may also be used. Commissioner Daniell stated that funds are available for the Master Plan and asked Director Gentry the time needed to complete the fields. Director Gentry stated approximately 12 to 18 months.

Commissioner Thomas asked reviewing the joint agreement with the schools. Director Gentry stated that the agreement will need to be renewed in 2018 and discussion should begin soon regarding agreement revisions and renewal. Administrative Officer Benko stated that the Board may need to consider park areas in conjunction with areas where the School System purchases/builds educational facilities.

Senior Center:

Chairman John Daniell reported that the Senior Center received the highest possible ranking for its food services and congratulated Director Merry Howard. Administrative Officer Benko stated that Director Howard and her staff are doing a great job. The Senior Center clientele has almost doubled and reports have been received that clients enjoy the food, trips and activities. Senior Center Programs integrating with Parks and Recreation Programs have been successful.

Extension Office:

Chairman John Daniell stated that Extension Agent Monte Stephens will be developing goals and action plans, which will include possible support and funding from the state.

Administrative Officer Benko shared with the Board that Joey Bristol, Senior 4-H Program Assistant, has resigned as of January 31, 2017. Recruiting for this position will require an applicant available for weekend hours.

Board of Elections and Registration:

Commissioner John Daniell stated that Director Pat Hayes and her staff are doing a good job. Administrative Officer Benko stated the Board of Elections and Registration will hold an election in March for the City of Watkinsville.

Commissioner Horton discussed safety issues regarding polling precincts at school locations, and the need to open all poll locations for a runoff election. County Attorney Haygood stated that the state will not allow selected poll locations open but requires all precincts to have the poll location open during an election.

Commissioner Wilkes asked if the Elections Office will be included in the new administration building. Administrative Officer Benko stated that the Board of Commissioners will need to make this decision.

Library:

Chairman John Daniell stated that the Bogart Library expansion is underway. He suggested that the Watkinsville Library be expanded in the future.

Chairman Daniell asked the Board for additional items to discuss, and there was no response.

Chairman Daniell asked Directors and citizens for additional discussion items.

Director John Gentry, Parks and Recreation, asked the Board to consider a pricing policy to calculate an amount per participant. He would like for the Board to review the direction of Parks and Recreation regarding Oconee's increasing population, increased activity in the parks, and the need for additional personnel. Chairman Daniell stated that a third party study could provide the needed data regarding financial reporting and which programs should be taxpayer supported. Director Gentry stated that two programs have the opportunity to be managed by youth associations.

Director Gentry also discussed the possibility of working with the University of North Georgia (UNG) for a cooperative agreement for library services. Administrative Officer Benko stated that planning stages can be beneficial to both sides resulting in a savings to tax payers. Mr. Gentry shared that Parks and Recreation is working with UNG's intramural sports and suggested other opportunities may be available to share/discuss regarding development of future facilities. Commissioner Thomas asked if the County has a joint use agreement with UNG. Mr. Gentry stated there is no rental agreement, but UNG collects student activity fees to support the joint use activities.

Property Appraisal Director Allen Skinner stated that new technology will eliminate the need to input field work when returning to the office, which allows the appraisers to continue working in the field throughout the day. He stated that by keeping appraisers out for the full day, the need arises for vehicles dedicated for the department. Mr. Skinner reviewed the approximate cost of technology for field input and the annual maintenance. Chairman Daniell stated that this item will be discussed at the Agenda Setting Meeting of the Board on January 31, 2017.

Commissioner Horton asked for Public Works Director Emil Beshara to update the Board prior to meetings regarding areas of concern and possible funding options. Also, he would like to have the same reporting from the Director Marvin Poe, Facilities and Operations.

Finance Director Wes Geddings reported that each department was under budget for FY 2016. The millage rate has remained at 6.686 (unincorporated) for almost a decade. Sales tax is at 52% versus 48% of real property. Oconee County has a philosophy of "pay-as-you-go," and is able to borrow money at a lower rate than surrounding governments.

Chairman Daniell stated that a Town Hall Meeting will be held this evening at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room of Oconee Veterans Park Community Center. Also, he reminded everyone that the next Board Work Session will be January 18, 2017, in the Conference Room of the Oconee Veterans Park Community Center. The topic of the meeting will be Water Resources with the possibility of other topics should time permit.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, on motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Horton, the meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

County Clerk

Chairman

Date