

A Work Session of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Friday, January 27, 2017 at 9:00 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
Daniel Haygood, County Attorney
Catlyn Vickers, Director Animal Control
Emil Beshara, Director, Public Works
Bruce Thaxton, Fire Chief, Fire/EMA
Karla Hulse, EMA
Merry Howard, Director, Senior Center
Wayne Haynie, Director, Utility
Malinda Smith, Director, Human Resources
Paula Nedza, Director, IT
J.R. Charles, Director, Economic Development
B.R. White, Director, Planning & Code Enforcement
Alex Perschka, Director, Tourism
Malinda Smith, Director, Human Resources
Tracye Bailey, Executive Assistant/Deputy Clerk
Wes Geddings, Director, Finance
Shawn Wheeler, Director, Civic Center
Lisa Davol, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation

Chairman Daniell called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

Approval of the Agenda

On motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Thomas, the Agenda was unanimously approved as presented.

Overview and Purpose of Work Session:

Chairman John Daniell stated that the Department Directors will give reports to the Board. John Gentry, Director, Parks & Recreation will present his report to the Board at the Agenda Setting Meeting on January 31, 2017.

Animal Control – Catlyn Vickers, Director

Director Vickers thanked the Board for the Director Retreat. The Animal Control Shelter feasibility study has been completed. Recommendations from the report include a new shelter with increased square footage in a centralized location within the county with sewer availability. Ms. Vickers suggested that, should the Board approve a new facility, to locate the shelter on land already owned by the County. The Animal Control Advisory Board will discuss the feasibility study at its next meeting on February 8, 2017. The Committee's recommendations and the Feasibility Study will be presented to the Commissioners at its Agenda Setting meeting.

Animal Control works with PetSmart for adoptions in addition to adoptions at the Shelter; utilizes social media opportunities; circulates a weekly newsletter; and publishes "Pets of the Week" in The Oconee Enterprise. Compliance is preferred over issuing citations and efforts are made to promote responsible pet ownership.

Ms. Vickers would like to work with the Oconee Chamber to promote the Shelter. She recommended changing the department name to "Oconee County Animal Services," which would encompass both the enforcement and shelter functions of the department.

Ms. Vickers is in the process of revising and updating Standard Operating Procedures for the Animal Control Department. When revisions are complete, she will submit to Administrative Officer Benko and the Animal Control Advisory Board and the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Vickers encouraged the Board to call her at any time with questions or to come to the Shelter and view the day-to-day operations.

Public Works – Emil Beshara, Director

Director Emil Beshara thanked the Board for the Director retreat. Mr. Beshara stated that several policy updates are needed for the Public Works Department as follows:

- Cemetery access for burials regarding budget and material limits.
- Placement and maintenance of private road signage where private streets intersect with county roads. Mr. Beshara stated that the signs can be included in the current budget for Public Works and would be a benefit to emergency responders.
- The No Through Truck Ordinance should be updated with a stronger definition of trucks.
- An ordinance is needed to restricting access to the extended Parkway Boulevard as the access points created during construction. With no ordinance, there could be future requests for additional access points. Current access points are well-spaced and can be signalized in the future.

Mr. Beshara recommended abandonment of several roads and would like to proceed with Old Rocky Branch Road and Harden Hill Road. There are other roads to be included for abandonment, which no longer serve a public purpose and maintenance is difficult.

Mr. Beshara recommended that the Board consider two transportation studies: Epps Bridge 316 Corridor Study and a county-wide transportation study. The Epps Bridge study would be an in depth study with a focus on economic development land use. Oconee County could partner with the Georgia Department of Transportation for the county-wide study, which would encompass future needs.

Mr. Beshara discussed the location a firing range for the Sheriff's Office on 7.5 acres on Marshall Store Road. Public Works will handle the grading work and build a soil berm.

Mr. Beshara presented pictures of the Parkway Boulevard Extension project.

Fire/EMA/EMS – Bruce Thaxton, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Bruce Thaxton handed out the Fire Statistics for 2016 and thanked the Board for the Director's Retreat. Chief Thaxton reviewed the Fire Department personnel numbers and statistics from 1997 in comparison to 2017. During his review, he stated that Fire Fighter calls have doubled and medical calls have tripled. He recommended that EMA separate from the Fire Department with a Department Director, and that EMS remain with the Fire Department due to the Fire Fighters and First Responders working together. Chief Thaxton stated that an Assistant Fire Chief is needed while the Fire Chief is absent, to assist with response to calls, manage fire and medical training, and manage fire prevention and public events (160 events during 2016). The Fire Department needs a part-time Fire Inspector to handle fire code violations, and he recommended outsourcing inspections.

Chief Thaxton recommends moving forward with land purchase for Fire Station 8 (Barber Creek) in the Mars Hill/Hodges Mill Road areas. ISO evaluation in 2012 recommended a ladder truck at Fire Station 8, which could be accommodated with a new station along with space for EMS.

Karla Hulse, EMA, reviewed technology updates including server installation in the EOC, updating sound system for meetings and tablets/iPads for two command vehicles.

Senior Center – Merry Howard, Director

Director Merry Howard thanked the Board for the Director's Retreat. She stated that older adults are participating in programs and activities outside their home, which provides a healthier lifestyle. The Senior Stretch activity originally at Parks & Recreation was integrated with the Senior Center and has been a success with approximately 45-50 people attending twice a week. The area used for the program is the dining room, which creates additional wear and tear and may create a safety concern for incoming senior citizens.

The Senior Center's original floor plan has changed from activity-based to include lunch services and activities. The Senior Center's population has grown and Ms. Howard projects the Center will serve approximately 19,000 lunches throughout the year. Ms. Howard recommended having a feasibility study regarding improvements to the Center's interior and also the exterior patio area. One option may be to enclose the patio area, which would allow extra space for recreation and exercise programs. Commissioner Wilkes asked if there is a limit regarding the number of people that can participate at the Senior Center. Ms. Howard stated there is no limit, but capacity for the dining services is at 100. She stated the age groups are 50 to 75 and that groups come in during the afternoon for various activities. The Senior Center has partnered with other organizations to provide outreach and participate in volunteer projects.

Ms. Howard was asked to provide the original Senior Center plans with any changes and examples where CDBG grant money was obtained for an expansion to a Senior Center.

Utility – Wayne Haynie, Director

Director Wayne Haynie thanked the Board for providing the Director's Retreat. Mr. Haynie discussed and previewed FY18 initiatives for the Utility Department. Calendar years 2016 and 2017 have been a period of rebuilding and preparation. Capital projects for FY18 will be in the areas of wastewater, treatment and collections. Calls Creek Plant expansion will be discussed at January's Agenda Setting Meeting of the Board and improvements are needed at the LAS on Rocky Branch Road. The McNutt Creek Sewer Line Project is underway. Rocky Branch/Mars Hill Road Force Main needs replacing and an option may be trenchless construction. Operations in the Utility Department will include new technology in metering water. Infiltration and inflow will continue to be monitored for improvements and reduction. Water storage tanks need replacing and waterline replacements, such as Thrasher Drive and White Subdivision, need consideration.

Mr. Haynie stated that a resolution covering rates and fees is needed and could be included in the budget planning process. He will continue to utilize on-call engineering firms. The LAS will continue with the private sector to manage farm services. He recommended a RFP for fire hydrant inspections, inventory and maintenance.

Mr. Haynie stated that a master plan for water and wastewater strategies will be done building on the 2005 Wastewater Strategies. All planning data will be available to merge into the Comprehensive Plan Update. He recommended the utilization of PVC pipe and stated that grades of PVC can be used for

residential and commercial construction. PVC will be included in specs this year. Another goal is to have backflow prevention on every water connection.

Mr. Haynie would like to provide inspection of water and sewer lines on private property. At this time, there is no inspection from the street to the property owner's home. This would benefit the homeowner in preventing leaks and costly water bills and would benefit the County by conserving water due to leaks. He plans for the Utility Department to transition to "smart" water meters. Technology will allow for water meters to be "read" over the internet and water service can be cut on and off from the office. Mr. Haynie recommended the development of an RFP for an asset management program, which would include mapping of strategic valves.

Mr. Haynie will continue to make improvements in the areas of Customer Service. The capability of online payments for customer water bills will require a server upgrade. He discussed customer insurance for water leaks, which could be added to the customer's water bill for a nominal fee.

Mr. Haynie recommended working with Planning Director B.R. White to include utilities with development permitting. He discussed succession planning for the department employees and public outreach.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, on motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Saxon the meeting was adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

County Clerk

Chairman

Date