

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FINANCING OF \$2,600,000 FOR LAND ACQUISITION FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION
PUBLIC HEARING/CONTINUATION MEETING
NOVEMBER 26, 2007
MINUTES

Chairman Leatherman reconvened the regular meeting as recessed and immediately convened the public hearing on Financing of \$2,600,000 for land acquisition for school construction as noticed. All Board Members, the Deputy Clerk, County Attorney, County Finance Director, members of the news media and interested citizens were present. Chairman Leatherman welcomed everyone, read the notice of public hearing and reminded everyone this hearing is to receive comments on the financing of \$2,600,000 to pay the costs of acquiring land in the vicinity of Macon Middle School to be used for public school purposes. Chairman Leatherman reminded everyone this is a public hearing on this financing issue, not a public session, and comments will be held to the topic.

Norm Roberts began discussion on an organizational chart and Chairman Leatherman reminded him comments were to concern the subject as noticed. Mr. Roberts stated he would urge the Board to publicly announce they made a hasty decision on school construction, to appoint a steering committee of citizens to study school needs and to revise the list of new considerations in order to avoid a tax increase.

Don Swanson questioned what happened to the million dollars in reserve for the North Macon School and the need to borrow \$2.6 million. Mr. Swanson added he thought it would be advisable to wait for the county's audit report and also suggested, with a fund balance of \$4.4 million over twenty-five percent, that the County should just write a check.

Kate Robb declined to speak stating her comments did not apply to this issue.

Charlie Cowie stated a newspaper recently reported the Board is carrying out a movement set by a previous administration and suggested an attitude of look and see if bigger is better. Mr. Cowie suggested looking at a new attitude.

Virginia Wilson registered to speak but declined.

Bob Lavery stated he wished to echo Mr. Swanson's comments and suggested using fund balance to pay for school construction, land purchase and related expenses.

Chairman Leatherman stated he would like to remind everyone that the recent school bond was passing until Highlands precinct came in and noted that seventy percent of the voters did not vote; therefore, only thirty percent of the voters made the decisions. He added that the message the voters sent was not a strong message, as suggested, since only thirty percent spoke. Chairman Leatherman acknowledged he had previously stated he would never again be held hostage to a revenue neutral budget and that he will vote to support schools, fire departments, emergency services, law enforcement and what he sees as the needs of the county. There were no further comments and the public hearing was adjourned.

FINANCING RESOLUTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Simpson and seconded by Commissioner Davis the Board unanimously voted to adopt a resolution accepting the proposal of Branch Banking and Trust Company in connection with an installment financing for the acquisition of land to be used for public school purpose in an amount not to exceed \$2,600,000. (Attachment #1)

Commissioner Davis advised the group that there were legitimate questions about the schools and discussion on agenda item #8 might answer some of those questions.

Discussion on expansion and upgrades to the Senior Services Building and bids on the South Macon Recreation Park were delayed until the December meeting.

OCCUPANCY TAX STUDY COMMITTEE: Discussion on appointments to the Occupancy tax Study Committee continued from the November 13th meeting and a memo from the County Manager with appointments to date as follows: County Commissioners Bob Simpson, Brian McClellan; Town of Highlands, Hank Ross; Town of Franklin, Sissy Patillo upon confirmation of Mayor Joe Collins; awaiting confirmations from Chambers that their representatives will be each director; three area representatives - Highlands to be named, Franklin, Josh Drake and Nantahala Vince West. Highlands Chamber Director Bob Kielytka stated Rick Siegel of 4 ½ Street Inn had agreed to serve as the Highlands Representative. Franklin Chamber Director reported Ron Baker who owns Mountain Retreats in Nantahala had agreed to serve as the Nantahala representative and they were recommending Candy Arvey as the Franklin Representative. Commissioner McClellan questioned the history of the recommended appointments. After discussion, with the note that Mr. West had been recommended but he did not own rental units or pay occupancy tax, Commissioner Simpson made a motion to appoint Ron Baker as the Nantahala representative. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Beale and all favored. Chairman Leatherman stated he and the County Manager would resolve the Franklin area representative later in the week and would get a confirmation on the Town of Franklin appointment from Mayor Collins. Upon motion by Commissioner Simpson and seconded by Commissioner Beale the Board unanimously voted to appoint Mr. Siegel as the Highlands area representative.

BUDGET REVISIONS: The following budget revisions were unanimously approved: revision #47, upon motion by Commissioner Beale and seconded by Commissioner McClellan, appropriating \$5,549 in additional state Criminal Justice funds; revision #48, upon motion by Commissioner Simpson and seconded by Commissioner Davis, appropriating \$63,910 from Contingency for administration and governing board adjustments; revision #49, upon motion by Commissioner Simpson and seconded by Commissioner Beale, increasing DSS-CIP funds of \$6,355 and revision #50, upon motion by Commissioner Simpson and seconded by Commissioner Davis appropriating \$103,000 the one percent employee bonus and benefits. (Note: revisions with corresponding numbers attached.)

RECREATION SECURITY: Sheriff Robbie Holland stated he had met with Recreation Director Seth Adams and the County Manager to discuss the proposed budget for December 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008 for providing security to county recreation areas, the Greenway, etc. as previously directed. He explained the position(s) would be filled by a community service officer with no arrest power rather than a certified deputy but would be driving a marked vehicle and wearing uniforms. The Sheriff explained involuntary commitments were very time consuming for his department and he could also use these employees to assist with transports. He noted the budget would be \$38,378 for the remainder of the fiscal year which would include salary, uniforms, a vehicle and necessary equipment. After a question and answer session Commissioner McClellan requested an accounting of property loss in recreation areas, Greenway, etc. Commissioner Beale stated the Board had asked the Sheriff to present this information and he felt it was an issue of protecting citizens and county property after which Commissioner Davis made a motion to proceed with the proposal as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Beale and passed four to one with Commissioner McClellan opposing.

SCHOOLS CAPITAL PROJECTS: School Superintendent Dan Brigman, Board of Education Chairman Donnie Edwards, Members Susie McCoy and Roberta Swank, school staff and Architect Mike Watson were present to discuss reprioritization of the schools capitol building program. Mr. Brigman stated the FHS gym and restrooms project was almost complete and they were very excited. He stated although the bond referendum failed the schools still have the same needs of which most deal with health and safety issues. Mr., Brigman stated the priorities were to continue with the East Franklin QZAB renovations, with the construction of a 5-6 school and construction of

a North Macon Elementary School on the current Iotla Elementary School site. Issues surrounding the bond referendum, the small community school concept and grading estimates at the 5-6 school were among other items discussed. No action was necessary and the general consensus of the Board of Commissioners was that they were committed to moving ahead.

Adjournment: Being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Sam K. Greenwood, County Manager
Clerk to the Board

Charles D. Leatherman
Board Chairman

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