

**WORKSHOP SESSION
TIFT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2012 (6:00 p.m.)**

The scheduled Workshop Session of the Tift County Board of Commissioners was called to order by Chairman Grady Thompson on Tuesday, November 6, 2012, 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, Commissioners Mike Jones, Donnie Hester, Sherry Miley and Buck Rigdon. Commissioner Melissa Chevers was out of town.

Public Comments: None

Appointments:

1. Dr. Bret Wagenhorst and Sharon Petzel addressed the Board on behalf of the Tifton Bicycling Group. Mr. Wagenhorst stated that it had recently been brought to their attention about the widening of Carpenter Road and do away with the bike trails that are currently in place. He does not want to delay the progress of the widening of the road but does not want to see the bike trail go away. The local group currently has around 30 riders and believes it would be larger if there were safe places to ride. Riders give back to the community in many ways. They ride a lot on both city and county roads and have weekly organized rides and they typically ride Carpenter and Whiddon Mill Road. A pair of riders was on Carpenter Road last week and tuned on Zion Hope Road going east and they were struck from behind by a vehicle. We take this accident seriously and want to work with local government to try and make thing safer. Bicyclists have a much right to use the roads as motorist.

Sharon Petzel, President of the Tiftarea Greenway Association addressed the Board and gave their purpose which is to try and establish spaces for exercising in a safe outdoor environment. Bike is on the rise across the nation for numerous reasons and she gave some statistics on information she received at a recent summit she attended. What they are asking for tonight are speed limit reductions, they hope for paint shares on the roads so that motorist will know they have a right to be there and that in the future that any changes made on roads in the city or the county that cycling and pedestrian is considered. Maybe some additional signage could be added. The current bike rout has not been properly maintained. The County Manager advised that the Carpenter Road project began around 2002 and in 2006 a decision was made by both City and County Official to eliminate the bike path along Carpenter Road due to the cost of the right of way acquisition and the Boards was presented with that written documentation. We are now 75% in to the way of property acquisition now for the widening. The ability to resign that road at this point is not feasible but we can take all of this into consideration in the future and can work on the maintenance of the current bike trails.

Public Hearings: None

Items to be discussed for Regular Session on November 12, 2012:

A. Preliminary Plat approval for MegHan Subdivision located on River Run Road:

B. Surplus Vehicles: Jason Jordan advised the Board that the Sheriff's Department has turned over nine (9) cars that are now long in service which consists of Ford Crown Vic's and one Dodge Charger. The Road Department also has the old low boy truck that is no longer in service. Staff recommends the Board declare this vehicles surplus and allow staff to place them on Gov.Deals which is our standard procedure of disposing of surplus items.

C. Approval of New Public Works Facility: Jason Jordan advised the Board that plans are complete for the new Public Works Facility and are ready for the Board's approval so that the project can go out for bids. The plans are available for the Board's review after the meeting and then will be in the Clerk's office for your review and he will answer questions.

D. Amendment to Tift County's Retirement Plan: Mike Walker, Human Resource Director advised the Board that we have received notification from GEBCorp that Tift County will be required to adopt new Plan Documents in order to keep our retirement plan in IRS compliance. A limited power of attorney will also need to be approved giving ACCG permission to file the Plan on behalf of Tift County. This is standard procedure from time to time as IRS rules and regulations change to keep the retirement plan in compliance.

E. Appointments to the Department of Family and Children Services Board: The County Clerk advised the Board that we have received notification that two long time Board members have resigned. H. C. Medford and Perry McCranie, Jr. both have tendered their resignations from this Board and will need to be replaced. Recommendation from the Department of Family and Children Services Board is for the Commissioner's consideration to appoint Rodney Griffin and Hal Baxley to serve a five year term. Their Board Member applications are enclosed for review.

F. Reappointment to the South Georgia Community Service Board: the County Clerk advised the Board

that we have received a letter from the South Georgia Community Service Board that the term of Liz Carson Keith is about to expire and recommends that the Commission reappoint her to serve another three year term. She has agreed to continue servicing on this Board.

G. Appointment to the Board of Assessors: The County Clerk advised that we have received notification that Wade Clark's appointment to the Board of Assessors will expire January 2013. Mr. Clark is willing to continue serving in this position and has the mandated educational and training classes required. The Board of Assessors and the staff of the Assessor's office support the reappointment of Wade Clark for another six year term.

H. Appointments and reappointments to the Human Resources Appeals Board: The County Clerk advised the per the Tift County Personnel Policy the Board must appoint a Board to hear any appeals dealing with adverse action taken against an employee by the County. The five panel Board is appointed to three year terms and each term is about to or has expired. Two members no longer are available to serve on that Board which leaves two seats open and three have agreed to continue serving. Two people have been contacted to fill the open seats and they have agreed to serve if appointed. They are Dr. Homer Day and Paula Avila. The three up for reappointment are Steve Hyman, Ellen Eaton and Kevin Dobard.

I. Hospital Bonds: The Hospital Authority plans to issue approximately \$89 million of revenue anticipation certificates. The Hospital Authority would like for the Board of Commissioners to back the bonds allowing for a much lower interest rate than would be available absent the County's support. The County already has a 7 mil pledge for around \$60 M and it is the Hospital's plan to make an addition to those bonds of around \$30M.

Bill Richardson addressed the Board and gave the following summary:

Tift Regional Medical Center plans to issue tax-exempt bonds for approximately \$88 M in order to refinance existing debt (which the county has previously agreed to back), and add an additional \$30 M for new projects

Should Tift County agree to continue the 7 mil pledge and the additional \$30 M is added it will enhance Tift Regional's credit rating and have a \$2.5 to \$6.0 M savings in debt service over the life of the issue. This would enhance Tift Regional's credit rating to the best rating that a hospital can receive. It would be an "A+" rating which is the best one can get given the County continues with the pledging of the 7 mils.

Tift Regional will pay about 3.4% on the new debt and therefore can invest internal reserves and achieve a return of 5-7% per year or \$1.8 to \$3.5M per year over and above the interest cost of in the new debt

Tift Regional Medical Center is a regional facility with an annual economic impact of \$415 M, employees over 2,000 staff members which includes 70 physicians and results in almost 5,600 jobs in the region

Tift Regional Medical Center has sufficient internal reserves for the expenditures anticipated but is the best business decision to invest the funds at a projected rate greater than we will pay on the debt

Several members of the Hospital Authority Board were present at this meeting along with several staff members of the hospital including Mr. Crum who is the Finance Officer for the Hospital as well as Karen Summerlin who is their legal counsel. Mr. Richardson stated that they all respectfully request the Board's consideration of their request to back the bonds.

Commissioner Rigdon gave some brief history of the Tift County Board of Commissioner's commitment to the Hospital of back bonds as early as the 1976 with documents on site, earlier than that documents are stored off sight and would have been difficult to receive prior to this meeting however the latest being in 2002 which was the backing of the current \$60 M. Mr. Richardson also advised the Board that they have a listing of some 20 to 25 counties in the state of Georgia that back bonds for their hospitals so this is a practice that is not unique to Tift County and we are not asking for something that is not otherwise done around the state.

Mr. Richardson also itemized the purpose to the Bond Issue 2012 which amounted to the \$88M and also itemized the what the expenditure of the new money would entail with the three most expensive being a lab and conference space addition, linear accelerator and information technology for meaningful use.

Commissioner Hester asked the question, because two figures had been quoted, \$88 or \$89 and he wanted to know which figure they were asking for. Mr. Crum, the Hospital's Finance Officer addressed the questions stating that the number is variable. They believe that the actual total issue amount is going to be in the lower \$80 M dollar range with the \$89 figure being the absolute maximum amount.

Commissioner Miley asked when the bonds mature and it will was explained that they were 30 year bonds. She asked that if the County backed these bonds, how will it affect the County's debt, and will it affect the County's borrowing power should we have a disaster in the County. The County Finance Director, Leigh Jordan stated that it would affect our ability to borrow money because by law 10% of the County's digest is our borrowing limit. If a disaster happens we would not be able to go out and borrow money because we would have exceeded that 10%. The County Manager stated that this is a work session and he believes there could be some meeting set up with all parties involved to get answers all the questions and concerns that have been raised tonight. The County Manager said he understands the Commissioner's concerns, "every time we underwrite debt, we, for a lack of a better work, are co-signing on a loan". Commissioner Jones inquired as to whether or not there could be an internal agreement where the Hospital would say that their internal reserves

would not go below a certain threshold as to say they would be actually backing the bonds yourselves. That would probably be a Bond Counsel question and the answer can be found prior to the Monday night meeting. All parties agreed to have meetings prior to the voting meeting on Monday night.

John Prince, Chairman of the Hospital Authority addressed the Board stating that the Hospital Authority Board had voted unanimously to ask the County to back the bonds. He gave some statements as to the financial stability of the Hospital, that the hospital authority had never asked for mills to be pledged for indigent care and that only 32 cents of every dollar charged by the hospital was collected, the 68% of charges being written off. He said the hospital had \$400 million in collateral to protect the county's pledge of \$6.3 million and stated that the land values had increased. He believes the Hospital is an economic engine for Tift County.

J. Resolution naming Tift County after Henry Harding Tift instead of Nelson Tift: This item was tabled from the previous meeting. Suggestion had been made to hear from family member to make sure that this was their wishes. The County received a letter from Roy Rankin who is a grandson of the founder of Tift County respectively requesting that Tift County pass the Resolution to rename the County after Henry Harding Tift. Other family members had given some Commissioners verbal wishes to have the name changed. The Resolution was available for the Board to review.

Executive Session: Motion was made by Commissioner Jones to go into Executive Session for a legal matter, seconded by Commissioner Rigdon. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Setters to close Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner Miley. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Thompson adjourned the meeting.

Chairman Grady Thompson, District 7

Vice Chairman Robert Setters, District 3

Commissioner Donnie Hester, District 1

_____absent _____
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 11/6/2012