

COFFEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2020
9:30 O'CLOCK A.M.
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM

Coffee County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, August 3, 2020, at 9:30 o'clock a.m. with the following present: Chairman Johnny Wayne Jowers, Vice-Chairman Oscar Paulk, Commissioners Jimmy Kitchens and AJ Dovers. Also present were County Attorney Tony Rowell, County Administrator Wesley Vickers, and County Clerk Tracie Vickers. Commissioner Ted O'Steen was absent.

Chairman Jowers called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Chairman Jowers asked Steve Carver to give the invocation. Everyone participated in the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Chairman Jowers announced the Legislative Leadership Conference will be held on September 30th through October 2nd at Jekyll Island, Georgia. If you would like to attend, please see the County Clerk.

There will be a pre-bid meeting held on August 4th at 10:00 a.m. for the renovation of the Coffee County Administration Annex Building. It will be held at the Project site located at 101 North Peterson Avenue.

Chairman Jowers asked everyone to please remember the Harry Cohen family.

Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the pre-meeting work session and the regular meeting held on July 6, 2020 and the Executive Session held on July 6, 2020. Commissioner Paulk made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Dovers seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Kitchens made a motion to approve the agenda with the deletion of Item # 8. Commissioner Dovers seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to enter a public hearing requested by CSX to consider the permanent closure of a rail crossing known as Salem Church Road Crossing. Commissioner Dovers made a motion to enter a public hearing. Commissioner Paulk seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed. Mr. Douglas Spitznagel, Engineering Consultant with ARCADIS, an Engineering firm for CSX, Mr. Spitznagel stated that CSX is requesting permanent closure of this railroad crossing. There have been 5 reported incidents since June 7, 2016 including one fatality. There was new signal equipment installed on Barrington Road crossing. Mr. Spitznagel stated CSX made an offer January 17, 2020 of \$15,000.00 to the County and the Department of Transportation also offered \$7,500.00 for closing the crossing. The \$15,000.00 offer has no strings attached to the funding. This offer is good until August 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Mr. Steve Stewart, Attorney for CSX, stated he is here for public safety reasons. Mr. Stewart stated Citizens are not paying attention, trains can be going up to 60 mph. It takes

time for trains to slow down. There was a recommendation in the 1990's to close railroad crossings that was not necessary. The Georgia General Assembly has passed a new procedure when public safety overrides convenience to the public. Mr. Stewart reviewed the enclosed Highway-Rail Crossing Safety Evaluation Form. If the evaluation is 5.0 or over it should be closed. This evaluation form shows a total of 10.3 as of January 2020. Mr. Stewart gave the Commission a GSP crash report of an incident at this crossing. If the Commission does not approve the request from CSX to close this rail crossing, CSX will appeal and at that time the offer will be off the table. There are two alternatives, Chaney Road Crossing and Barrington Crossing. Commissioner Kitchens asked for clarification about Mr. Spitznagal stating there was 5 accidents and one fatality since 2016 and you stated there is one accident. Mr. Spitznagal was referencing trucks that got hung up on the crossing, but a train was not coming. Chairman Jowers asked if that was taken into consideration for the equation. Mr. Stewart stated it was not. He said only the one that got hung up on the track and the train did hit it. Mr. Emory Smith, MJ McClelland Road, gave the Commission photographs and reviewed the photographs with them. Mr. Smith stated this crossing has been there approximately 45 years. There has been one accident but no fatalities. Chaney crossing can be unpassable when it rains. Closing this crossing would damage attendance and growth for Salem Church. Mr. Smith asked the Commission to vote no to closing this rail crossing. Chairman Jowers stated to Mr. Stewart that CSX has been aware the church had an issue with closing this crossing. Did CSX contact the Salem Church to try to resolve this? Mr. Stewart stated he did not believe they did. Chairman Jowers stated there are two other ways to get to the Church, will CSX be willing to help with paving to the other crossings? County Administrator Vickers stated he believes a previous estimate for paving to the other crossing was approximately \$100,000.00. Attorney Rowell stated it would be approximately 1700 feet to Salem Church. Attorney Stewart stated Pecan Grove Lane is part of the County Road System. Attorney Rowell stated that in his experience with CSX they have not had any objection in the past with working with the County concerning a County road, but the County would need something in writing to confirm this. Mr. Edlin Regis, Georgia Department of Transportation Railroad Safety Program Assistant, stated the Georgia DOT will also have an independent contractor to look at this crossing. Section 130 allows Federal funds to be used if the Commission closes the crossing. Georgia DOT may be able to help contribute the funds to pave an alternate route. Commissioner Kitchens stated he understands the CSX side of this issue and also the side of the Church. CSX needs to work with the County more, because a lot of times the railroad creates a problem. Closure of the crossing could be considered if there is a different route and give them as good of an access as they have now. Chairman Jowers stated there needs to be compromise on both sides. The Commission has had a dialogue but cannot come to a decision today. Mr. Emory Smith stated they need signage and also a road paved with good access when it rains. Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Dovers made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Paulk seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed. Attorney Rowell stated regarding the railroad application, if the decision is made to not close this crossing, the Statute allows CSX to appeal under Table 9. The Commission will make a decision concerning the crossing at an upcoming meeting.

County Administrator Vickers stated the County has received (3) bids for sealing and Striping the parking lot at the Law Enforcement Center. The Bids received were:

M & M Striping –\$19,475.00

Corey Manac – \$21,285.00

Burke Paving Company, Inc. - \$22,500.00

Mr. Vickers stated this project will be paid out of TIA funds. Mr. Vickers recommends the low bid of M & M Striping. Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve or reject the bid for sealing and striping the parking lot at the Law Enforcement Center. Commissioner Kitchens made a motion to approve the low bid for M & M Striping of \$19,475.00. Commissioner Dovers seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

Attorney Rowell stated as discussed in the work session, the law provides a mechanism for appointing a local government agent for abandoned mobile homes. Today, we have a Resolution that allows the Building Inspector to act as the government agent for the abandoned mobile home act to effectuate change in our Community. Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve or reject the Resolution to appoint a local Government Agent for an Abandoned Mobile Home Act. Commissioner Dovers made a motion to approve this Resolution. Commissioner Paulk seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

County Administrator Vickers stated he has been in discussion with the USDA representative. The County previously had (2) applications that has now been combined into one grant. The grant is to purchase (70) tasers. The grant is \$29,200.00. The contribution required by the County is \$54,380.00. The County has received the Letter of Conditions to purchase (70) tasers through a USDA grant. The Chairman needs permission to sign any related documents necessary relating to this grant. Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve or reject the letter of conditions to purchase (70) Axon tasers through a USDA grant and give the Chairman permission to sign any related documents necessary relating to this grant. Commissioner Kitchens made a motion to approve this Letter of Conditions. Commissioner Dovers seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

County Administrator Vickers stated the County has the Resolution to purchase (70) tasers through the USDA grant which is the same as the Letter of Conditions. Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve or reject the Resolution to purchase (70) Axon tasers through a USDA grant. Commissioner Dovers made a motion to approve the Resolution. Commissioner Kitchens seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

County Administrator Vickers stated the Chairman received notification last week the County is eligible to receive funds in excess of \$400,000.00 with a possibility of receiving over one million dollars under the CARES act. Mr. Vickers anticipates training from the State of Georgia this week on how to manage this grant. Due to the deadline to apply for this grant, the Chairman signed this required paperwork last week. Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to approve or reject the ratification of the CARES agreement entered into between Coffee County and the State of Georgia. Commissioner Kitchens made a motion to approve the ratification of the agreement. Commissioner Paulk seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

Chairman Jowers asked for any comments from the audience. There were no comments from the audience.

Chairman Jowers asked for a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting. Commissioner Dovers made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 10:30 a.m. o'clock. Commissioner Paulk seconded the motion. All Commissioners unanimously agreed.

County Clerk

Chairman