

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday, February 7, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., in the Courtroom at the Brooks County Courthouse, located at 100 East Screven Street, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Ms. Myra Exum; Mr. Willie Cody; and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Mrs. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; Mr. Jason Kemp, County Attorney; and various residents.

Chairman called the Public Hearing to order.

Public Hearing – Sign-In Sheet Provided

Brian Devine – Special Exception – Verizon Cell Tower – Ms. Sherry Davidson, SGRC, Local Government Services Director, presented the Petition by Brian Devine on behalf of Verizon Wireless for a Special Exception for a 195-foot-tall monopole 4G cell tower. The property is located in east Brooks County on the west side of Highway 133, across from Dugong Road. The property is within the Highway Commercial zoning district of unincorporated Brooks County, being more specifically described as Brooks County Map No. 146, Parcel No. 00119. Ms. Davidson advised that the request is consistent with the Brooks County Zoning Ordinance for a special exception; and will serve an important need for telecommunications in the coverage area. Brooks County Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the request during the meeting on January 25, 2022. SGRC Staff recommends approval of Application No. 22-01 by Brian Devine on behalf of Verizon Wireless for a Special Exception for a 195-foot-tall monopole 4G cell tower.

Mr. Brian Devine was the only one present to speak for or against the Special Exception request. Mr. Devine stated the cell tower is owned by Verizon Wireless; it is a capacity site to better serve customers. The site will have three additional carriers and supports local emergency services.

Chairman closed the Public Hearing at 5:10 p.m. to go into the regular meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Prayer & Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman called the Regular Meeting to order; and asked Mr. Jason Kemp to lead all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

Chairman asked for a motion to amend the agenda. On the motion by Mr. Cody, seconded by Mr. Maxwell, the Board approved to amend the agenda for February 7, 2022 to add Perdue Heights under Item #5A, Consent Agenda. Vote was unanimous.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion by Mr. Cody, seconded by Ms. Exum, the Board unanimously approved/accepted the minutes of the following meetings:

- Special Called/Executive/Work Session December 28, 2021
- Regular Monthly Meeting January 3, 2022
- Special Called/Executive Session January 10, 2022
- Special Called Meeting January 18, 2022
- Special Called Meeting/Work Session January 25, 2022

3. INVITED GUESTS

A. P. D. Duncan – Administration invited Mr. P. D. Duncan for an appreciation presentation. The Board presented Mr. Duncan with a flag; and thanked him in appreciation of his service on Veterans Day, cooperating flags around the Courthouse and for all he does. Group pictures were taken with Mr. Duncan and the Board.

Mr. Duncan thanked the Board and stated he hopes the Board will permit him to do again this year. His goal this year is to have 200 flags placed around the Courthouse; last year it was 113. Applications are being accepted and should be submitted before May 10, 2022. The flags will be up by Memorial Day; and removed after the 4th of July.

B. Buddy Holwell – Workers’ Compensation Renewal – Administration invited Mr. Holwell to appear to update the Board on the renewal of Workers’ Compensation Insurance. Mr. Holwell stated losses are based on the prior three to four years because it takes awhile to progress through. In the past Brooks County has had extremely high rates, causing high premiums during Ms. McKinney’s first year as Administrator. But due to her being watchful of employees and implementing safety measures, the rate is the best in the past two years.

C. S. C. Barker – Information Update – Progress Report – Brooks County New Ag Building – Mr. Kevin Barker appeared to update the Board on the progress of the New Ag Building. The overall project completion percentage is 94%. Paving should be complete by the end of the week; and landscaping and irrigation by Monday. Sidewalks have been installed; and grading has been completed. Alarm system is installed; but not brought on-line. Appliances are trickling in, refrigerators are in and dishwashers anticipated this week. The Amphitheatre is in limbo, no information, and no date of arrival, maybe by Wednesday. A walk-thru with the Architect and Administrator is scheduled for February 16, 2022. The change orders from USDA were just approved last week; they were given the price in November 2021.

County Administrator commented on the things that have been working against us such as the weather, COVID -19 again and again put challenges on supply and demand and labor. Ms. McKinney emphasized that the County chose to repurpose the land because we did not want to purchase property. The Board has been responsible and fiduciary in negotiating through the beautification of build and good repurposing of taxpayers’ money. The revenue for Brooks County will increase with the new lease with USDA by generating \$110,000.00 annually versus \$6,000.00 annually.

4. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES & DEPARTMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. Wayne Waldron – Chief Appraiser – Board of Tax Assessors – Mr. Waldron provided a copy of the 2022 Assessment Report prepared by Brooks County Assessor's Office. The report is intended to show the need for revaluation of different classes of property. Mr. Waldron stated the values are higher and need adjustments which will result in property owners calling Commissioners. The Assessor's Office is charged with setting assessed values for tax purposes at 40% of the actual market value. All available data indicates an urgent need for a substantial inflationary adjustment to residential property values. The statistics verify that the value of existing residential properties is much higher as of January 1, 2022, than the same properties on January 1, 2021. It is imperative that a complete revaluation of residential properties be performed and implemented for 2022. Like residential properties, the need for a revaluation of agricultural properties is clear and necessary. Why re-assessment? The Board is required to reevaluate property to stay in line with the State Statute or it could cost the County money. Therefore, the value is raised to make sure everyone is at market value.

B. Michasia Dowdy – Extension Office – Ms. Dowdy assumed the position of Ms. Stephanie Hollifield and appeared to update the Board on the Extension Office. She informed the Board that they have three positions open and are going full force. They continue to have the 4-H Archery Team and the Sportsman raffle, meeting with Farmers and going out in the field. She emphasized that nothing stopped due to COVID-19.

C. Fire Chief Catlett – Brooks County Fire Department – Chief Catlett updated the Board on the Fire Department progress and activities.

- Two Fire Fighters have completed Fire Fighter 2 training and two are enrolled in class in Lowndes County. By March, all should be certified.
- GCIC audit went well; now Brooks County is registered.
- The new trucks have been delayed one week.
- The Department will attend the Brooks County High School Career Day on February 24, 2022.
- An area of concern: Received a Proposed Consent Order from EPD for Jackson Road Station of violation of the Georgia Underground Storage Tank Act and Georgia Rules for Underground Storage Tank Management. Chief Catlett stated he is working with EPD to get registered. Former Fire Chief failed to properly register all underground storage tanks at the subject location by the annual deadline. EPD offered a Consent Order (Order) to resolve this violation and settle the matter. The payment of the negotiated settlement amount of \$2,000.00 shall be submitted no later than thirty (30) days from the execution date of the Order. Registration had not been done since 2018.

D. Jim Owens – Road Department – Updated the Board on Road Department activities/projects:

- JMAR Loop – met with Water Company, looked at the water system, and concurred will go northside to tie all major arteries. It is their responsibility to proof the water.

- There is a 6 in. water main, and 1 inch poly for every other house can have access.
- The Water Company Representative will take it back to his group; and may do entire project.
- Hickory Head Road – Department working on it, the road is torn up at Thompson Road and Livingston Road. Currently barricades are up.
- Same for Patrick Road, has called companies for material cost.
- Side Arm is behind Gateway Baptist Church and moving to Hodges Road.
- Have employees out due to COVID-19, are slack on personnel.
- Department was out Saturday assisting residents with driveways.
- Will check with Scruggs as to why there are no white lines on edge of Dixie Road since it was recently paved.
- Discussed putting something in place to alert traffic they need to stop on Grooverville Road coming into Dixie Road. Discussed possibility of rumble strips.

E. Stephanie Williams – Development Authority – Informed the Board of the countywide meeting with Brooks County and municipalities scheduled for March 4, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at Wiregrass Technical College in Brooks Hall. The meeting will include discussion of where want to see Brooks County grow and strategic a development plan. There will be videography and the press will be present.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Perdue Heights Subdivision – Mr. Cody and Mr. Maxwell requested this item be added to the agenda for discussion. Mr. Maxwell stated Perdue Heights is in bad condition, it has not been maintained and the ditches are grown up. Mr. Maxwell recommended Mr. Owens and Mr. Randy Becton of R & G Maintenance, contracted with the County for right of way mowing, go out and look. The infrastructure is 15 to 20 years old, and the right of way has gotten out of hand. Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Cody emphasized how serious this project is and would like for R & G to provide an estimate of cost as soon as possible. Mr. Becton was asked how long the project would take; he responded at least 10 days; it is rough cutting. Administrator inquired if it is the pleasure of the Board to bid the project out and recommended the funding will come from the Road Department salary budget line item if the Board wants to move on. Mr. Maxwell stated there is no time to advertise for bids, this is critical if we have the funds. County Attorney, Mr. Jason Kemp, stated to the Board that Administrator has legal authorization to approve up to \$20,000.00 if Administrator deems this is the best interest without a bid and waive the three-bid requirement; the Board need not take any action. Mr. Maxwell made the motion authorizing Administrator to proceed with bid up to \$20,000.00, negotiate with R & G to see what can do; and bring back to the Board if the bid exceeds Administrator's authority, Mr. Cody seconded.

Chairman called for discussion. Mr. Larko commented on restricting to one vendor, should look how spending, explore more opportunities; and be responsible. Mr. Cody commented that R & G is already contracted with Brooks County. Chairman called for the vote. Ms. Exum and Mr. Larko opposed. Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Cody, and Chairman voted yes. Vote was 3 to 2.

The motion was made by Mr. Maxwell to approve appropriating funds from the salary line item of the Road Department budget, Mr. Cody seconded. Vote was unanimous.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A. Wrecker Service Agreement – County Administrator presented a draft of the proposed Brooks County 911/Dispatch Wrecker Rotation Policy and Procedures for Board review. After discussion, Ms. Exum made the motion to lay the Agreement on the table for 30 days to be reviewed by Sherry Davidson, SGRC, LaToya Hampton, 911/EMA Director, and legal counsel, Mr. Larko seconded. Vote was unanimous.

B. Surplus List – Administrator provided a list of surplus equipment from Chief Catlett, Brooks County Fire Department, to be considered surplus. Ms. McKinney will concur with the Sheriff regarding down vehicles in his department and provide a list. Mr. Larko made the motion to accept the list of equipment from the Fire Department declared as surplus, Ms. Exum seconded.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Brian Devine – Special Exception – Verizon Wireless Cell Tower – Ms. Exum made the motion to approve Application No. 22-01 for a Special Exception request from Brian Devine on behalf of Verizon Wireless for a Special Exception for a 195-foot-tall monopole 4G cell tower located in east Brooks County on the west side of Highway 133, across from Dugong Road; Mr. Cody seconded. Vote was unanimous.

B. Chief Magistrate – David Crosby – Request/Approval of Supplemental Pay Chief Magistrate, David Crosby, requested supplemental pay of \$200.00 for personal vehicle use. Per the ACCG Salary Guide, only the Board can authorize the supplemental pay which is based on population and for Brooks County it is \$200.00. Ms. Exum commented this funding is not budgeted for this fiscal year. After discussion, Mr. Larko motioned to approve the supplemental pay of \$200.00 for Chief Magistrate in the fiscal year budget beginning July 1, 2022, Ms. Exum seconded. Vote was unanimous.

C. Brooks County Planning Commission – Board Vacancy District 4 – Administration received notification from Sherry Davidson, SGRC, Local Government Services Director, of a vacancy on the Planning Commission Board in District 4. But the vacancy is for District 2. The Board table this issue until the March regular meeting on the motion by Ms. Exum and seconded by Mr. Cody. Vote was unanimous.

D. Tax Assessors Board Appointment – During the October 4, 2021 regular meeting, Wayne Waldron, Chief Appraiser, explained to the Board that Dr. Gerald Golden will serve on the Board until a certified replacement is found. The Board proceeded with accepting/reviewing applications/resumes for the appointment. One resume was submitted for consideration by Mr. Brewer Bentley. On the motion by Ms. Exum, seconded by Mr. Larko, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Mr. Brewer Bentley to serve on the Tax Assessors Board for the remaining term of Dr. Gerald Golden, which expires December 31, 2024.

E. Rumble Strips – Magnolia Church Road – Project Cost – Quotes – During the work session for the agenda review on January 25, 2022, the Board requested Mr. Owens provide quotes for estimated cost to install rumble strips on Magnolia Church Road intersecting at Tallokas Road. He submitted the cost for material to install rumble strips from: 1) Safety Products, Inc., which listed the cost of \$929.70 each, but did not list how many strips will be needed; and 2) Flint Trading, Inc. listed cost for PreMark In-Lane Rumble Bars Kit listing cost per pack for different sizes. Mr. Owens noted that an attempt to contact Peek Paving was made but no response was received. Recognizing this would not suffice, County Administrator took the necessary time out of her schedule to make inquiries for the request with local companies and provided the following information: 1) Reames & Son submitted a quote for installing the rumble strips, as asphalt, with GDOT specifications, in the amount of \$6,250.00. 2) Peek Pavement Marking, LLC submitted quote to install Thermoplastic Rumble Strips, do not install asphalt rumble strips, a 20 ft. section is approximately \$750.00 and a set of three (3) will cost \$2,250, with GDOT specifications.

Board discussed looking at other roads in the County that may need rumble strips, and tabling until a list is provided. Mr. Larko asked the Board to act on installing rumble strips from the quotes on Magnolia Church Road. The Board gave Administrator authority to proceed with installing rumble strips, from the quotes, on Magnolia Church Road intersecting at Tallokas Road, get with GDOT for specifications. Administrator has authority to approve up to \$20,000.00.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. Mary Henley – Road Grading Upkeep of Rogers Lane – Administration received an agenda request to address the issue of road grading on Rogers Lane. Ms. Henley expressed her concerns of water constantly on Rogers Lane since the late 80s and 90s; and the process of grading the road. Ms. Henley provided pictures for Board review of the road condition. When it rains, she has problems getting in and out. She emphasized her concerns and her trust in the Board to make corrections to the road.

B. Fannie M. Jackson Gibbs – Complaint – Ms. Gibbs requested to appear to express her concerns of her organization, The Macedonia Community Foundation, Inc., to restore and preserve heritage for cemeteries, churches, ancient homes, businesses, and other notable landmarks, for which the Foundation was formed. She provided a letter addressed to Chairman Folsom. She stated that the Foundation is passionate about their history, and they have previously reached out for support and funding but not received an official response. They feel it was time to include more African and Native history in the archives.

C. Morris Hines – Roads – Mr. Hines was not present.

D. County Administrator Updates – County Administrator updated the Board on the following:

Notification – GDOT – Project SR 122 at SR 333 – PI #0016114 – Elliptical Roundabout - Administrator informed the Board of notification received from GDOT that they are in the beginning stages of project development of this proposed transportation project. GDOT is attempting to identify historic properties already listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and any properties not already listed that would be considered eligible for listing within the geographic area of the proposed project. A Project Location Map is attached.

Gas Tank Purchase – The Board approved the purchase of a gas tank for the Road Department with the clarification that proper spill out was already in place. Ms. McKinney and Mr. Jason Hylton went to Road Department to confirm the proper spill was in place; but it is not. Therefore, the containment will need to be added to the cost; the tank will sit until it is added. County attorney is assisting Administrator with the process.

E. Commissioners Notes/Comments

- **Lee Larko (District 1)** – Thanked everyone for attending.
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)** – Thanked everyone for attending.
- **Willie Cody (District 3)** – No comment.
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – Thanks to everyone for attending.
- **James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)** – No comment.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION – PERSONNEL

On the motion by Ms. Exum, seconded by Mr. Cody, the Board closed regular meeting to go into executive session at 7:21 p.m.

No action was taken. Ms. Exum made the motion to go out of executive session and return to the regular meeting at 8:03 p.m., Mr. Cody seconded.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Exum made the motion to adjourn regular meeting at 8:04 p.m.; Mr. Cody seconded.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman
Mrs. Jessica J. McKinney, County Administrator
Ms. Patricia A. Williams, Clerk