

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday, August 7, 2023, 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; Ms. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator, Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; Mr. James Burchett, County Attorney; and various residents.

1. PUBLIC HEARING – NONE

2. CALL TO ORDER - Chairman called the regular meeting to order.

Prayer & Pledge of Allegiance – Commissioner Cody led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion by Mr. Cody, seconded by Mrs. Exum, the Board unanimously approved the following minutes:

A. Regular Monthly Meeting	July 11, 2023
B. Special Called/Work Session	July 25, 2023
C. Joint Meeting/Workshop	July 31, 2023

Chairman asked for a motion to amend the agenda to change the monthly meeting date for September due to the Labor Day Holiday being the first Monday, September 4th. On the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko, the Board unanimously amended the agenda to add under Consent Agenda, Item A; Set Meeting Date for September.

4. INVITED GUESTS – (5 MINUTES) - NONE

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

A. Brooks County Fire Department – Chief Weeks – Provided the report for July 2023 Fire Department and activities:

- Responded to 66 calls for service, 22 weather related calls, 10 MVA, 1 extrication, 11 medical, 10 canceled or no incident found, 1 structure fire, 1 vehicle fire, 3 power lines down, 4 fire/smoke alarms and 2 miscellaneous.
- Training included hose management, reading smoke, ground ladders, and interior fire attack.
- Started the process of having an enclosed engine by built at Station 2 on Brookfield Drive.
- Hired employee to fill vacant position, he is already NPQ Firefighter 2 and has a Class F driver's license.

- **Update:** Chief Yates, Morven Police, came by the station on July 31, 2023 to advise they will not be ready to separate until September 1, 2023.

B. Brooks County Road Depart – Amy Hart – Provided report for July 2023:

- Graded and ditched 221 roads.
- Installed and repaired 9 culverts and driveways.
- Cleaned out 11 pipes and outfalls.
- Received 39 tree calls and 20 Beaver dams.
- Used 86 bags of pothole mix for potholes.
- 29 loads of rock, clay, and sand.
- Mowed and side armed 15 roads.
- Rebuilt Coleman Road that had a huge wash out, it looks good.
- Stated the Road Department is short-handed, but trying to do the best we can.
- Mr. Cody stated there is sand on roads and asked why and requested to look at from Price Road to Dry Lake Road.

C. Brooks County Elections Department – Brooks County Elections Supervisor, Ms. LaShell DeShazor, provided report for July 2023:

- Elections is preparing for a special election. Attended a conference before the special election preparation started for the re-introduction to GARVIS, the new election maintenance system for all of Georgia. It replaces the previous ElectionNet maintenance system.
- Attended the annual Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials (GAVREO) conference.
- In an effort to make sure the elections office is in the best condition as possible, we have been doing a few remodeling projects. We believe the changes will help us become a more efficient elections office.
- In the upcoming months, the office has scheduled a visit from the Secretary of State office to do a warranty check of all our election equipment. During this time, the office will be partially closed to the public; but will still be able to answer all questions and attend to most matters via email or phone.
- Qualifying for the upcoming election on November 7, 2023, will begin on August 21, 2023, and end on August 25, 2023.

D. Brooks County Family Connection – Drug Free Communities Grant – Erin Blanton

Ms. Erin Blanton, Project Coordinator, Drug Free Communities Grant, provided a copy of the 2022 Brooks County Family Connection Annual Report. Brooks County Family Connection strategy one works to develop programs to support school readiness and improve literacy. Strategy two they will work to develop and streamline programs and services for families in Brooks County to decrease youth substance use.

The Drug Free Communities Grant is a federal grant program that provides funding to community-based coalitions that organize to prevent youth substance use. The grant is provided through the White House Office of National Durg Control Policy, a cabinet-level division of the Executive Office of the President. The grant was formed based on

data from the 2014 Georgia Student Health Survey, focusing on three substances: alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.

E. Brooks County Tax Commissioner – Becky Rothrock – Tax Commissioner, Mrs. Becky Rothrock, presented the millage rate numbers: incorporated 14.250 and unincorporated 13.484. If the Board wants to remain under the Rollback and not increase taxes, the beginning millage would be 16.0250, which would be \$255,000 less than last year (2022). If the millage rate is over 16.0250, will have to have three public hearings. The Board need to stay under the Rollback or be at the Rollback.

Administrator explained she and the Auditor, Mr. Gary Zeigler, worked the numbers to bring to zero, and provided a worksheet. Without knowing the numbers, they looked at bring the tax increase to zero, there will be no tax increase. They looked at reducing the millage for incorporated and unincorporated and being under the Rollback will reduce income by \$579,883.00. Administrator stated she worked the operational budget and when working the operational budget and everything to be funded and all the line items requested with exception of two capital items, did not put capital for Jail and Fire Department because they are capital, did not put in operational budget. That left an excess of roughly \$550,000.00. To get at or under the Rollback, a mill would generate \$579,883.000, having the excess of \$550,000 we could be easily at or under the Rollback. According to Ms. McKinney and Gary Zeigler calculations, we are sitting at 12.923 for unincorporated, and the Rollback would be 13.484. Rollback for incorporated 14.250 and calculated sitting at 14.6909, roughly .44 over. There is room in the \$500,000.00 surplus to decrease further and be at or under the Rollback. The decision now is whether the Board wants to deplete the surplus or leave as balance remaining to put in a capital line-item expenditure. There is a \$200,000.00 contingency built into the Governing Body budget.

Board discussed the Jail and CID buildings and the need to do something. Discussed how much want to put into the jail, the approximate cost for improvements is \$300,000.00; and it maybe better to look at a new jail.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Set Meeting Date for September - Mr. Maxwell made the motion to set the monthly meeting date for September from September 4th to September 11, 2023 at the same time 5:00 pm and at the Courthouse, Mr. Larko seconded.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. FY2023-2024 BUDGET – Administrator McKinney prepared a line-item budget as requested by Commissioner Exum and Commissioner Larko. Administrator stated it is essentially to walk the Board through the proposed revenue for FY2024 budget is \$15,777,340.00. The proposed expenditures operating expenses after all line items are satisfied that were requested and/or adjusted based off rising cost in the detail budget there are notes that indicates as to what was proposed versus recommended or requested versus recommended and will walk the Board through how to read the

report. All operational expenses being set aside will put us at expenditures of \$15,217,953.81, that leaves us with an excess of \$559,386.19. As indicated, there is enough surplus to get us at or under the Rollback.

Mr. Larko complained he could not read the line-item budget. Mr. Larko stated he asked for a line-item budget as in supplies in amount of dollars, gas in amount of dollars, he stated it was not what he was looking for. Administrator explained it is what we refer to as a line-item budget, line by line of every account built by our system. Showing whether it was appropriated money or not and this a four-year capture of what transferred out of SmartFusion into new system; and reminded the Board we are in a new software started July 1, 2023 and still learning the system and the output as such. Every account is accounted for whether we use them or not. If purposed it will show in the line item. Two departments, 911 and Fire Department go out to balance, we only receive \$260,000.00 from the State for 911, those accounts do not balance.

Administrator McKinney explained there are salary adjustments, 22% increase in health insurance, which is fed back into the department. Administrator commented she can recalculate the Fire Department staff, social security, postage, and can cut salary. Mr. Maxwell commented on not cutting any salaries for employees or events, and he did not see a problem. Mrs. Exum questioned the increase to \$15,217,953.00, stating there was no notification of increase, and where did the increase come from. Administrator McKinney stated it will show from the bottom where the increase came from. She advised she would figure out how to get an electronic version sent to them. County Auditor, Mr. Gary Zeigler, assured the Board the audits are complete for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 and sent to DOAA, and we are in compliance with State law.

Chairman conferred with each Commissioner on the Rollback. Chairman agreed to take entire Rollback. Mr. Maxwell agreed to entire Rollback, Mr. Cody agreed, Mrs. Exum agreed and Mr. Larko, all agreed to take the full Rollback.

County Attorney commented that what is not clear needs to be cleared. We need to know the budget so will know how to operate and to set the millage. Mr. Burchett stated that if there are questions, get with the Administrator, she works with the budget to fit the millage rate.

If the full Rollback is used, we will need only one public hearing, if there is an increase, we will need three public hearing. Setting a date and time for the public hearing was discussed. After discussion, August 14, 2023 at 5:00 pm was set for the budget workshop and August 23, 2023 was set for the public hearing at 5:00 pm.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. GDOT – 2024 LMIG Program – Administration received notification from GDOT for fiscal year 2024 Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Program announcing they are accepting applications starting July 2023. The application must be submitted no later than February 1, 2024. The formula amount for fiscal year 2024 Program is \$794,554.60.

B. Abandonment of Charles Lane – The Board discussed initiating the process to abandon Charles Lane during the June monthly meeting. The abandonment was tabled at Mr. Maxwell's request to have a chance to look at the location. The minutes have been researched and other resources; but there is nothing specifically representing the Board had officially abandoned Charles Lane upon completion of construction of Crosbys Town Road. The existing culvert crossing Charles Lane has been exposed due to erosion. Residents are asking the County to repair ground cover to make driveway more accessible.

Mr. Maxwell stated he had looked at Charles Lane. The one resident wants the road abandoned, says no one can come down the road, and she can gate off the road so no one can come down. She feels this would be safer for her because there has been one a break-in. Mr. Maxwell questioned how the road will be kept up. The response was she has a friend with a backhoe and will install a gate with remote control.

Mrs. Exum reminded the Board we are only approving to start the process tonight. The motion was made by Mrs. Exum authorizing to start the process on the abandonment of Charles Lane, Mr. Larko seconded. Chairman called for the vote. Chairman, Mrs. Exum, Mr. Larko, and Mr. Cody voted yes. Mr. Maxwell opposed. The vote was 4 to 1.

C. Quitman-Brooks County Chamber of Commerce – Alison Wider – 2023 12th Annual Brooks County Skillet Festival – October 21, 2023 – Use of Courthouse Grounds & Alcohol Sales – Mrs. Alison Wider, Director of Chamber of Commerce, requested to appear to request the use of Courthouse Grounds and to provide alcohol sales for the 2023 12th Annual Brooks County Skillet Festival to be held October 21, 2023. On the motion by Mrs. Exum, seconded by Mr. Cody, the Board unanimously approved the use of the Courthouse grounds for the Skillet Festival on October 21, 2023. The approval for alcohol sales will go before the City Council.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. P. D. Duncan – 4th of July – Being Held on the 4th of July – Mr. P. D. Duncan thanked the Board for assistance and support with the flag situation. He stated it was outstanding, this year there were 204 flags this year, there are people waiting in line for next year. There have been numerous calls, cards, and letters.

Mr. P. D. Duncan submitted a request to appear to address his concerns regarding the 4th of July celebration being held on the actual date of 4th of July. He stated he could not understand why the 4th of July celebration is not held on the 4th of July, the date it is celebrated.

10. ADMINISTRATION/ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATES

A. County Administrator Updates - None

B. Commissioners Notes/Comments

- **Lee Larko (District 1)** – Commented to stay safe this summer, it is exceptionally hot.
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)** – Commented that he tries to keep the meetings in order; and if anyone wants to speak, they need to submit an agenda request form.
- **Willie Cody (District 3)** – Thanked everyone for coming.
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – Reminded everyone that school had started and hoping for a great year for teachers and students.
- **James Maxwell, Vice Chairman (District 5)** – Commented to pray for students and teachers, buy extra pens and pencils, adopt a teacher, and remember the children.

Chairman made an exception and let Mr. Andrew Wade speak. Mr. Wade is the Founder & CEO of B.O.B. (Branches of Blessings, Inc.) who is set up at different locations to provide food to families.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION - NONE

12. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Maxwell made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:33 p.m.; Mr. Cody seconded.

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