**Jasper County Board of Commissioners**

**January 6, 2020**

**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**6:00 P.M.**

Comm. Pennamon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chairman, Carl Pennamon, Vice-Chairman, Bruce Henry, Don Jernigan, Gerald Stunkel, and Doug Luke.

Staff Present: Mike Benton, County Manager, Clerk, Sharon Robinson, Finance Director, Dennis Pate, and County Attorney, David Ozburn.

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

**Invocation:**

Commissioner Pennamon

**Agenda Approval:**

Comm. Henry made motion to approve the agenda as presented, Commissioner Jernigan seconded; passed unanimously.

**Consent Agenda:**

**Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioner Jernigan made the motion to approve the Minutes of December 2, 2019 as presented. Commissioner Stunkel seconded; passed unanimously. Commissioner Jernigan made the motion to approve the Called meeting minutes of December 12, 2019. Commissioner Henry seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Check Register:**

Commissioner Luke made motion to approve the check register which included Check #’s 56949-57249 for payment, Commissioner Jernigan seconded; passed unanimously.

Public Hearing: Commissioner Henry motioned to open the Public Hearing for the second reading of the Hotel-Motel Tax for the Unincorporated Jasper County at 6:05 p.m., Commissioner Stunkel seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

1. **Public Hearing: Hotel - Motel Tax for the Unincorporated Area.**

Mr. Benton stated that this is the second reading of the Hotel-Motel Tax for unincorporated Jasper County. It is a 5% tax on the lodging cost of hotels, tourist camps, cabins, camp grounds, and any place that is considered an overnight stay. One of the caveat is that the proceeds are used for the promotion of tourism, convention, and trade shows. There are specific expenditures that the money can be used for.

**Speaking in Favor**: Tom Joy (Chairman, Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors) - Mr. Joy stated that the Monticello Motel is shut down at the present time. It’s not known whether it will reopen as of now. This is a loss of income for the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is a Regional Tourist Information Center (RTIC), which means they are responsible for passing out literature to smaller communities. All brochures are centered here for our region. We would like to work toward other tourism factors for Jasper County as well. They need a budget to be able to handle those factors and this is a good way to get those funds. That way the burden is not on the taxpayers.

**Speaking Against:** None

Commissioner Henry made the statement that code that we are using is the OCGA 4813-51. He asked if this the state code that we will be using. Mr. Benton stated that that is correct. Mr. Benton stated that authority actually allows for a higher rate than 5%. Commissioner Pennamon stated that if we went higher than 5% we would have to go through legislation. He also stated that we set a later date for the enactment if the board approves because there is a lot of detail involved that has to be worked out (i.e. who is going to do the billing, who we are going to bill, how much will it cost the county to do the billing, and how much will be collecting. We have to make sure that we don’t enact something that is going to cost us more money.

Mr. Benton stated that we must set an effective date if the board does approve. Commissioner Henry stated that there is an administrative fee on some of the collections that the county does. He questioned if there will be an administrative fee for this before the money is passed on?

Commissioner Pennamon questioned if these funds will be additional or part of those funds that the county currently pay to the Chamber. Attorney Ozburn stated that funds that come in through this ordinance would have to be spent for tourism. The funds that are currently being spent can be used elsewhere but it is up to the board. Mr. Joy asked if there is any additional tax that is collected with this (i.e. sales tax). He stated that if the county isn’t currently doing that, it would behoove the county to do so.

Commissioner Luke motioned to come out of the Public Hearing at 6:14 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stunkel, passed unanimously.

Commissioner’s Items:

**Commissioner Jernigan**- Commissioner Jernigan stated that he was going over the Public Works work schedule and noticed several open tickets. He questioned whether there was some equipment down, wrong time of year, can we find out why. He wants an update on the Public Works shop.

**Commissioner Henry –** Commissioner Henry stated that he visited the Smithsonian and encouraged everyone to visit.

**Commissioner Pennamon-** Commissioner Pennamon stated that he received a confirmation letter from Walton County Tax Commissioner stating that Jasper County will be receiving by March 15th, $131,000 from the Stanton Springs Development and should get another $20K from TPA.

**Commissioner Stunkel-** None

**Commissioner Luke-** Commissioner Luke stated that we need some potholes patched on Lakeview Drive.He spoke about being able to better leverage for filling the holes. He wants to see the Grade All out to cut limbs.

Presentations/Delegations: None

**Regular Agenda:**

**Appointments:**

**Item 1: Appointment of Chairman**: Commissioner Jernigan motioned to appoint Commissioner Carl Pennamon as chairman, Commission Pennamon seconded the motion. The motion failed 2-3. Commissioner Luke motioned to appoint Commissioner Bruce Henry as the Chairman. Commissioner Stunkel seconded the motion, Commissioners Luke, Henry, and Stunkel voted in favor. Commissioner Pennamon and Jernigan against. Passed 3-2.

**Item 2: Appointment of Vice-Chairman-** Commissioner Henry motioned to appoint Commissioner Gerald Stunkel as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Luke seconded the motion. Commissioners Jernigan, Henry, Luke, Stunkel voted for, Commissioner Pennamon voted against. Passed 4-1

**Item 3: Appointment of County Attorney-** Commissioner Pennamon motioned to appoint Attorney David Ozburn as the county attorney. Commissioner Stunkel seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 4: Appointment of County Clerk-** Commissioner Pennamon motioned to appoint Sharon Robinson as the county Clerk. Commissioner Luke seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**New Business:**

**Item 1: New Ordinance for a Hotel – Motel Tax for the Unincorporated Area:** Commissioner Pennamon motioned to approve the adoption of a Lodging Tax Ordinance as described in Sections 17.1 through 17.17 as presented with the effective date of January 1, 2020. Commissioner Luke seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 2: Board of Assessors Board Appointments:** The countyTax Assessor Ms. Lynn Bentley stated that there are two board position that are expiring at the end of the month. There were four applications for those position, two from the current board members and two from elsewhere. Ms. Bentley stated that she has already budgeted for the current members’ training. If new people are appointed there would be additional cost because the training would be additional. This would be Ms. Breeding’s 3 term and Mr. Stansell’s fifth or sixth year.

Mr. Taylor stated that he teaches high school here. He teaches government and wants to see how it works from the inside.

Ms. Breeding stated that she wants to continue to serve as she has. She states that she has been to all of the classes.

Mr. Stansell stated that he has served on the board for about 12 years. He considers it an honor.

Mr. Workman was not present due to him going to a funeral visitation.

Commissioner Jernigan motioned to reappoint Breeding and Stansell to continue on the Board of Assessors. Commissioner Pennamon seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 3: 911 Authority Communications Status Update:**  Ms. Betty Jump gave an update on the radios. The first phase from Transcom has been completed. She stated that recently it seem that we are going backwards again for some reason. There are a lot of areas in the county where they are not able to transmit. They had Ed Laudon with Laudon Communications to come out along with Chief Finch and a Deputy Bentley to run test. Chris with Transcom seems to think that the issue is the consoles. Ms. Jump stated that they have had the consoles for a while. The consoles were struck by lightning in 2016 and didn’t get them back until 2017 so the insides are only 3 years old. Laudon made some suggestions, Waxwing and Hillsboro were programmed the same which called interference. Laudon could do microwave hops for approximately $5,000 each once we do the second phase with Transcom. She stated that we need higher antennas. The mobile radios work but we really need our portable to work. Those are the ones where the guys are out of their car.

Commissioner Pennamon questioned whether we can get quotes of what it would cost to get communication from Waxwing to Hillsboro back to the 911 Center. He suggested to chairman that the board instruct the 911 Authority to do research on the companies and get recommendation to bring back to the board.

**Item 4: Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement:**

Ms. Jump stated that the Mutual Aid is signed every four years. This is signed and in place in order to receive any type of FEMA grant money.

Mr. Benton stated that the County Attorney Mr. Ozburn has reviewed the Agreement.

Commissioner Pennamon motioned to approve Jasper County to participate in the Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Program and authorize required signatures to execute the Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement extending the agreement until March 1, 2024. Commissioner Stunkel seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 5: 911 Authority Board Appointment Advertisement:**

Ms. Jump stated that with the county bylaws the county should have 5 people on the 911 board. She is asking the board to advertise for the board positions.

Commissioner Pennamon motioned to authorize Staff to advertise the open position for the 911 Authority Board. Commissioner Stunkel seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 6: Development Authority of Jasper County Board Appointments Advertisement**

Chairman Henry stated that we have seven positions available that we need to advertise for. Going forward we will be getting board updates for the upcoming quarter starting in March.

Commissioner Stunkel motioned to authorize Staff to advertise the open appointment positions for the Development Authority of Jasper County Board. Commissioner Pennamon seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 7: Set Qualifying Fees for 2020 Elections**

Chairman Henry stated that we have to set the qualifying fees for the upcoming election. The fees are typically three percent of the base pay for those positions. Currently:

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| **Office** | **Fee** |
| Sheriff | $1,616.40 |
| Clerk of Superior Court | $1,392.25 |
| Tax Commissioner | $1,392.25 |
| Probate Judge | $1,392.25 |
| Chief Magistrate |  $1,392.25 |
| County Commissioner | $ 216.00 |
| Board of Education | $ 108.00 |
| Coroner | $ 72.00 |
| Surveyor | $ 10.00 |

Commissioner Pennamon motioned to approve Resolution #2020-01-06 (1) setting the Qualifying Fee Schedule for advertisement prior to February 1, 2020. Commissioner Jernigan seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Item 8: Resolution in Support of the Creation of the Jasper County Public Facilities Authority**

Mr. Ozburn stated that the when local legislation delegation require a resolution of the local governing board (in our case the Board of Commissioners) whenever local legislation such as this. This just signifies support. We are not creating anything or passing anything other than the resolution.

Chairman Henry stated the board will appoint five board members to the authority. This will help in some of the long term projects where the county cannot go over a year.

Commissioner Luke stated that we collect money from SPLOST over the years and then once it is all collected the cost of the project has increased significantly. This gives a structured way to fund projects.

Commissioner Pennamon stated that the anticipation is that we would use our investment from Stanton Springs to offset the cost for funding this authority which means no additional taxes for the residents.

Commissioner Luke motioned that the Jasper County Board of Commissioners Adopts Resolution 2020-01-06(2) which supports legislation to be introduced into the 2020 General Assembly for the Creation of the Jasper County Public Facilities Authority. Commissioner Stunkel seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**County Attorney Items:**

Attorney Ozburn stated that Jim Alexander negotiated some of the cell tower agreements. He will investigate to see what is in the files.

**County Manager Items**:

Mr. Benton stated that courthouse exterior envelope renovation project has a detailed timeline to get the bids back to board of commissioners. Bid document will be ready by Friday, January 10th. The county review by 1/14. The bid documents will be sent out publicly via email and advertisement in the newspaper. There will be a mandatory pre-bid meeting 2/4 in the BOC meeting room. Bid opening 2/18. March 2nd we plan to have bid proposal for the BOC to consider. He stated that he will have the design build document for the Public Work workshop ready at the 2/3 meeting.

**Citizens Comments:**

Stephanie Puckett- 228 Honeysuckle Road, Monticello- She stated that would like to be educated on the transfer of title from the Jasper County ownership to the Development Authority on the cannery and the old health department. She wants to know why it was done, how it the benefits to the citizens, is there a reason. Commissioners Luke and Henry stated that they did not have the information readily available. Ms. Puckett then questioned why they chose to transfer instead of being put up for public sale. She asked if there are viable businesses with more than three employees. She asked if the records could be made public.

Commissioner Pennamon stated that by transferring the buildings the Development Authority were to go out and find viable businesses which they did to our knowledge. We were told that they had three employees there. They went through a lease purchase deal where they paid the county cash back in April or May of 2019. That building now belongs to the owner. Ms. Puckett questioned whether it’s in the title because her search has not shown her that information. She asked that citizens are given a chance to purchase buildings before they are transferred to the Development Authority.

Tom Joy- Mr. Joys stated that he spoke earlier. He thanked the board for passing the Hotel-Motel Tax. Commissioner Pennamon asked Mr. Joy how the board will compensate when a company is going out of business. He stated that the Chamber Board moved the employees from part time to full time positions. He stated that they are working hard not to but any more burden on the state. They raise funds through memberships.

David Ivy- 376 Doe Lane, He asked if properties are put out for bids by the Development Authority. He stated that if property is going to move there should be notice. Attorney Ozburn stated that anything that the BOC does is on record through minutes. He stated that the public meeting requirements apply to the Develop Authority as well. Commissioner Pennamon stated that the reason property is turned over to the Development Authority is they have the interest in trying to get more business and to create more jobs. Mr. Ivy stated that there is a water tower on Hwy 212 sitting on a hill that may be one of the highest points in the county. He also stated that the USDA may have vegetative topical map.

Mandi Tanner- Ms. Tanner stated that she was giving an updated count for the visitors to the Smithsonian. She stated that there has been 1100 visitors. The total visitor count for the year was over 10,000 which was 2,500 more than last year. Brochures were ordered. This is where the Hotel-Motel Tax comes in, it helps to promote the county.

**Executive Session:**

None

Adjourn:

Commissioner Luke motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 pm. Commissioner Pennamon seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

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Bruce Henry, Chairman

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Sharon Robinson, Clerk