

Jasper County Board of Commissioners

January 25, 2021

Work Session Minutes

6:00 P.M.

Commissioner Henry called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chairman, Bruce Henry; Vice-Chairman, Gerald Stunkel; Don Jernigan; and Stephen Ledford.

Staff Present: Mike Benton, County Manager and Sharon Robinson, County Clerk.

Work Session:

Jasper County Public Facilities Authority Board Appointments- Review Applicants- Chairman Henry ask each applicant to come before the board to introduce themselves and to tell why they would be a good candidate for the PFA Board.

Hal Harris – Mr. Harris stated that he has lived in the county since 1972. He stated that he owns a business here in town since 1992 (Harris Sample Books). He see this as an opportunity to serve the county and he would like to advance the county. Commissioner Jernigan asked Mr. Harris where he would like to see Jasper County in 5 years. He stated that he would like to see the county continuing to grow. Commissioner Jernigan asked Mr. Harris what he see as the biggest problem in the county. Mr. Harris stated that he may not see all problems. He stated that the problem that he thinks the county will face is the growth that is going to continue Jasper County and whether we will have the infrastructure to support it. Chairman Henry asked Mr. Harris what type of growth he was referring to. Mr. Harris stated that there is opportunity for all types of growth but thinks that there will be more residential growth than commercial growth.

Adam McGinnis- Mr. McGinnis stated that he has been in Jasper full time since the 80s. He has had the opportunity to serve on several boards. He stated that he is involved in the city and county politics in Jasper County. He stated that he has had the opportunity to see what works and what doesn't work in other communities. He thinks it's important to know that we all want the same thing we have to come together to get to our ultimate goals.

James Thiele- Mr. Thiele has been in the county for seven years. He was a founding president of Grayson Cluster Schools a nonprofit foundation which raised moneys for schools and gave grants to teachers. Commissioner Jernigan asked Mr. Thiele where he would like to see Jasper County in five years. Mr. Thiele stated that he would like to see growth but in a limited way. He wants to see it very residential and very rural but have access to internet and broadband.

Greg Kerbow- Mr. Kerbow stated that he has been in the county for 15 years. He stated that his background is in Construction and is interested in that part of the PFA. He stated that is focus has

always tended to be on the younger generations. He thinks it's important that we provide them with training to become viable and productive citizens. He stated that he has had the opportunity to work throughout the country and have some ideas of how projects are funded and funding mechanisms.

Blight Tax- Mr. David Dyer stood before the board to present information about the Blight tax. Mr. Dyer stated that when site acquisition managers come here they come to take us off their list. They look at the community itself. Blight Tax is recognize by the State of Georgia's constitution. There are six necessary elements to the blight tax. One of the most critical is what blight is. There is not a lot of room for guessing. It is important to be able to identify who owns certain properties especially when there is an estate. We have to know the standards of rehabilitation. You can go as high as a 10% penalty. He talked about uses for funds that are brought in through this penalty. It is more effective if the county and city can work together with this property. The penalty cannot be used for primary residences. Eminent Domain can be used as well. Residential structures that are vacant or used for purposes other than primary residence, commercial or industrial structures, brownfields and land that is unlikely to be used or underdeveloped land can be considered blighted. The burden is always on the municipalities.

When considering the legal challenges you have to make sure that you adhere to constitutional boundaries, find the appropriate owners for notice, and not messing with primary residences. It's important to have support from the community and leaders. Public awareness is critical. There are some administrative burdens that will fall on the county, i.e. making sure that funds are segregated. Process management has to be consistent. The blight tax is not a revenue generating tool. The decrease has to be directly related to the remediation plan.

Tax Assessor Lynn Bentley stated that this much less complicated than the homestead that we were considering.

Attorney Ozburn stated that he would suggest starting with the model ordinance and keeping some of the basics of it like the procedural things.

New Home Minimum Square Footage

Commissioner Stunkel stated that we have not had any houses built under 1800 sq ft since 2006. This hurts first time buyers, seniors looking to downsize, and rentals. He stated that we have a need to help our community by revisiting this. Most first time buyers are looking to purchase homes that they can use HUD assistance with. This also causes many people to come back to ask for variances when they have smaller lots.

Shane Sealy stated that most lots in Turtle Cove does not meet the .7 acre minimum.

Chairman Henry asked if we do this would we be spot zoning? Mr. Sealy stated that it is not rezoning.

David Ozburn stated that you would not be rezoning but altering the zoning classification regulations. There will have to be some proof of lot size. It would be difficult to tie it to specific geographic locations. He stated that there is a lot of flexibility within a zoning classification to regulate it, it just applies to everything in that zoning classification.

Chairman Henry asked Lynn Bentley how this will affect the property values.

Ms. Bentley stated that it will depend on what's going on with that neighborhood.

Chairman Henry declared the Work Session closed at 7:35 p.m.

Bruce Henry, Chairman

Sharon S. Robinson, Clerk