

**Jasper County Board of Commissioners**  
**November 4, 2024**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**6:00 P.M.**

Chairman Bruce Henry called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Bruce Henry, Chairman; Steven Ledford, Vice Chair; Don Jernigan; Sheila Pounds and Asher Gray

Staff: Mike Benton, County Manager, Sheila Belcher, Clerk- Administrative Services Director, Larissa Ruark, Chief Accounting Officer, Doug Attaway- Planning and Zoning Director,

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

**Invocation:** Commissioner Gray

**Agenda Approval:** Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Pounds seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Consent Agenda:** Commissioner Gray motioned to approve the following minutes

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Commissioner Pounds seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gray motioned to approve **Check #'s 72308-72525** Commissioner Ledford seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

**Public Hearings with Business Action**

Commissioner Ledford motioned to begin the public hearing at 6:02 p.m. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing 1: Nelson Rd Private Drive Subdivision:**

Planning and Zoning Director Doug Attaway presented a request from Mr. and Mrs. Mauldin the property owners of 550 Nelson Rd. They are requesting to be allowed to deed his son five acres of land to build a home without being forced to build a private drive subdivision.

**Dan Mauldin:** Mr. Mauldin spoke in favor saying the board has heard from him a few times recently as he was trying to get the private drive subdivision ordinances updated. He said he did not have anything to add to what Mr. Attaway explained he said he is just seeking approval from the board. Chairman Henry asked Mr. Mauldin if he had worked out all the details with Mr. Attaway and understood the requirements. Mr. Mauldin said he did get the details from Mr. Attaway and he Understood the requirements.

**Mary Mauldin:** Spoke in favor and gave the commissioners photos to review. She said that in 2004 she found 550 Nelson Rd and fell in love with it. She said it like when she grew up. She said the dirt road is flawed but that's what they like. Mrs. Mauldin said that most people don't even know anyone who lives there other than the mailbox. She said you cannot see their home or their barn from the road. She said the location where her son wants to build his home is not visible from the road. She said that they have become part of the community on Nelson Road. She said they have been gifting their land to family for hundreds of years and they are willing to share that land for her and her husband. She said there is an old home place where to plan to put their road. She said it doesn't fit in with how they like Nelson Rd but she was raised in a military family and the military,

you follow the rules. She said they were just trying to follow the rules. She said they have worked with Mr. Attaway and been to the meetings and they are aware that the commissioners stand for family, remaining rural, and community. She said that is what they want also. She said their neighbors are concerned and have started asking if they are building a subdivision. Mrs. Mauldin said she felt it was important to explain what they were trying to do and why. She said they have three children but only one wants to live on the property. She said in 2023 they spoke with someone in Planning and Zoning regarding their plans and were told it would not be a problem. She said her son sold his home and changed job locations. She said they returned to Planning and Zoning and Mr. Attaway had taken over and the rules had changed. She said Mr. Attaway tried hard to help them and Commissioner Pounds worked with them. She said when they got it figured out the rules had changed. Mrs. Mauldin said they tried a third time and there was another rule change. She said that it shouldn't be so hard. She said she would like for the commissioners to consider all the good people here when they are making these decisions not just the ones who have made not made good choices. She said they should know how many tens of thousands of dollars it is going to cost them to build something no one else will ever see except her family. Mrs. Mauldin said she just thought they should see the faces of the people making the request. She said she realizes they have a big job with a lot to consider and hear a lot of facts she just wants to remind them of the faces. Commissioner Jernigan asked Mrs. Mauldin if her neighbors were in favor of splitting the property. She said that they are supportive of what they are trying to do.

**Business Item 1: Nelson Rd Private Drive Subdivision:** He said their son has gone through a great deal of trouble to move back to Jasper County. He said the neighbors support what they are trying to do, and he doesn't see any harm in making an exception. He said the board can make an exception. Commissioner Jernigan motioned to approve Dan and Mary Mauldin's request for the minimum requirement of 300 Feet of road frontage. Commissioner Pounds seconded, with discussion Commissioner Pounds said she spoke to the family, the county engineer, Mr. Attaway, and Commission Ledford. She asked Commissioner Ledford to share what they had discussed. Commissioner Ledford the main reason for the road frontage requirement is the lot size. He said years down the road when the family is no longer there someone else could come in and split the remaining property because the exception was made. He said the county can't afford the growth. He said the any way to keep from raising taxes is to control the growth. He said making exceptions takes away the ability to control the growth. He said the county needs industrial growth to support the residential growth. He said the main source of income for the county is residential taxes and the county can't make it on that without increasing taxes to support the growth. He said he understands it's a hard hit financially but there are some things they can do to save on that cost but the best option in this situation is a private drive subdivision. Chairman Henry said they spent just under two years trying to improve the ordinances to control lots and lot sizes. He said the road frontage requirement was one of those changes. He said it was a lot of work and he doesn't feel like it has been in place long enough to start making exceptions. He said that would cause additional people to want exceptions. Commissioner Jernigan said each situation is different and exceptions should be made on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Attaway said he believes it is right at three hundred and eighty- seven feet total. He said before the ordinance change on May 6, 2024, the requirement was two hundred feet. Mr. Attaway said even without the change Mr. Mauldin did not have enough road frontage for two homes. He said in Mr. Mauldin's defense the previous director told him a flag lot would be his best solution. He said flag lots do not meet any of the ordinances, so he isn't sure why they were told that. He said Mr. Mauldin had the drawing that they had been given by the previous director. Commissioner Gray said he is not against them, but they must try to control the growth. Mrs. Mauldin asked if it would change anything if it was in both their name and their son's name. She said eventually it would all be his anyway. The commissioner asked what would happen if their son were to have a financial hardship. He asked if they would be able to assume financial responsibility for that home. She said the house would be paid for and property was a gift and the deed was in both names. Commissioner Ledford asked if both properties were in both names. Mr. Mauldin said it will be if that is what they need to do. Commissioner Pounds said if we say no to this request does that mean we will say no to all requests? Chairman Henry said that was his understanding but that is always the decision of the board and as the board changes hands that may change. Commissioner Jernigan said he thinks these requests should be handled case by case.

Commissioner Gray asked if they had tried to purchase property from a neighbor. Mr. Mauldin said they have tried, and the issue is that they and both neighbors have conservation and it can't be split without penalties. Motion failed 2/3. Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve Mr. and Mrs. Mauldin's request to build a Private Rd Drive Subdivision. Commissioner Gray seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing 2: Public Hearing for an Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 8 section 8-31(b) short-term vacation rental overlay license limitation:** Mr. Attaway presented a request for an Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 8 section 8-31(b) short-term vacation rental overlay license limitation. He said the Planning and Zoning Board voted to table due to uncertainty about the number of licenses they will have with the commissioner reopening the application process. He said he had advertised for a public hearing before that decision. Mr. Attaway said they do know the maximum number they will allow is thirty because that is what is allowed in the ordinances.

**Julie Newman:** Spoke in favor and wants section 8- 31A to be revisited also. She said the code states if you were not operating before July 2023 you cannot get a license. She said they were building their home at the time of the ordinance change. She said she now does not qualify for a license even though she is willing to pay the fees and taxes. She said if someone with a license sells their property the license is not transferable to the new owner. She said that is extremely limiting and will eventually reduce the number of STR to zero. She said that with means no revenue to fund the enforcement of the policy and that doesn't make sense. She said with no hotels or motels here and STR is the best way to stay small while still having visitors. She said thirty licenses just don't make sense because to collected revenue will barely cover the cost of enforcing the policies. She said Butts County collects approximately \$300,000 and Jasper only collects about ten percent of that amount. She said if they raise the limit to sixty or have the policies in place to remove those who caused to complaint. She asked why not take advantage of the people who follow the rules and the laws to increase the tax revenue to the county.

**Jeffrey Johns:** Spoke in favor of the amendment saying he agrees with Mr. Newman. He said that he thinks Mr. Attaway having a hard time locating the STRs is a good sign because that means few complaints. He said reading the old minutes increasing taxes is always an issue. He said he understands that they need to manage it but it's easy tax revenue for the county. He asked about the application and annual fees saying he heard Jasper County mirrored Putnam County. He said Jasper County is much higher than Putnam and Newton. Mr. Johns then asked what the burden of proof is if someone were to complain about a STR location. He asked if they would be taking the neighbor's word for it or if would they need police documentation.

**Mary Patrick:** Spoke against the amendment. She said it disturbs her that people would come into our county and build a house they knew they would not be living in for years and then decide to rent it out. She said she thinks it's time to think about the people who live here. She said the ones who have been here following the rules and paying the taxes. She said nobody wants bad renters, but how do know who is renting that home and how do you control it? She said she thought going through this whole process was to get to the point of not allowing it. She said originally it was zero then limited. She said bringing it down to zero would the county wouldn't need the revenue because there would not be a need to enforce it. She said if the Commissioners are going to do as Commissioner Jernigan suggested in the previous Public Hearing and take things case by case then they don't need the ordinances. She said they had lots of hearings, people had their say and she thinks they did a good job of putting rules in place. Mrs. Patrick said now she needed to stick with it. She said if someone does not qualify for the rules in place then they just don't qualify.

**Tim Heminger:** He said he has STR on both sides of him. He said he sold his house in another county years ago and built a home on the laké. He said now every day he wonders who his neighbors are. He said his biggest complaint is one of the owners has requested to extend the license time is his biggest complaint. He said trash from renters lies in the road. He said he and other neighbors have picked up the trash to keep animals from dragging it out. Mr. Heminger said they have cleaners come on Sunday but do not check the property after the trash is picked up on Tuesday. He said their trash can has been sitting on the road for a month. He

said he was sitting on his deck with his grandkids and he could smell the marijuana coming from their property. He asked how he can stop it. He said most of the owners don't live in Jasper County and they don't bother to check the properties. He said there was one instance where the hired help was there to do service work and was confronted by a renter with a gun. He said that made him very uncomfortable. He asked how the neighbors knew that they had a license to operate. He said the county does not have a good system in place to enforce the ordinance. He said they are leaving it on the residence to enforce and when he calls the police by the time they show up there may not be proof. He said there have been parties at the property and the cleaners don't pick up the trash left outside. He said lives there, so he has to look at the mess or clean it up.

**Cathy Benson:** Spoke against the amendment. She said she has been dealing with the same issues as Mr. Heminger. Mrs. Benson asked where all the people who were upset about the rules were two years ago when the process began. She said there were several meetings and hearings. She said she had a recording from one of the STRS playing music that could be heard from 1364 feet away. She asked when would stop, and when will she have rights and peace and quiet. She said she has lived here for twenty-six years and she wants to live in peace and quiet. She said she should not have to put up with it. **Business Item 2: Public Hearing for an Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 8 section 8-31(b) short-term vacation rental overlay license limitation.**

Commissioner Gray Motioned to reduce the number of Short-term rentals from thirty to ten. Motion failed due to no second.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to table. Commissioner Pounds seconded the motion.

Commissioner Jernigan asked the reason for tabling. Commissioner Ledford said they still don't know how many are in the county. Mr. Attaway said no and that he was not currently accepting applications. He said because the board needs to set the application period. Commissioner Jernigan said he thinks they should go back to the original thirty if there are not a lot of issues increase that number or decrease the number if there are several issues. He said if there is good enforcement there should not be issues. He said it might not be a lot of income, but he thinks they should be in favor of all income that may benefit the homeowners. Motion passed 3/2 Commissioner Jernigan and Commissioner Gray opposed.

**Public Hearing 3: Public Hearing for an Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 119, Section 119-48-Conventional zoning districts. Removing R-R and updating the density for RES zoning.** Mr. Attaway presented a request for Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 119, Section 119-48-Conventional zoning districts. Removing R-R and updating the density for RES zoning. He said the request is just updating the chart to match ordinance amendments the board passed in May of 2024.

No Citizen Comments

**Business Item 3: Public Hearing for an Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 119, Section 119-48-Conventional zoning districts. Removing R-R and updating the density for RES zoning:**

Commissioner Ledford motion to approve Ordinance amendment to Part II, Code of Ordinances which includes Chapter 119, Section 119-48-Conventional zoning districts. Removing R-R and updating the density for RES zoning

Commissioner Gray seconded. Commissioner asked if the verbiage was correct in the amendment. He said he just doesn't want to have to go back and change it in a few months. Mr. Attaway said it was correct. The motion passed unanimously.

**Presentations/Delegations:** None

**Citizens Comments:**

**Mary Patrick:** Mrs. Patrick gave the commissioner handouts to consider. She said the county has been busy hiring new employees instead of being more efficient. She said she believes the county can benefit from an efficiency audit. She said they would tell them if employees were working eight hours a day. Everything will be fed into the system and could save a lot of time and money. She said it was somewhere around \$70,000 but that is cheaper than hiring another employee. She said they should think about it. She said they are looking to hire a part-time person in finance when they have three full-time employees. Mrs. Patrick said she works in finance every day and she doesn't see the need for another employee. She said the STR brings in more problems than money and they bring cost. She said there are things they need to start thinking about why we have zoning.

**Amy Gude:** Mrs. Gude said she is looking forward to Jasper County being a place where everyone has opportunities. She said she was encouraged by Commissioner Gray's prayer at the beginning of the meeting. She said he talked about working together for all citizens. She said she was very encouraged by that. She said she looked up the word perception and it is a belief or opinion often held by many people based on how things seem. Mrs. Gude said when she attends the meetings she often hears a lot of negativity about moving forward. She said that she grew up during the Civil Rights movement and her perception of keeping Jasper County rural is a negative racial term. She said it may not be but that is her perception. She said that she is encouraged that going into 2025 the Commissioners will consider people who might not be their friends or the ones who always spoke the loudest. She said she has noticed the loudest noise seems to come when things are referenced for the African American community. She said she has seen pushback on departments with Black Directors and even heard someone call out Commissioner Pounds about Sands Park. She asked if the commissioners don't support one another. She said that she was born here and would like to see the county be more progressive and civil considering everyone in this county not just the loud voices.

**Tim Heminger:** Mr. Heminger said the commissioners are going to make Mr. and Mrs. Mauldin put in a private road subdivision because they can't break the rules but then turn around and break the STR rules for people who don't even live in the county. He said that is very wishy-washy on their part. He said the attorney told them to do it in the short term because if it goes long then it gets longer and now they are tabling it again. He said lock it down to what you said it was going to be. He said it was supposed to be tuned in and the knew is. Mr. Heminger said it was in the newspaper and one of the applicants who works for the school system said she didn't know. He said she works here but they don't live here. He said he was upset about the property beside him because they had a group of people who had gone out fishing on a boat. He said the live well on their boat died so the fish died. They just dumped them back in the water so when he went to use his boat the next morning forty dead fish were floating at his dock that he had to clean up. He said he went to speak to them about it and was asked to leave. He asked who you call. He said to limit it and be done with it.

**County Commissioner Items:**

**Commissioner Pounds:** None

**Commissioner Jernigan:** None

**Chairman Henry:** Chairman Henry reminded everyone to use the right to vote in the 2024 election.

**Commissioner Gray:** None

**Commissioner Ledford:** None

**Business Items:**

**Business Item 4- Short-Term Rental Application opening period:** Mr. Attaway requested their start and end date for reopening the application for short-term rentals as voted on by the board on October 9, 2024. Chairman Henry asked if he had people trying to apply. Mr. Attaway said he had but he had but he is not

accepting any until the board decides. He said he assumes he will have an applicant as soon as the board opens it since the ordinance only allows thirty. He said he ran it in the newspaper the following Thursday. Commissioner Jernigan said he was thinking ninety days originally. He said he thought Commissioner Ledford mentioned forty-five days. Commissioner Ledford said it was Commissioner Gray and he suggested thirty days. Commissioner Ledford said he agreed with the thirty days.

Commissioner Jernigan motioned to reopen the Short-term Rental Application process for thirty days beginning November 14, 2024, and ending December 13, 2024. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 5- Appointment to Planning and Zoning Board:** Mr. Bill Nash was the only applicant. Mr. Nash said he is interested in the work and he thinks he contributes. Commissioner Ledford motioned to appoint Bill Nash to the Planning and Zoning board. Commissioner Jernigan seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 6-Additional 2024 LMIG Funding – Murder Creek Church Rd Resurfacing Bid**

**Submittals:** County Manager Mike Benton presented a bid submittal for Murder Creek Church Rd resurfacing. He said GDOT approved funding for the lesser amount of \$245,000 or seventy percent of the project cost. He said it would be reimbursement funding. Mr. Benton said the project is for a full-depth reformation of .7 miles. He said the county received six bids. He said Blunt Construction was the low bid at \$294,229. He said the estimated total would be \$226,629 with the engineering cost and the low bid. He said that the total reimbursement amount of \$207,640. At 70%. The county engineer recommended Blunt Construction based on the bid and history.

Commissioner Gray motioned to award the bid to Blunt Construction for \$294,229. For Murder Creek Church Rd.

Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 7-2025 LMIG Application and SPLOST Projects Recommendation:** Mr. Benton presented project recommendations for the 2025 LMIG-approved funding amount of \$663,275. He said the county is required to match thirty percent of the funding to qualify for the grant. He said the application is due February 1, 2025. Mr. Benton recommended using funds for Aikenton Rd 3.75 miles at \$1,431,476, 1.4 miles of Georgia Pacific Rd and .11 miles of Miss Sara Rd He said the estimated total for all three would be \$1,888,099. The project funding would come from the LMIG funds and SPLOST funding if the board chooses to do so.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve the LMIG application for the 3 projects as presented. Commissioner Jernigan seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 8-Resolution to Increase Hotel Motel Excise Tax:** Chairman Henry asked the county attorney to explain the process of changing the hotel/motel tax rate. He said the maximum amount is eight percent and the are required uses for the revenue collected.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to increase the hotel/motel tax from five percent to eight percent. Commissioner Gray seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 9-FY 2025 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Financial Report:** Chief Finance Officer Larissa Ruark gave an update on the First Quart Financials.

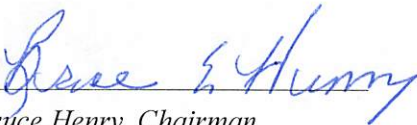
**Business Item 10-Schedule Work Sessions and Called Meetings as Needed:** Work Session scheduled November 25, 2024 at 6 p.m.

**County Attorney Items:** None

**County Manager Update:** Mr. Benton gave updates on building permits. He also gave an update on the parking behind Fire Station One which is ready for voter parking.

**Executive Session:** None

**Adjourn:** Commissioner Pounds motioned to adjourn at 7:56 p.m., Commissioner Ledford seconded, motion passed unanimously.

  
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Bruce Henry, Chairman

  
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Sheila Jefferson, Clerk