

**WORKSHOP SESSION  
TIFT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2009 (6:30 p.m.)**

The scheduled Workshop Session of the Tift County Board of Commissioners was called to order by Chairman Grady Thompson on Tuesday, February 3, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room of the Administrative Building. Members of the Commission present including Chairman Thompson were Vice Chairman Buck Rigdon and Commissioners Donnie Hester, Mike Jones, Melissa Chevers, Robert Setters and Sherry Miley.

**Public Comments:**

**Appointments:**

1. Meredith Lipson with Mauldin & Jenkins was present and gave the Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2008. Ms. Lipson told the Board that the County's finances are something to be proud of in today's economy. The total assets of the county exceeded its liabilities by 90.4 million and of that 17.8 million are unrestricted which means that may be used to meet the county's obligations. She advised the county's total net assets increased by 1.1 million for the year ending. The county's unreserved fund balance was 15.2 million or 71 percent of the total General Fund expenditures. A full Audit Report was given out to each Board member.

2. Brad Day, with the Chamber of Commerce was present and gave the Board the Mid-Year Chamber Report. Mr. Day reported that Tift County had lost 560 jobs in the last 150 days and unemployment was approaching 10 percent. He stated that some new jobs had been created from the expansion of Heatcraft. He reported that Tift County is now ranked as a Tier 1 which is classified as economically needy in the State of Georgia, but it would be good for securing grants to be used to entice new business to the area. He does hope the ranking status of Tift County will improve in the near future. Among other things, Mr. Day reported the amount of grant money received through the OneGeorgia Authority; Tifton/Tift County had been designated as a certified "Entrepreneur Friendly" community and that the Economic Roundtable had been formed to prioritize the community needs. He also gave a brief report on some of the chamber's goals for this year.

**Public Hearings: None**

**Items to be discussed for Regular Session on February 12, 2009:**

A. County Resource Agreement for Arts in Black Celebration: Craig Sowell reported that the County has sponsored this event for as long as it has existed. The Festival is held at Fulwood Park. He is requesting the Board authorized the County Resource Agreement for this Festival.

B. Portable Baseball Mounds: Craig Sowell explained that when the Recreation department starting playing baseball at the E B Hamilton Softball Complex the use of portable mounds became important to accommodate the Leagues and tournaments for that site. The mounds we have now which were purchased several years ago are wearing out and cracking. The Recreation Department is requesting authorization to purchase six (6) fiberglass Tru-Pitch mounds to replace the old ones that are worn out. The total cost of the mounds is approximately \$13,000 and money was allocated for these types of items in SPLOST IV.

C. Fundraiser for Denny & Thomas Families/Waive Customary Fees: At a previous meeting this request was brought before the Board for consideration and the Recreation Department was given the verbal agreement to move forward, a motion in this meeting will ratify that decision. The fundraiser is to raise money to help with medical and other expenses of these two families whose children were involved in a four wheeler accident during the Christmas Holidays with some serious injuries.

D. Approval of 2009 Lease Addendum with So GA Community Service Board: The County Manager advised that the County rents the Behavioral Health Building to South Georgia community Service Board for \$6,800 per month. Staff recommends approval of the FY 2009 Lease Addendum with South Georgia Community Service Board.

E. Professional Court Services – Fee Increase: At the request of Judge Larry Mims, the County Manager explained that Professional Court Services has provided probation supervision services to the County since 2000. They currently charge a fee of \$30 per month which is paid by the offender. The County does not incur any expense for the service. Professional Court Services is requesting that the fee be increased to \$40 per month per offender beginning January 2009. The Board will need to authorize Professional Court Service to increase their monthly fee to \$40 per offender.

F. Approval of Beer License for Jenish R. Patel for store located at 4468 Hwy 319 South: The County Clerk advised that the application and necessary documents have been completed and that this comes to the Board with an approval from Sheriff Vowell.

G. Approval of Beer & Wine License for Ami S. Shah for Short Stop located at 607 Short Street: The County Clerk advised that the application and necessary documents have been completed and that this comes

to the Board with an approval from Sheriff Vowell.

H. Approval of Beer & Wine License for William H. David for Sonny's Bar-B-Q Restaurant: The County Clerk advised that the application and necessary documents have been completed and that this comes to the Board with an approval from Sheriff Vowell.

I. Purchase of replacement Vehicle for Sheriff's Office: The County Manager advised that earlier in the year one of the Sheriff's Dodge Charges was involved in a wreck and damaged to the point that it was taken out of service. The Sheriff requests using the reimbursement from the insurance along with funds transferred from the gas, oil and diesel line item, he would like to purchase the vehicle so that he will have a full fleet. Staff recommends purchasing the vehicle as opposed to our normal process of financing for three years. The Finance Department feels it would be better to buy than obligate the County to payments in future years when the economic condition is at best unknown.

J. Approve Right of Way acquisition contract between DOT & Tift County for the Bridge Replacement Project on Scooterville Road at Ty Ty Creek: Jason Jordan explained that the Board authorized the Chairman to endorse these same documents in March of 2008. The documents were returned to the State DOT for their execution however the Right of Way Agent for the DTO recently relocated to another building and during the move the documents were misplaced. A new contract has been re-issued to be properly executed.

K. Review of Board Appointment process by the County Attorney: The County Attorney asked for an Executive Session to discuss this item with the Board. See comments below after the close of Executive Session.

The Board agreed to place items A through J on the Consent Agenda for the Regular Meeting.

**County Manager Items:** None

**Commissioners Comments:** None

**Executive Session:** Motion was made by Commissioner Hester to go into Executive Session for Legal and Real Estate with the right to return to Regular Session, seconded by Commissioner Miley. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Setters to close Executive Session and return to Regular Session, seconded by Commissioner Chevers. Motion carried unanimously.

The County Attorney gave a brief discussion on the Board Appointment process by the Board of Commissioners and its history and where we go from here. Mr. Rowell stated that he believed the Board's method of voting for candidates to fill posts was legal and this method has been used for many years and was in compliance with the sunshine and open meetings law. He believes the statutes allow for commissioners to vote by secret ballot unless there is a roll call vote. Mr. Rowell said he had discussed this issue with the attorney for the Association of County Commissioners as well with other attorneys in his firm that believe the same way. He stated it is important for the public and the paper to know that the police for appointments to boards are not in violation of the open meetings law. He further stated the public perception of the process of voting was "resonating" in the community and that the people wanted to know how each commissioner voted on the most recently appointment to the Development Authority. Therefore, his advice to the Board of Commissioners was for the Chairman to polled the commissioners and let each stated which candidates they voted for in January for each branch of the Development Authority appointments. The Commissioners agreed to take this advice and the results were as follows:

Commissioner Robert Setters stated he voted for Richard Golden for the Constitutional and Statutory Development Authority.

Commissioner Mike Jones stated he voted for Richard Golden for the Constitutional and Statutory Development Authority.

Commissioner Donnie Hester stated he voted for Lynn Lover for the Constitutional and for Frankie Mathis for the Statutory Development Authority.

Commissioner Buck Rigdon stated he voted for Frankie Mathis for the Constitutional and Statutory Development Authority.

Commissioner Sherry Miley stated she voted for Richard Golden for the Constitutional and for Frankie Mathis for the Statutory Development Authority.

Commissioner Melissa Chevers stated she voted for Richard Golden for the Constitutional and for Frankie Mathis for the Statutory Development Authority.

Mr. Rowell then advised the Board that he would evaluate a process to permit the public to know how each commissioner votes on appointments and the mechanics of how that will be done will be discussed with the board members. He stated at we'll move forward and craft a procedure more to the public's wishes in the near future.

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Hester, seconded by Commissioner Miley. Motion carried unanimously.

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Chairman Grady Thompson, District 7

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Vice Chairman Fred W. (Buck) Rigdon, District 5

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Commissioner Donnie Hester, District 1

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Commissioner Melissa Chevers, District 2

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Commissioner Robert Setters, District 3

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Commissioner Sherry Miley, District 4

ATTEST:

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Commissioner C. Michael Jones, District 6

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County Clerk