

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

CALLED MEETING

MARCH 20, 2019

MINUTES

Present: Chairman Ricky Crosby, Commissioners James Benjamin, Brad Crews and Vann Wooten, Attorney Carla Powell, Administrator Keith Carter and Clerk Sherri Lytle.

Chairman Ricky Crosby called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and Commissioner Brad Crews gave the invocation. Chairman Crosby led the Pledge of Allegiance.

BID OPENING FOR 2 GRASS TRACTORS

Bids read as follows:

Ag Pro/John Deere	2018 6120E Cab Tractor (101 PTO hp)	\$68,500
	2018 6020E Cab Tractor (101 PTO hp)	\$69,999
	Total	\$138,499
Appling Motors	2 Kubota M6S-111HDC (114 hp)	\$55,300 ea.
	Total	\$110,600
Ocmulgee Outdoors	MF 5711 PFA Cab (110 PTO hp)	\$56,999
	MF 6713 Deluxe (130 hp)	\$59,999
	MF 5711 SL (110 hp)	\$76,999
Lasseter Tractor Co.	John Deere 5125R Utility Tractor	\$76,283 ea.
	Total	\$152,566

Motion: To accept the bid from Ocumlgee Outdoors for 2 Massey Ferguson 6713 Tractors for \$59,999 each.

Proposed: Commissioner Brad Crews

Second: Commissioner Vann Wooten

Motion Carried

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE AND PROPOSE A ONE-CENT SALES TAX FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE REGION

Motion: To approve a Resolution to establish a regional roundtable and propose a one-cent sales tax for the purpose of funding transportation infrastructure improvements in the region.

Proposed: Commissioner Van Wooten

Second: Commissioner Brad Crews

Motion Carried

RESOLUTION

**A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF JEFF DAVIS COUNTY, GEORGIA,
CALLING FOR COUNTIES IN THE HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA SERVICE DELIVERY REGION TO
ESTABLISH A REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE AND PROPOSE A ONE-CENT SALES TAX FOR THE PURPOSE OF
FUNDING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE REGION**

WHEREAS, the Transportation Investment Act of 2010 established the ability of each service delivery region in Georgia to levy a sales tax for the purposes of funding transportation infrastructure improvement; and

WHEREAS, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region; consisting of Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, and Wilcox counties; implemented the requirements of the Transportation Investment Act of 2010; and voters approved a sales Tax Referendum on July 31, 2012; and the Region has been successful in collecting a transportation sales tax and delivering projects in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, upon the adoption of resolutions by a majority of county governing bodies within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha special district, an election may be held for the re-imposition of the tax while the tax is in effect; and

WHEREAS, ALL OF THE PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE Transportation Investment Act of 2010 remain in effect regarding the creation of investment criteria, the establishment of the Regional Roundtable and Executive Committee, the development of a draft investment list, and public participation among other items.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AHAT THE Jeff Davis County Board of Commissioners desire to initiate the process outlined in the Transportation Investment Act of 2010 for the voters of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region to consider the imposition of a one-cent sales tax for the purposes of funding transportation infrastructure improvements in the region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to the Director of Planning of the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission; as well as the Boards of Commission of the counties of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region.

APPROVED AND AOPTED this 20th day of March, 2019.

Jeff Davis County, Georgia

By: _____
Ricky Crosby, Chairman

DISCUSS BIG HOUSE

Chairman Ricky Crosby informed the Board that the Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Development Authority has requested to locate these offices at the Big House. The Board of Tourism Office is already located there and they believe it would be beneficial for them to have all their offices at the Big House.

Commissioner Brad Crews stated "in my opinion is that we will continuously throw money on the upkeep of this building forever. I believes it's unfair to the taxpayers to have that burden. It needs to be sold. I don't have a problem building them a new building". He doesn't feel like him as a taxpayer and a commissioner that we can continue to maintain this building. Chairman Crosby said "it's a historical site and I don't know how we can close the doors on it".

Board of Tourism Director Jim Sewell spoke and said "the expense to the county to maintain the Big House is virtually nothing. We're funded through hotel/motel tax". Mr. Sewell explained "we pay the utilities and the regular maintenance. We've had some roof repair and some interior painting done using inmate labor. But, my concern is that we're able to maintain the building through tourism dollars that has been used for community events. If we change it to an office building, it's going to be hard for us maintain upkeep to the building from the hotel/motel funds because we have to report to the state how these funds are being spent. It has to be spent for tourism purposes and if you don't the state could come in and tell you that you can't collect the tax anymore". When we were in the Chamber Office, the Chamber managed the office and paid the utility bills and Tourism and the Joint Development Authority paid a monthly rent to the Chamber. He asked, "If they move to the Big House are we going to continue to pay the utilities and they pay us rent? Is the county going to take over with maintenance and utilities and all three of us pay rent? Chairman Crosby answered and said they could split the utilities three ways. Mr. Sewell stated we are 8 months into the year and the utilities average about \$800 per month and spent \$4300 in maintenance. The upstairs will need air conditioners replaced and the roof replaced in the near future.

Chamber Director Terry Stone and JDA Director Andrea Taylor spoke in favor of their offices working together.

Terry Stone spoke and said "she was vice-chair on the Board of Tourism, a director with the Chamber and on the Joint Development Authority. We're in the business of selling Hazlehurst and where we're at now is not a good reflection on what we need to sell. The Big House sells Hazlehurst a lot better than the old building we're in now. I think it would be an asset to our community if we would move it to the Big House."

Commissioner James Benjamin asked "how would you utilize the office? Are you going to be able to hold your events there? Mr. Sewell said "I don't think you'll be able to continue holding the events there. We budgeted approximately \$5000 off rentals and to date we're already over \$3000 for the year. The rental income offsets the utility bill. Brad said his only fear is to continue spending money on the building and it doesn't need to be an office building. It needs to be what it is, a historical site for Jeff Davis County if that's what we want it to be. Mr. Sewell stated there's a lot of advantages of all three of us being together in the same building.

JDA Director Andrea Taylor stated she worked in Douglas before coming to Hazlehurst and worked a number of years at the Ashley Slater House. Her offices were upstairs and rented the downstairs. Now, they don't rent the downstairs at all they use it as a welcome center. That's where all tourists go to get brochures, etc. They have a lot of people to stop by to get information and brochures. She said when we hold our meetings in the board room it is so packed because it's so tiny. The Chamber and the Development Authority should be the front door to your community.

Commissioner Brad Crews said "so what we're going to do about holding weddings, reunions, proms and etc. there? How are we going to handle that when we turn it into offices?" Andrea said "we propose to have our offices upstairs".

Sonya Miller asked if there was \$90,000 left out of the \$100,000 SPLOST money for repairs because the money brought in front tourism should be spent to bring tourism in not on the property itself. There's also grants for historical sites and it takes someone to apply for those grants. I believe we would be an asset there. She understands that if they did move that it would affect the chamber funding some. I understand the Development Authority pays rent. Administrator Carter stated "we give them \$24,000 a year, so it would only \$4000, the \$20,000 would go away because we're paying rent and that sort of stuff". Sonya said "the only thing that would go away is \$2800" but, Administrator Carter explained "we're not going to pay rent to rent our own building. That's a city building".

Tommy Purser was present and stated that everything Jim Sewell said was correct. Years ago, the building was about to fall down and this town didn't want it to fall down. We made a deal with One Georgia that they would give us \$500,000 if we would put a culinary school in there. The long term goal was to make it into a community center. Secondly, the city bought the R.E.A. building when Buddy Spann was mayor and let the chamber go there for nothing. It was a way to help the Chamber of Commerce because of its importance. The reason the JDA and Tourism was paying rent was to help the Chamber. You can justify paying rent on your building to help the Chamber. They all agreed the Chamber is very important. Administrator Carter said "I believe the Chamber should self-sufficient".

Commissioner Vann Wooten stated government is not self-sufficient. You can't treat it like a business, it won't work. Commissioner Crews ask "was this supposed to be for the community"? The community pays taxes. If we have offices everywhere then the community can't use it. They explained offices wouldn't be everywhere only upstairs. Sonya Miller stated there's only a certain amount of people that can be up there anyway.

Mr. Purser informed them that the engineering firm that did the renovation strongly advised to no dancing up there because they were afraid the whole thing would fall down and that's why the upstairs would be better as an office. Attorney Powell said "it would have to be handicap assessable". Chairman Crosby said "why don't we give it a shot and see if it will work and if it don't we'll let Commissioner Crews build them a new building". Attorney Powell suggested why don't you table it and let them get some plans drawn up of what they want and bring it back to the board to show them what y'all would need and where it's going to add to the building. Chairman Crosby said "they don't want to table it they want to move in". Attorney Powell said "you got to have it handicap assessable before they can move in". Mr. Sewell said "there's an elevator in there, but it doesn't work". Attorney Powell stated an inspector will need to go in and see if all this can be done. Mr. Sewell asked again "who is going to pay the utilities and the upkeep of the building. With three entities in there it wouldn't be right for tourism to continue paying the whole bill. Mr. Sewell wanted everyone to be aware if you split the cost three ways it will be approximately \$475 each entity. It is an expensive building to keep up." Commissioner Crews told Chairman Crosby that he was not against them going there, I'm against anything damaging what I feel like belongs to the citizens. If we move in offices in there and it gets to where nobody can't use it for a wedding or prom anymore then I think we've done more harm than good. I don't have any problem with them going in there.

Commissioner Wooten stated "you're going to spend that money that you talked about regardless. The county is going to spend the money. There's \$90,000 to spend on it from the old SPLOST. There's money in the bank and the people needs to be able to see it on a wall, building or somewhere. We've got to spend the money to fix this stuff. We just went through the Fair Association thing and why did we do that. Because there's nothing going on. We're talking about repairs, we got to fix it. Whatever money is in that account designated for that building needs to be spent on it and fix it.

After much discussion,

Motion: To table.

Proposed: Commissioner James Benjamin

Second: Commissioner Brad Crews

Motion failed.

Commissioner Brad Crews said I'm not going to vote on this now not knowing how much it's going cost. You get me a number then I'm good with it.

Motion: To table and get an estimate next week for the repairs (anything that's wrong with it from bottom to top) for the Chamber and JDA to move in to the Big House.

Proposed: Commissioner Vann Wooten

Second: Commissioner James Benjamin

Motion Carried

ADJOURN – 4:54 p.m.



Sherri Lytle, Clerk



Ricky Crosby, Chairman