



**Board of Commissioners of Spalding County
Work Session
November 18, 2019
4:00 PM
119 E. Solomon St., Meeting Room 108**

The Spalding County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session in Room 108 of the Spalding County Annex on Monday, November 18, 2019, beginning at 4:00 p.m. with Chairperson Rita Johnson presiding. Commissioners Donald Hawbaker, James R. Dutton and Bart Miller were present for the meeting. Commissioner Gwen Flowers-Taylor joined the meeting at 4:03 p.m. Also present were County Manager, William P. Wilson, Jr., Assistant County Manager, Michelle Irizarry, Parks & Public Grounds Director, T.J. Imberger and Executive Secretary, Kathy Gibson who recorded the minutes.

I. OPENING (CALL TO ORDER) Chairperson Rita Johnson.

PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES AND ALL OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

Chairperson Johnson stated that the Invocation and Pledge to Flag would be conducted during the Extraordinary Session and it will not be done for the work session.

II. INVOCATION

III. PLEDGE TO FLAG

IV. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Commissioner Miller has requested a work session to discuss the Collection Centers and how to better handle the waste that is coming into these Centers.

Mr. Wilson stated that a number of the Board members have been out to the Collection Centers and noted that there are large amounts of bulky items being disposed of at these centers. Also, at times there are large amounts of household garbage disposed of at the collection centers. One center, Carver Road, handles yard waste and we have been constantly over-run with yard waste. Yard waste is not a priority for us, so we get to those containers as we can.

Mr. Wilson then stated that Commissioner Flowers-Taylor was at one of the Collection Centers when a U-Haul truck rolled up with what appeared to be the contents of two houses and unloaded those items into the bulky bin and filled it up. Commissioner Miller has been out to Collection Centers on a number of occasions when people pull up with trailers or large trucks with 20 or more bags of garbage.

Commissioner Miller stated they had a 16' trailer filled with garbage.

Mr. Wilson stated that staff believes that a lot of the yard waste is landscapers using the service for free and they are getting paid for removing the debris from their clients. Staff believes that there are mattresses and other items from rental houses being disposed of at these locations. Staff also believes that there may be individuals in a neighborhood who go to neighbors and charge their neighbors to pick up their trash and then deliver it to the Collection Centers.

Mr. Wilson stated that this is an abuse of the current system and staff has four

recommendations to be considered. All of the recommended items would become effective on March 1, 2020:

- Discontinue the acceptance of yard waste at the Carver Road facility. That is the only Collection Center where we accept yard waste. Yard waste can be disposed of at the Shoal Creek C&D Landfill. There is a minimum charge of \$15.00 which is what most residents would be required to pay.
- That the bulky items that are currently being accepted at the Collection Centers be discontinued at the same time. These items can be disposed of for a \$15.00 minimum charge at the City's transfer station, which is being reconstructed and is estimated to be opened in mid-December.
- We currently accept metals at our facilities, with the current recycle rate of \$0.03 a pound and barely 1.5 to 2 tons being collected in a 20' container, it would be a return of approximately \$6.00 that we collect and it costs us at a minimum of \$85-100 to deliver that metal to the recycle center to reap the \$6.00 return.
- When the City's transfer station reopens, they are going to start accepting comingling again which is the portion of the garbage that could be recycled. Limited to plastic bottles, paper and cardboard. They do not accept glass and haven't been accepting glass for over a year. We would propose to keep the comingling boxes at the Centers after the City opens back up their transfer station. Right now there is no place to dispose of these items where they could be recycled.

The City is also raising their tonnage rate at the Transfer Station to \$38.85 compared to the current \$36.00 per ton charge.

- Household Garbage – These are household garbage collection centers. Staff would like to limit this to 5 bags maximum per day.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that we have no control over the City raising the cost of solid waste. So as a resident of the City, it bothers her that the City is not recycling anymore. All of the trash goes into the same container, even before it burnt.

What she is saying is, before we jump in with what we are going to do we need to look at who is putting the bulk of yard waste into the containers at Carver Road. Was it City residents? Did County residents come in from southern Spalding County and bring their stuff over there. Will this really affect "unincorporated" Spalding County or people not in the municipality?

The other thing is we are no longer going to accept bulky items and people can take them to the transfer station for a minimum of \$15.00. Why is there a minimum? If you are going to go by weight, it is either what the weight it or it isn't. Is that our fee or is that the City's fee?

Mr. Wilson stated that is the City's fee. We do not set that rate structure.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then asked if we have numbers that will give us an estimate of how much bulky trash that has been received and how much yard waste has been received and what the savings would be over a year's time. We are then going to have to depend on our Code Enforcement personnel to make sure the people are not dumping their bulky goods somewhere.

T.J. Imberger stated that they are pulling approximately six containers a day of bulky items from all the centers. On yard waste it is literally, if they are emptied, it could be an unlimited amount in a day. We would not be able to move them fast enough.

Mr. Wilson then advised that so far in 2019 there were 22 tons of yard debris in January, 13.8 tons in February, 14.8 tons in March, 16 tons in April, 35 tons in May, 18 tons in June, 11 tons in July, 9 tons in August, 6 tons in September and we don't have October numbers yet. These numbers are tons and when the transfer station burned, we stopped emptying yard waste as much as we have done before.

Mr. Imberger stated that it would be approximately 505 loads of yard debris.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then asked how much that would equate to in dollars? We have to have some numbers that tell how much we are paying for the amount of trash that we are dumping and how much are we paying for the yard waste that we are dumping.

Mr. Imberger stated that the County pays \$23.32 per ton, which is the dump fee, it doesn't include the equipment utilization, the driver or any of those additional items.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that one of her biggest problems with this type of control is that people are going to throw trash out. So, we are going to end up with a County full of trash if we don't have anyway to control it. If nobody is actually looking to see if this is happening. On one side we may benefit, but on the other side we may have to make up for it in another area and that is why she wants to know the numbers. You can't just take something away without providing for some prevention of something worse happening.

Mr. Wilson advised that we have two Code Enforcement Officers budgeted and we have recently hired the second one who is scheduled to start tomorrow.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that even with two Code Enforcement Officers we are not going to be able to do what we need to do. If we are going to make this change on this side and ask people to change their behavior, but we do not police on the other side then we defeat the whole purpose. Instead of us having the trash going to a location, they are going to be putting it someplace else. She then stated that it sounds really good on paper, but when you look at the human side, what are we going to do to make sure that it doesn't end up on the side of the road?

Chairman Johnson then asked if staff has a strategy for this?

Mr. Imberger stated that his staff is already working with Code Enforcement regarding dumping on dirt roads and in the field. His staff is able to take pictures of the items dumped, they will try to find addresses within the items dumped prior to picking it up and this enables them to start the process for Code Enforcement and then Code Enforcement can make a case from that.

Mr. Imberger then advised that the numbers discussed for yard debris, was without yard debris being a priority, if we were to start actually making yard debris a priority, we could probably multiply the amount received at Carver Road by four very easily. As far as the dumping on dirt roads his staff is working very closely with Code Enforcement, his staff starts the first step when they get the call and get out to the location.

Mr. Imberger advised that once the transfer station opens back up, he will have an additional crew that he can put into the field due to the recent hiring of another trash truck driver. They can be in the field 2-3 days a week doing a regular route on what are known "hot spots" in the County. We are just waiting on the transfer station to reopen to start this.

Mr. Wilson stated that we are also going after them with Code Enforcement as well, if we can identify who is dumping, we are going to prosecute them as well. We are not in the business of picking up curbside.

Commissioner Miller stated that when Code Enforcement writes the ticket, we need a set fine for littering.

Mr. Wilson advised that is up to the Judge. We can not tell the Judge what to enforce.

Commissioner Dutton then advised that the current ordinance does have a Fine Schedule that they can follow if they want. Currently the fine is \$250, \$500 and \$1,000, he feels the fines should start at \$1,000.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated she feels we need to "beef up" our littering consequences across the board.

Chairperson Johnson then asked how other communities handle this issue? How does it work with our neighboring communities like Fayette, Henry and Clayton County?

Commissioner Dutton stated that the municipalities in Fayette County write littering tickets. Peachtree City doesn't put up with it all.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that Spalding County has a trash problem in general and while we can do some things to reinforce the enforcement, we also need to do some things regarding educating the public. We have to be strategic and we have to be intentional about the message we are going to give. We have the ordinances in place, we don't have the bodies to inspect and enforce. We may save some money on the tonnage if we don't have to pay for misuse of the collection centers, but the other side is that we may be overburdened with more trash and we can't control what we have now.

Commissioner Dutton then stated that if Officers are writing tickets for these violations then they are paying for their salaries. For example, if they write one littering ticket a day, they would pay for that officer's salary. Especially, if we make the change at the collection centers and increase the recommended fine, then our judges and magistrates would follow. Again, they are not bound to it, but in general they would follow.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that part of the answer is getting more feet on the ground, but we should not change the rules if we do not have the capability of enforcing and then educating the public on how we are going to do it, why we are going to do it and when they can expect for it to happen.

Commissioner Dutton stated that this is a good place to start, but we need to get the Sheriff and the various judges involved and soft commitments. We need to make it clear to everyone that this is going to become a priority. We are going to start treating this like the serious crime that it is.

Chairperson Johnson then asked, "What is the goal for today?"

Mr. Wilson stated that staff had presented suggestions. The Board had called for this and the staff recommendations have been presented, so the Board needs to tell us what you want us to do.

Chairperson Johnson stated that for the sake of the agenda, we need to let staff know how we would like them to handle Item 1. Then we can have the conversation once we move on to item 2.

Mr. Wilson then asked if the Board wants to make any changes at the Collection Centers.

Commissioner Dutton stated that he was not in favor of the proposed blanket ban on yard waste. Something has to happen, but to say that we don't accept yard waste at all, he doesn't feel the residents are going to want that. That being said, something has to be done, it may need to be bagged, it could be limited to weight or having an agreement with the City that we would redirect everyone with yard waste to the Transfer Station for a nominal fee.

Mr. Wilson then advised that we would direct them to the C & D Landfill. We have already worked that out with the landfill, it is the current policy now. If you live in unincorporated Spalding County you can take your Construction and Demolition (C&D) and your yard waste, which has to be separate, to the C & D Landfill. They go into two separate places for a minimum of \$15.00.

Mr. Wilson then stated that we currently do not have any statistics to show who is dumping yard debris. We don't know if you are a City resident or a County resident. We suspect a majority is within the City limits of Griffin and they are already paying for that service, yet they don't want it stacked on the corner of their yard to kill their grass until the City or a contractor gets there to carry it off. People are very peculiar when you question them as to where they live and where this garbage is coming from because they feel, and Commissioner Miller has said it at least a hundred times at least before he was commissioner that the people of his district feel that the only service that they get from the County is "the dump."

Commissioner Miller then stated that is correct, the people out where he lives feels it is too far to go to use the Senior Center, many of them don't have children so they are not using recreation. There are a lot of things the people out in the County don't even participate in because of the distance they would have to travel.

Mr. Wilson stated that we have treated garbage in this County for 50 years as the County is going to take care of it for you. Way back at intersections the County would put open dumpsters. It was nasty, people would set them on fire. Then when we built the first fire station in 1979, Mr. Goolsby got the idea, why not put compactors at the stations, have them at each location and let the firefighters push the trash down. So, from 1979 until 1997 there were compactors at each of the fire stations and the firemen were responsible for going out once an hour and packing down the trash and they hated that. The Collections Centers were built when the 1996 SPLOST passed.

Mr. Wilson then reminded the Board that only one center collects yard waste.

Commissioner Dutton stated logistically what you are proposing works, but if we do it as it is being proposed. Everyone is going to see it as we are turning them away

and shutting them down. However, if work out an agreement with these people, if it is the same agreement that currently exists, then we are providing them an alternative way and not simply discontinuing service. We are redirecting it to a new....

Mr. Wilson then stated that it would not be like we are discontinuing service, the service is still available at the Shoal Creek Landfill for a small fee.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that the big difference is that it is no longer going to be free for people to take it there. The next question is how much money are you going to be saving by rerouting the yard debris and the next question is what are you going to be doing with that money you save. Right now, we don't know how much money we will be saving. To get back to the original argument, it looks like we are picking out a certain group of people who like to use the Collection Centers and we are taking something away from them that they are used to having.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she feels the recommendations of staff are fine, but she doesn't have anything that helps her to see that we have collaborated with the Sheriff's Office regarding trash in the yard. That is going to come back to us to make sure when Public Works is riding down the road and they see a yard full of trash, they need to notify Code Enforcement. There needs to be a process for how we are going to work it. She is not good with just passing this without having more details about not only how we are going to implement it, but how are we going to engage the public in enough time and in a way to explain to them what we are doing, where we are doing it, why we are doing it and how we are doing it.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor advised that she feels it what is critical is how we approach this and how we want to implement it and she would really love for us to at least talk to the City of Griffin and say "Hey, this is a problem for us and we're sure it is a problem for you. We're going to want to do this." How can we let City residents know that this has changed.

Commissioner Miller stated that his biggest problem with the household garbage is the appearance that people are conducting business and bringing in 16' trailer with 40-50 bags on them. The machines won't hold but so much, then the operator has to close the machine and compact it. That is a big item to him. A lot of the people in the County who have complained about yard debris is because they go out there and the container is full and they can't put yard debris. The yard debris is not packed, it is thrown into the container and is loose. If it is people who are doing yards as a business the taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for them to dispose of their yard debris, they should have to go to the landfill and dispose of their yard debris. He stated he has been out to the Collection Center a number of times and pick up trucks will come in with garbage bags packed up higher than the cab of the truck and there will be 15-20 cars backed up waiting on this person to unload. Household garbage is what was meant to be handled by the Collection Centers, yard debris and bulky items were never meant to be handled by the Collection Centers.

Commissioner Miller stated that if we don't do anything else, we need to put a limit on the amount of garbage that people can bring in there. He wants a notice placed at the front gate the beginning of December and stays up there until it starts in March 1. He has been there and listened to people arguing with the man at the Collection Center about how much garbage they could dispose of. Commissioner

Miller then stated that something needs to be done. He added that 90% of the people who live in the County take care of their yard debris by burning it out in the yard for most of the year.

Commissioner Dutton then stated that he likes the idea of limiting it to a residential amount of trash of 5 bags a day. That would mean that all of the citizens of Spalding County could use the Collection Centers on a normal basis. He stated if we enter into an agreement with the City or the Landfill or whomever for them to take on the bulky items and yard debris so that we can focus on the household garbage at our Collection Centers it would be a viable alternative.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that she feels this area has been mismanaged for years and allowed to become something much, much more than a household garbage collection center. So, the concept of having these places available out in the County is a service to the residents, but we have allowed it to expand from household garbage to yard furniture, lawn mowers, old cars and all this other. The question is, in order to get back to that is where staff recommendation will take us, but she feels like the road to get there is going to be really rocky.

She agrees with Commissioner Miller that whatever we decide to implement, there needs to be a banner up at least 90 days before saying that as of a certain date we will only accept up to 5 bags of household garbage, all other debris has to be taken to and name the locations with the address. At the same time, this needs to be in the paper, it needs to be on the Facebook page, it needs to be everywhere we can possibly get it. Then we need to have some pamphlets put out, or have something mailed to people saying "Look, this is fix-in to change." People are going to be mad, even when all of this is said and done, they are going to be mad. This has to be a really well thought out, roll out.

She then stated that we need to include why we are doing this and the benefit to be derived from taking this action. This is what the 1996 SPLOST said these Collection Centers would be and we are getting back to what the Collection Centers were established to be. The taxpayers voted for Collection Centers for household garbage and we are going to make these centers available for what the taxpayers voted on back in 1996.

Mr. Wilson then asked the Board for direction for staff.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated there needs to be a strategy, there needs to be order and there needs to be a huge information opportunity for people to know and understand why we are doing this.

Commissioner Dutton stated that the Citizen Engagement Specialist could focus on this and let the public know, this is how much it cost the County to provide this service, this is how we are being taken advantage of and we need a solution. Getting out that information.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that being said if we are no longer paying for the yard debris, we will not be accepting it at Carver Road. What savings are going to be realized from discontinuing this service? Are we really going to be saving money? If it is a significant savings, would we be brave enough to hire another Code Enforcement person to help enforce the littering problem. There needs to be somebody saying there is a plan and a reason for us to be doing this, not to just save us money.

T.J. Imberger stated that if there is trash on the road, they do not pass it, they pick it up and they train their staff on what to do to make a case for Code Enforcement.

Mr. Wilson stated that a significant number of Public Works employees have devices that are paid for by the County where they can create work orders.

Mr. Imberger stated that with the new system being implemented all the employee will have to do is push a button and it will GPS their location, so they won't even have to put in addresses and they will be able to forward that information directly.

Mr. Wilson asked the Board to allow us to do a 90-day test beginning in January. Mr. Imberger will talk with his staff about looking for violations and if they see something to report it. He then advised that he would have Code Enforcement to do a "top 10" list of violations such as furniture in yards, garbage in yards, abandon vehicles etc.

Mr. Imberger advised that this information could be entered into Facility Dude and would be the beginning of a record to be presented in court.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that with this as part of the plan she is good with not looking to hire any additional personnel. We can say that one of the steps we have implemented is we have trained 35 people in Public Works to be aware of the top 6 Code Enforcement violations related to trash.

Mr. Wilson stated that it is unfortunate that we have to take a stance that will hurt the honest citizen out there that may have a mattress or a bulky item every 10-15 years due to the people who take advantage of the service.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she is fine with the proposals, but she wants to know what the roll-out plans are and what the public perception plan is going to be.

Mr. Imberger stated that we can do banners, we can do signs, we can do graphics, we can do a logo, if you want to. We can do all of this within the 90-day period.

Mr. Wilson then asked what the Board is agreeing to move forward with right now?

- 5 Bag limit on Household Garbage per day
- No bulky at this time.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she would like for us to start with bulky items and limiting the amount of Household Garbage. She feels that the savings on yard waste could be miniscule at certain times of the year because there is no yard waste. She would like at this time for us not to address yard waste and maybe in 6 months we can revisit the yard waste issue.

Mr. Wilson clarified 5 bags of household garbage per day and no bulky items will be taken in at this time effective March 1 and get out a campaign and provide information for at least 90 days prior to implementation.

Commissioner Miller stated at the Collection Centers there needs to be a permanent sign that Household Garbage will only be accepted at this location beginning March 1, 2020 and will be limited to 5 bags per day per household and no bulky.

Mr. Imberger stated that they will have a big yellow sign with this information along with the information on where you can carry both bulky items for disposal.

Mr. Wilson asked if this would be ratified in this evening's meeting or if they wanted it placed on the December 4th meeting?

Commissioner Miller stated that staff needs to write up their proposal for implementing this, give us a sample of the signs and banners.

Mr. Wilson then stated that we would plan for the 2nd meeting in December which would be December 16th and that will give us enough time to develop a plan of action.

Commissioner Dutton stated it would also give staff an opportunity to compile the numbers on what we will be saving by implementing this plan.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that she would like permission to work with Assistant County Manager, Michelle Irizarry, and staff or T.J. Imberger. When she travels in other places she sees where there are deposit locations for cans and bottles and things like that. One of the things they talked about at ACCG is the County has a right to levy a tax on plastic items or other items that are recyclable, but as an incentive for the community. She feels that with a very small investment we could easily start a program to have people collect plastic containers, aluminum cans, beer bottles and incentivize the community to collect these items instead of throwing them away. She believes this will get stuff picked up off of the street that would normally not be picked up.

Mr. Wilson stated that staff will come back to you at the December meeting with a "Marketing Plan."

2. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor has requested an opportunity to discuss the litter on roadways in Spalding County and possible revisions to the Spalding County Code of Ordinances to strengthen the laws currently on the books.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Miller to adjourn the meeting at 5:19 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by all.