

After Agenda

Board of Commissioners of Spalding County
Work Session
Thursday, February 25, 2021
3:00 PM
Room 108, Annex Building

The Spalding County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session in Room 108 of the Spalding County Annex on Thursday, February 25, 2021, beginning at 3:00 p.m. with Chairman Clay Davis presiding. Commissioners Gwen Flowers-Taylor, James Dutton (who joined the meeting at 4:40 p.m.), Ryan Bowlden and Rita Johnson were present for the meeting. Also present were County Manager, William P. Wilson, Jr., Assistant County Manager, Michelle Irizarry, County Attorney, Stephanie Windham and Kathy Gibson, Executive Secretary to record the minutes.

I. OPENING (CALL TO ORDER) by Chairman Clay Davis.

PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES AND ALL OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

II. INVOCATION

Commissioner Gwen Flowers-Taylor, District 1, delivered the invocation.

III. PLEDGE TO FLAG

Commissioner Ryan Bowlden, District 4 led the group in the Pledge to the Flag.

IV. APPOINTMENTS

1. Chairman Davis requests an Executive Session for discussion or deliberation on the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary actions or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a county officer or employee as provided in O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(6).

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Bowlden to enter into an Executive Session for discussion or deliberation on the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary actions or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a county officer or employee as provided in O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(6).at 3:02 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by all.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Johnson to close the Executive Session at 3:56 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by all.

2. Discussion of City of Griffin's response to County's request regarding City Park and City Pool and provide direction to staff on how to proceed.

Mr. Wilson stated attached to the Agenda is the County's request with regard to City Park and City Park Pool, you will also find the City's initial response to the request and then Mr. Smith's clarifying letter that states what the City would be willing to do. We have been talking about this for approximately three months. We sent a request to the City of things that the County would like for the City to do should we

choose to take City Park Pool and City Park operations over.

The City responded and the way that Mr. Wilson and Chairperson Flowers-Taylor interpreted their response was that they were not willing to provide any funding, but after Chairperson Flowers-Taylor and Mr. Wilson talked with Mr. Smith, he wrote the attached clarification letter that states they are not opposed to some funding and probably using some of the excess SPLOST funds to contribute, but that is to the Family Fun Pool and Splash Pad at the location of the current City Pool. As far as City Park, they did say that they were not willing to discuss LOST percentages at this time and they were not prepared to do that. They felt that we could maintain City Park with the personnel that we currently have.

Mr. Wilson stated that is where we currently stand. On Monday night's agenda, Paragon Consulting will be providing us with three options at Cowan Road, behind Pickleball on the School Board's property. One utilizing the school's driveway, one with an entrance off Cowan and one utilizing both. They will also be presenting to us the costs for the Lakes at Green Valley. That is for the competition pool, therapy/instructional pools.

Mr. Wilson stated there has been discussions regarding what was originally on the SPLOST and what was in everyone's mind as to what was on the SPLOST versus what we are looking at now. The size and scope of this project started out significantly smaller than what is currently being considered. So, costs were dramatically escalated as well. We went from one pool to two pools, we went from six lanes to eight lanes, we went from a retractable cover to a brick and mortar building. Lots of things have changed because we did a bad job of our homework, we did not really know what was needed and we used estimates that were not based on professional design and engineering. The commissioners have voted that anytime in the future that we do a SPLOST we will get engineering and architectural estimates with a total construction package costs and use that for any future SPLOST projects, so this won't happen again.

Mr. Wilson stated that he, T.J. Imberger and Michelle Irizarry looked at City Pool and came up with a design that would bring it up to County Standards. We talked about redoing the building, redoing the concrete, the City recently put in a salt system for the pool. The pool is 50+ years old, the parking for the pool is good, but everything else needs a major rehab or tear down. We included a couple of pavilions, a splash pad, an area where people could congregate during inclement weather and that total cost was \$1.19 million. Spalding County has a standard that we set over the years and our standard is state of the art for Parks and Recreation. Nobody else in the State or the Southeast can do Park and Rec as good as we can.

That is where we are, the City doesn't want to give up any Local Option Sales Tax to help with that. Mr. Imberger has developed a budget of what it would take for the Parks Crews to come in and take over City Park and over the next two to three years bring it up to our standards and it is a pretty hefty budget. Mr. Smith, on the other hand, states that the City of Griffin spends approximately \$80,000 a year maintaining City Park, but that amount will not touch the way we maintain our facilities.

Commissioner Johnson stated that simply for safety reasons, how much would it cost to bring the pool up to code for the safety of the children?

Mr. Imberger stated that the remodel of the building would be approximately \$260,000.

Mr. Wilson stated that the facility doesn't meet ADA codes for the ramps and inclines and then there is fencing that needs to be replaced. The big things would be the building and a place for the kids to be able to move to should there be inclement weather or lightening. Right now, they all just crowd into the center of the building.

Mr. Imberger stated then you would have to consider the pool, itself, is 50+ years old. Which is not a good starting point.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then started that her concern is that with all the changes that have been done and things that have been added on, what has happened is that the "fun pool" part of the whole arrangement has been completely wiped off the slate. She totally agrees that we shouldn't build a six-lane pool because we have kids in competition at the high school. So that was added on and unfortunately it was at the expense of the fun part of the park that was supposed to be created for the community. When we sold this to the community, we talked about how all the kids were going over to Henry and Fayette County to the water parks at \$10-\$15 a day and why should we not get those same funds. Why are we spending our money in another county? Her disappointment that in getting to where we are on this project, we have totally negated what it was that the people wanted and in all actuality are we not only building something that we feel the general population would not get to use. We need the Aquatic Facility, but we need both.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she would like for someone with expertise to look at City Pool and advise if it would be cheaper to "dig a hole" someplace else or do something here. She feels we need to know that before we start talking about whether something is good. In dealing with the City of Griffin, if we decide to build a fun pool somewhere else, they will have no incentive to utilize any of their excess SPLOST in a location that is good with us. She then asked Ms. Windham how we can verify that the City is not supposed to be closing that pool. Before the County makes an investment in that location, would we be tying ourselves to that old contract with the Department of Interior.

Stephanie Windham, County Attorney, stated that the City of Griffin does have an agreement with the Department of Interior on the pool. She feels we are going to have to do more investigation because the State of Georgia was supposed to have been doing inspections every three years since 1971 and we don't know when the last time an inspection was done. So, the only issue is, there is no time limit on this grant and aid. It reads as if it would be in perpetuity, but there is some language in it that basically talks about its useful life. Therefore, 50 years might be more than what would be determined as a useful life for a pool.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she just wanted to make sure that the County would not be encumbered by the obligations of the grant that established the pool in the first place. She feels like the people who voted for the SPLOST voted for that SPLOST because we put certain things on it. So, as a taxpayer she would be very concerned if you told me you were going to do certain things with the money I voted for and we didn't follow through with those things.

She then said that Mr. Wilson had mentioned approaching the Hospital Authority in looking for assistance for the Therapy Pool. She has a whole different picture of that, but she also looks at the recreation part and it would be of interest to the Hospital Authority if every child in grade school could learn to swim before they got out of grade school. So, what we have to offer in terms of a healthy element to this will be more of a driver for the Hospital Authority providing us with funding. Not that it's not a good idea for the Therapy Pool, but if they are looking at the biggest overall bang for the buck how will this something that will benefit a larger part of the community and the public? If we are going to do this, we need to have something to present to them as our plan and this is how it will benefit the community. This is how recreation will be involved or this is how the senior program will benefit. Those are the kind of things that will say this is truly a program that will hit a large spectrum of the community.

Ms. Windham stated that if we were to do the family fun and splash at the City Pool location there would be no issue if we would be doing anything in violation of this grant, because this would fit into the recreational purpose.

Mr. Wilson advised that Kenny Smith is watching the proceedings and states that the last inspection of the pool was in 2018.

Commissioner Johnson stated she wanted to talk about the City Pool and the SPLOST, both Mr. Wilson and Commissioner Flowers-Taylor are right the concept started small and has grown significantly and the fun piece of it is out. So, our job now is to find a way to put the fun piece back into this plan. She believes that this still can be done. It may not be in the sense that we do it all up front right now, but she believes that for the community, for the citizens and for those who actually would consider another SPLOST, we can have some type of fun recreational aquatic feature, whether it be at City Park or whether it be at another location. With the same SPLOT funds that we are using right now for the Therapeutic Pool.

She understands that on Monday night the location is going to be established. So, she feels we need to determine what we can do with the SPLOST funding for the fun piece of this, where we are going to do it at and what kind of money are we talking about. That is going to be a big piece, before the citizens decide to do anything regarding another SPLOST. We need to hold our end of this bargain up. That way, if we must break it up, then we have to be creative and we can do that. That is what she wants to talk about.

Mr. Wilson stated that he and Mr. Imberger have discussed splash pads and smaller pools. Mr. Wilson stated he would start, and Mr. Imberger will finish up.

Mr. Wilson advised that we are talking about a fun part of the pool, a splash pad much like the one that was in the photographs that were used for SPLOST. It is around a \$300,000 splash pad.

Mr. Imberger advised that splash pads are dependent on the features. They all have a base cost, then depending on the different features, you add from there.

Mr. Wilson stated that would be just the cost of the splash pad, just like with everything there is some grading work and other things. What Mr. Imberger is

talking about is the splash pad assembly only. So, you probably need to add 50-100% more for the other things involved: the grading, the wiring, the lighting etc. Splash pads can be where you use all potable water where you have a huge water bill, or you use recycle water that's been treated and pushed back through. Most utilize recycled water.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that if we had a "real number" on the City Pool, it would give us some idea of what we would be looking at in terms of the excess SPLOST and would also give the City an idea of what they would be able to afford to do toward that. If we can do that with the excess funds, then anything we ask the Hospital Authority.

Mr. Imberger stated that the real number for City Park is \$1.2 million to do the building, the pool, the splash pad, and pavilions. This is the real number from Paragon.

Mr. Wilson then stated that you would still be dealing with a 50+ year old pool.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that she doesn't know what that means, can it be refurbished, or do we need to dig another hole in the ground and start over? We need to have a swimming pool person to tell us how that works. She knows it costs a lot of money to dig up concrete, but it also costs a lot of money to dig another hole.

Mr. Imberger stated that even though he is not a "pool person," 50+ years is a long life for a pool.

Commissioner Johnson then stated that if we were to put money into this 50+ year old pool, what are the odds that in a few years we would have to invest more money into this pool?

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that is what the City has been doing every year is putting more money into this pool.

Mr. Imberger then added that should the County choose to build a pool and a splash pad somewhere else, it would not be the same pool as City Pool, because City Pool was built as a competition pool. It would be for recreation only, you would do zero entry to a depth of 4 feet, you could build a 25x30' or a 35x40' you would be looking at a different usage than what that pool was built for. Half of that pool is a diving well, which hasn't had a diving board in 15-20 years. It is a 11-12' depth. You would be building something strictly for recreation. That is what Clayton County builds at their recreation centers.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that we are not looking for anything with long lanes or temperature control year-round, we are just looking for a big hole, clean water and someplace that you can let your kids come in.

Commissioner Johnson then asked if we are willing to take this concept and invest into the City Pool, or once again building our own? What makes sense? She would like for the kids to have somewhere to enjoy the water. In the meantime, to do things and do it right, like we do, what makes sense for the kind of money we are

talking about. She does not feel comfortable in putting a lot of money in the City Pool right now after she has seen it. It simply doesn't make sense. She feels we need to create our own, even though time may be an issue. What can we do in the interim?

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated if there is an option of getting a new pool versus a 50+ year old pool, but she wants to know that we have decided that is what we are going to do so it is part of the plan. Once that is decided then we will know how we can go to the Hospital Authority and ask for money. It is not our responsibility to get the City Pool opened. She wants the pool open because the kids in the community didn't have anyplace to swim last year. It is not our pool, it is the City's pool. We can ask the City if they would still be willing to do something with a swim facility that is not at the City Park, but they would have to know that there is going to be something. She then stated that if the remainder of the Board feels it is just too big of a financial risk to go in on that pool, she will go with the majority.

Mr. Wilson then asked if there is a consensus that currently we are not interested in City Park pool, but we may be interested in building a splash pad with eventually another recreation pool

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated "no" if we go into the business, we need a pool. We don't need a splash pad that is just someplace where you can go and get wet. That is not what we said, we said we were going to have a fun pool. The City may very well, if we choose not to go there, they had some plans to build a splash pad, she doesn't know if they will do it because recreation is not their thing. Her though process of what we were saying is at least we agree that since that was part of the project for the SPLOST, we need to figure out how to give the people what we said they were going to get.

Chairman Davis then stated that the original SPLOST stated we would have a pool which included a splash pad. Now we are getting a competition and therapeutic instructional pool and you two are talking about us having another pool for family fun because that is what we told everyone on the SPLOST.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that is exactly what she is saying.

Commissioner Johnson stated that after visiting Fairmont with Mr. Imberger and seeing the possibilities and the money that it would cost to do it is something that is very doable. She was sold on it and that would make the vote for her to have the Aquatic Center at the Lakes at Green Valley it would be easier for her knowing we have a community pool at Fairmont.

Commissioner Bowlden stated he feels that the whole project should be stuck to the original plans that were presented at the time of the SPLOST and to be honest, District 4 could probably care less about a pool. We are so far out there we are not going to come to Griffin to go to Tyus Park, we are not going to the Lakes of Green Valley to use an Aquatic Center. He feels we should simply give the people what we promised, or we'll never sell another SPLOST.

Kelly Carmichael, Parks and Leisure Services Supervisor, then stated that one of the duties we have to the County is to keep up with current trends and attend education workshops. You pay for us to go to these things so that we can make the right

decisions when it comes to county dollars. Current trends, across the United States, and we are connected nationwide are building stand-alone splash pads and many communities have more than one. They become destinations, when Hampton opened theirs the Day Care Centers came by the bus load and brought kids to the location. Whatever, you decided to do the stand alone splash pad will be hugely popular. It will probably become something of a management nightmare in the beginning because it will be so fresh and new. Be aware this this is a huge movement across the United States building standalone splash pads.

Mr. Imberger then advised that splash pads don't require lifeguards, they don't require changing rooms or showers.

Ms. Carmichael stated that splash pads are affordable and most of them are open, they don't charge a fee to come. Many of them don't charge a fee unless it becomes a staffing cost.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she doesn't have a problem with Ms. Carmichael advising what the trends are. She just knows that kids running around in the summer are not going to want to go to a place where you swim laps. You may want to go and play in a splash pad, but some of them want to jump in the water.

Mr. Imberger then reminded the Board that with a splash pad all you have to do is set the amount that you want to spend, and you can go from there.

Mr. Wilson stated that we could ask Paragon to give us a price for a "recreational pool" at Fairmont with and without a splash pad and then a splash pad alone, with or without a pool. He does feel that beside the Community Garden would be an awesome spot for this.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that the area being discussed was supposed to be green space. She feels it is great that we are bringing stuff into the community, but she doesn't want to see the green space eaten up. Her concern would be that you are going to take up the little spot next to the garden so the only green space would be the garden.

Commissioner Johnson stated that she felt that should be a decision for the community. She feels that we should bring them in to make the decision and we can advise the concept we are considering, and it would be on the green space. How important is the green space to the community over putting some type of recreational facility, we are talking about a public hearing? She feels that is something the community should voice their opinion on, not something for the Board to decide.

Chairman Davis then stated that we are now talking about a second pool and a splash pad at a minimum.

Mr. Wilson stated that he would get a price for a splash pad and a price for a pool and then we will give you a price for both. He will give you an operational cost as well.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that we are no longer interested in doing

anything with the City Pool.

Consensus of the Board is that we are no longer interested in doing anything with the City Pool.

Chairman Davis then stated that we are going to get information on a splash pad and the possibility of another pool.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that we will look at what is presented and once we decide on what we can do, then we can start talking about going forward. Do we need to let the City know that we are no longer interested in pursuing the City Pool?

Mr. Wilson asked if the Board would authorize him to send a letter to the City of Griffin stating that the Commissioners at their work session advised that we are no longer interested in City Park Pool. Mr. Wilson then advised that he would love to have a decision regarding City Park today as well.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Bowlden that we authorize the County Manager to contact the City of Griffin to let them know we are pursuing other alternatives for City Park and the City Pool. Motion carried unanimously by all.

3. Discuss proposed request to the Hospital Authority for funding toward the Therapy Pool at the Aquatic Center.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she had talked with Kelly Carmichael about what we can do to create a healthy initiative surrounding the pool. We don't have anything yet, but she feels it is going to be important for there to be something from recreation that shows how we will utilize the pool to promote healthier living in the community. Whether it is senior aerobics, water safety classes, CPR classes or swimming lessons. She feels that we need to be able to show the Hospital Authority how the request for these funds is going to benefit the entire community. She doesn't want to only ask the Hospital Authority about the therapy pool. Because what we are designating as a therapy pool is not really a therapy pool, it is a warmup pool. It can be used for therapy, but not in a sense there is a therapist on staff to assist you with whatever you need to do in the pool.

While it may be impressive, calling it a therapy pool, she thinks it would be more impressive for them to know there is a community program that will be surrounding the aquatic center. Whether it is the school doing swim lessons, we need to be able to say we are coordinating with the school system, or that the school swim team is going to be here. She feels it would be premature to start talking with the Hospital Authority just about the therapy pool when we don't have any other community partners and when we don't have recreation plan that shows a justification to show why we feel funds from the Hospital Authority can be utilized for this.

Chairman Davis then asked if there was a timing issue for the Hospital Authority?

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor responded that we have been talking with the Hospital Authority on and off, but we have never given them anything official saying what it is we want. She then stated that she got the opinion from when she served

on the Authority that they are willing to invest into this because it is for a community effort. So, she feels we need to have our paperwork in order when we go to them asking for money. That is an absolute.

Mr. Wilson advised that once the site for the pool is decided and once we get through a portion of the design plan and show them the actual layout on a piece of paper. This is what it is going to look like, and this is what it is going to be used for will be the time to approach the Hospital Authority.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she wants to add that whatever the pitch is coming from the therapeutic side and coming from the health side, that we also get staff to give us the “elevator speech.” Because she feels we need to talk with Hosasiki and Caterpillar. These are community partners who want to do stuff in the community. We just need to tell them what it is they can do. She would like to come to the table with some community partners when we talk to the Hospital Authority.

Chairman Davis stated that Commissioner Dutton would start to work on acquiring partners and we will have the staff putting together the therapeutic, kids learning to swim and be able to present it as a whole as to how it will effect the entire community. He stated that it is important that we are all on the same message.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/Second by Johnson/Flowers-Taylor to adjourn the meeting at 4:51 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by all.