

After Agenda

**Board of Commissioners of Spalding County
Regular Meeting
Thursday, May 6, 2021
4:00 PM
Room 108, Annex Building**

The Spalding County Board of Commissioners participated in a Joint Meeting with the Cities of Griffin and Sunny Side Board of Commissioners on Thursday, May 6, 2021, beginning at 4:00 p.m. at 119 E. Solomon Street, Meeting Room 108, Griffin, Georgia.

In attendance for Spalding County were: Chairman Clay Davis, Commissioners Gwen Flowers-Taylor, James R. Dutton and Ryan Bowlden. Commissioner Johnson joined the meeting at 4:12 p.m. Also present for Spalding County were: County Manager William P. Wilson, Jr., Assistant County Manager, Michelle Irizarry, County Attorney Stephanie Windham and Executive Secretary, Kathy Gibson to record the minutes.

In attendance for the City of Griffin were: Mayor Doug Hollberg, Commissioners David Brock, Cora Flowers and Cynthia Reid-Ward-Ward. Commissioner Rodney McCord joined the meeting at 4:46 p.m. Also in attendance for the City of Griffin were City Manager, Jessica O'Connor, Planning and Development Director, Chad Jacobs, Director of Watershed Management, Dr. Brant Keller and Executive Secretary, Susan Bartholomew to record the minutes.

In attendance for the City of Sunny Side were: Mayor Bill Slaughter and Gay Whitman.

There was no one in attendance for the City of Orchard Hill.

I. OPENING (CALL TO ORDER)

Chairman Clay Davis called the meeting to order for Spalding County.

Mayor Doug Hollberg called the meeting to order for the City of Griffin.

Mayor Bill Slaughter called the meeting to order for the City of Sunny Side.

PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES AND ALL OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

II. INVOCATION

Mayor Doug Hollberg, City of Griffin delivered the Invocation.

III. PLEDGE TO FLAG

Chairman Clay Davis, Spalding County led the Pledge to the Flag.

IV. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discuss with the Cities of Griffin, Orchard Hill and Sunny Side projects for inclusion in a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and/or a

Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (T-SPLOST) referendum to be held November 2, 2021.

Spalding County Manager, William Wilson, stated that we are here today to talk about a TSPLOST and a possible SPLOST. In order to call a TSPLOST, you must be collecting an existing SPLOST. A TSPLOST can only collect funds for five years maximum and the maximum amount is 1%. The County Commissioners at their meeting last month voted to estimate \$750,000 per month and in 60 months that would equal \$45 million with an intergovernmental agreement. The County can also choose to implement a TSPLOST by ourselves, without the cities and if we do the maximum we can levy is $\frac{3}{4}$ of one cent for a total collection of \$33.75 million.

If we do another SPLOST and have another intergovernmental agreement collections can run for 6 years or 72 months. \$750,000 times 72 months is approximately \$54 million and we can agree to whatever split we want.

The County Commissioners at this time are looking favorably toward a TSPLOST and we have placed on our website and on social media a listing of projects for public comment. We are discussing putting \$20 million into the resurfacing of roads. That is \$4 million per year for 5 years. We're looking at \$5 million for a local match for ARC and GDOT projects. We're looking at approximately \$2.5 million for equipment needs in Public Works which is a recommendation from the Public Works Department not from the Board at this time. And we are looking at project management, bond issuance cost, design and engineering cost of \$6.2 million, that is assuming a split where the County would get \$33, 750,000.

We did send out the required notices which are attached to the Agenda for Orchard Hill, Sunny Side and the City of Griffin. We are in a time crunch due to a couple of things: The Secretary of State's Office utilizes Kennesaw State College for the ballot preparation and in order to meet the deadline of August 2nd to submit the ballot question to the ballot builders, we have to do something in June/July at the latest and we have a pretty aggressive schedule as you will note in the back of the Agenda package. The calendar details publication deadlines you must meet, all the intergovernmental agreements that have to be signed, if we choose to go that way. First, Second, Third and Fourth Notices. Not only that, the County Commissioners have to call for the election and the Board of Elections have to call for an election. We have some local legislation that has created some administrative problems there as well. We have a number of things working against us, but we do need to do this during May or June at the latest so that we can get everything ready and be ready for a possible vote in November.

Should we decide to have a TSPLOST in November and that fails, the current SPLOST will cease collections at the end of March 2022. The earliest we could call for a SPLOST would be May of 2022 for November of 2022. You would have to put a regular SPLOST back in before considering a TSPLOST again at a later date if that SPLOST is approved. One of the key things to remember is you have to have a SPLOST collection period running. You have to have an approved SPLOST before you can even call for a TSPLOST vote.

That is why the County Commissioners are thinking of having a TSPLOST now because we have a current SPLOST running and should it not pass in November then we could come up in the first or second quarter of 2022 and call for a regular SPLOST vote and then a TSPLOST later that year.

Commissioner Dutton stated that if a TSPLOST passes then it would actually take effect at the same time that the current SPLOST is slated to end correct?

Mr. Wilson stated that is correct, there would be no overlaps and the State Revenue Department instead of depositing the funds in the 2016 SPLOST for April collections which we would get in May, those would go into the new TSPLOST. The vendors would not have to change their machines or any calculations, the SPLOST would “fall off” and TSPLOST would pick up. So, if you went to purchase something that cost a dollar it would still be \$1.07 with taxes. There would be no change there, the money would just be put into a TSPLOST account versus the SPLOST account.

Chairman Davis then stated that he isn't interested in forcing a decision today, if we can come to a decision today, that would be great, but there is no desire on his part to force a decision. The first big step is to decide which one we want to do first.

Commissioner Brock, City of Griffin, then asked that the timetable be repeated.

Mr. Wilson stated that within the next 30 day a decision needs to be made if there will be a TSPLOST or a SPLOST. If there is going to be one, which one it is going to be. Is there going to be an intergovernmental agreement, what the distribution will be and what the projects will be.

Chairman Davis then advised that the County Board feels the number one issue inside of our county is roads and we think we need to do a TSPLOST. Nothing is sexy about roads. Everyone is going to need to get involved in saying this is the way we need to go.

Mr. Wilson then asked that everyone remember that a TSPLOST maximum collection is five years or 60 months. A regular SPLOST with an Intergovernmental Agreement can go up to 72 months. At 60 months the estimated \$750,000 is \$45 million. At 72 months for a SPLOST is \$54 million.

Chairman Davis stated that everyone is probably aware that the SPLOST spending from 2016 did not equal the numbers that were stated in the referendum. We have gone over budget on almost every project. The engineering and design work was not well done and so we have gone over. That will be much easier this time because we will not have to go through the engineering or design issue. We are talking about, from our standpoint, just resurfacing of roads. We know how much it costs to resurface roads as we do it all the time. We have put out through all the Social Media asking for comments back. We used a very specific statewide criteria to pick the roads and then broke them down by year.

Mayor Hollberg stated that the City Commissioners are committed to supporting either a T-SPLOST or a SPLOST. He noted that, particularly, the City can support a T-SPLOST in 2021 and a SPLOST in 2022.

Chairman Davis addressed Mayor Slaughter of Sunny Side and asked his thoughts. Mr. Slaughter noted that it does not make much difference to Sunny Side. A TSPLOST would not help Sunny Side as they do not own roads.

Commissioner Ward then asked at what point the percentages would be discussed?

Chairman Davis stated that his hope is that we are agreeing that we are going to do a TSPLOST in November. Once we have agreed to hold a TSPLOST then we will negotiate on a percentage.

Mr. Wilson stated that it appears a consensus from both Boards that TSPLOST would be the most favorable by the County and City of Griffin Board at this time.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor and Commissioner Johnson then stated that they wanted to go on the record that they feel that the County is not ready to go forward with a TSPLOST at this time.

Commissioner Dutton then stated that the last SPLOST had a lot of neat things on it that we could have done without, none of which were needs. We could have done without everything on that SPLOST. We can't do without roads. If this one waives from the main objective of roads, you are going to totally lose his support. This needs to be a SPLOST of needs. The County needs roads, the City needs roads and we have got to do something to fix them. Commissioner Bowlden agrees with Commissioner Dutton 100%.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the last TSPLOST failed by less than 100 votes and chances are there is a high probability of it passing.

Commissioner Dutton stated that in the last TSPLOST what he heard was complaints regarding money that was designated to pave dirt roads. Many people who live on dirt roads, don't want the roads paved.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that she agrees there is a need for resurfacing of roads, but if it wasn't for the recreation infrastructure that the County put in place during COVID 19, there would be a lot more people in psychiatric hospital if there had not been parks and places for people to go. Recreation infrastructure is just as important as sidewalks and trails. The reason that she is against our doing a SPLOST is because as a County we have not completed the projects on the last SPLOST and she has heard from the Community that is being affected by this, that they will not support the SPLOST because there is an issue of trust. What is to make them believe that we are going to complete the projects that we say we are going to complete in Transportation, since we didn't complete the projects that we said we were going to do in the last SPLOST. In a perfect world, for her, it would be to move forward with a SPLOST to complete the projects that are not complete and place the remainder of the funds on roads and transportation, but it's not her decision.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that the Boards are here today because we know that we need funding for roads, but she is not sure that the public is feeling that the needs are as serious as they are because we haven't done what we said we were going to do. That would be an option and we still run the chance of not having it pass. She stated that she doesn't know the answer, these are simply her concerns.

Mayor Hollberg stated that the City put \$7 million in the last SPLOST for funding the City's share of matches and for road projects. He then asked what the County is anticipating the shortage being for the 2016 SPLOST projects.

Mr. Wilson stated that we are looking at \$10-12 million at this time to include the family pool and the two splash pads.

Mayor Hollberg then stated that the County is looking at approximately \$12 million basically, what if we do an 18 month SPLOST to cover the costs of those projects, get them done and then come back. Do a TSPLOST, then immediately come back with a countywide SPLOST to cover the cost of these projects.

Chairman Davis then stated that he believes that before we get to voting time for TSPLOST in November, we will have taken care of these projects. He feels confident and we know the requirement and we are working to fill that. Then then wanted a double check that we all agree on a TSPLOST in November?

Commissioner Ward then stated that she couldn't say if she is in agreement or not at this time.

Chairman Davis stated that if we get to the point to where we are in agreement for a November TSPLOST, then we can start the negotiation on a split. We are looking for a win, win for both sides and to lead us in this Commissioner Flowers-Taylor will lead off.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that the recommendations are coming from the recommendations of staff, which is we wanted to know how we could fairly determine based on all the roads in the County. How many miles were city roads and how many miles were county roads as GDOT measures them. Based on those numbers we came up with the percentages of the roadway being 20% of the roads are in the city and 80% are in the county would be a good distribution. So, as we discussed this we hit at a number of 75%-25%, but as she shared with the Chairman earlier today whether the city chooses to participate in the other entities, every place in the county is in the county and so when the SPLOST happens, if it is transportation then we need to be looking at what road improvement projects will happen countywide, not what is in unincorporated Spalding County and what is in the municipality of the city because Commissioner Johnson and Commissioner Flowers-Taylor both have a lot of roads in their districts that are in the city. She feels they are getting skipped over in a lot of these instances. This is a starting point for us to explain how we got to those numbers.

Commissioner Flowers then stated that based on the documentation provided in the packet, is someone from the county able to provide information on how the split was determined in the previous TSPLOST. She understands how we got to the current recommendation, but she would like to know what justifies the difference between the split in the last TSPLOST and the current proposed split. She would like for someone to explain why there is a difference in the percentages.

Mr. Wilson stated that the previous TSPLOST vote had an intergovernmental agreement for 66 ½% and 33 ½%, that was just a number that the city and the county agreed upon, there was no basis for those numbers, it was simply something that both entities agree on. The City of Orchard Hill's project was to be funded from City of Griffin funds and the City of Sunny Side's project was to be funded from County funds. We met in a room like this and talked and that is what the numbers turned out to be. There was no basis for this split.

Commissioner Reid-Ward stated that it was her understanding from discussions prior to this meeting that the county had considered doing a TSPLOST without the city.

Mr. Wilson advised that is an option in the law.

Commissioner Reid-Ward then asked if the county implements a TSPLOST without the city then what happens to the roads inside the city?

Commissioner Flowers then restated would there be paving of any city roads or just the roads in the county?

Mayor Hollberg stated it is the city's responsibility to pave their own roads.

Ms. O'Connor stated that the county could pave roads inside the city, just like it was agreed in the prior TSPLOST for the city to pay for the City of Orchard Hill project and the county to pay for the City of Sunny Side's project. We can agree to the paving, but it is not required.

Commissioner Johnson stated that going the TSPLOST alone is an option, but the primary idea is that we want to have a relationship with the city and we want to have a split, the bottom line is what does that split look like.

Mayor Hollberg then stated that both the city and the county have transportation plans, we have projects and goals that are set up. There are things in the city's comprehensive plan just like there are things in the county's comprehensive plan that we need to get done, but it is continually pushed out. To base it on the city having 20% of the roads and the county having 80%, the point of sale is that over 75% of the cash that comes into this community in sales tax is the City of Griffin. Our population over triples every day of the week and we have extra cars on our roads coming in from the County and coming in from other counties as a job center that create sales tax. So, a 20/80 percentage or a 25/75 is very short sighted and is not working toward the greater good of us working in a partnership for the greater good of our citizens.

Mayor Hollberg then stated that Commissioner Johnson's district is the western quadrant of the city, Commissioner Flowers-Taylor's district northeastern quadrant and the north side of Griffin and most of your districts is in the City of Griffin which needs roads paved and they have paved roads. They have spent over \$7 million in this SPLOST to pave roads and fix bridges. City staff is recommending 40 ½ - 59 ½ based on current LOST negotiations. He, personally, not speaking for his board advised what they had before was a fair ratio for the city to be able to accomplish the projects they need.

Commissioner Flowers stated the reason that she asked the original questions was that the past percentage was arbitrary and the current recommendation is arbitrary and there is such a difference between the two. She tends to agree with Mayor Hollberg that the 66 and 34 is the bare minimum for being appropriate, just because coming into this it was her assumption that would be where we started and that was the basis for her question. When we discussed this at our meeting there was no 75/25 discussion, we were assuming the lowest threshold would be 66 ½ - 33 1/2. So, today, she does agree with Mayor Hollberg.

Commissioner Davis then stated that he believes the county's position is 70/30. He then stated that we are looking at this as a resurfacing of roads. That is what we are about, the Mayor has talked about other projects and there are probably some things that need to be done, but for our county, resurfacing of roads is what we are going to talk about.

Mayor Hollberg then stated that because we do not have a TSPLOST, our ratio in local matches is higher than if we had a TSPLOST. So, the amount of money that we will be able to leverage as a community for projects will be increased. There is no reason we can't utilize the TSPLOST money to leverage additional money from the State for projects. The problem is it just costs so much to do these improvements, whether it is intersection improvements or McIntosh Road. There are bridges that we have to look at fixing, there is connectivity of sidewalks, we have talked about a need for a shuttle service or transit system. These are things that TSPLOST could benefit this community going into the future.

Mr. Wilson stated that Mayor Hollberg is correct, all of our projects now require a 30% match from the locals on any GDOT projects because we do not have a current TSPLOST.

Commissioner Davis asked for thoughts from the city and the county.

Commissioner Johnson stated that a 70-30 split would work.

Commissioner Ward stated that they came with their staff recommending a 40% portion. She then stated they would consider anything between the 33 ½ that we had in the prior TSPLOST and the 40% being recommended by staff.

Mayor Hollberg then suggested that maybe there is a countywide project that the 7% spread could be used for. Such as the SR 155 relocation, designate that percentage of the money to that project.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then stated that the county's position has been it is to be about roads. We are only about paving. We are not talking about construction of new roads or expansion of roads, so if we're going to start picking and choosing additional projects, then we need to back and talk about what it is we can do as a joint project.

Dr. Keller stated that just because the County has more miles in roads doesn't mean the city doesn't have transportation needs. He stated that the County has not identified what the remainder of the funds over the \$20,000,000 for paving will be used for.

Mr. Wilson stated that the County has identified those projects, and Dr. Keller argued that those projects are not paving.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that is the purpose for having the discussion, and obviously nothing will be decided today. She stated there are much bigger issues that specifically need to be worked out, stating that she is not happy with the County's paving list because it is three years old, noting that she is unsure of the list's accuracy. She also stated her unhappiness that her district will not receive much money until year four. She continued by asking what the ARC and GDOT matches will be. She stated the only thing she knew about was the transportation feasibility study. She felt that money should be put in the T-SPLOST to implement or go beyond recommendations in the study. Paving is important, but there are other significant issues.

Dr. Keller stated that SPLOST and T-SPLOST were capital projects only. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor noted that we have a walking community, and part

of the transportation feasibility study is how to better move people throughout the community.

Commissioner Dutton stated that the current roads listed for paving is from a priority list and it the tip of the iceberg that continues to go through a number of phases and encompasses a multi-million dollar road resurfacing. So, the road resurfacing is just a tip of our iceberg.

Commissioner Reid-Ward stated that she understands that the county is going to focus on resurfacing; however, the city's needs are going to be something different in transportation than the county's will be.

Commissioner Reid-Ward then stated that if the city accepted the 20/80 split it wouldn't give them enough money and they would have to go in debt to get the money to do what they need to do.

Commissioner Flowers then stated that just because the city's transportation priorities don't line up with those of the county doesn't mean that their priorities are any "less" than those of the county.

Chairman Davis stated that when we started the focus was on resurfacing. When we started his plan was in May, we're going to have a SPLOST and there was going to be transportation projects in that SPLOST. We have talked about buses, that was for the SPLOST in May, not what he was thinking regarding resurfacing on our side. Resurfacing then going into the SPLOST in May, we would say that we have other transportation projects we want to get done. Those were the projects that he saw going into the May SPLOST.

Commissioner Dutton stated he would like to hear more from Mayor Hollberg about a joint project that the 7 percentage points that we are off could be utilized for.

Mayor Hollberg stated that he has been on the Griffin-Spalding Area Transportation Committee since 2004 and they have always worked together and tried to develop joint project. One of our top priorities is the SR 155. We need to try to look at what type of projects that can be done together that improves the quality of life, that benefits all residents and the SR 155 relocation has been a beast for us. Personally, he would hope that it can be done in conjunction with the new airport, that would keep us from irritating the folks on South McDonough Road with that project.

Major Hollberg stated that his suggestion would be that the county gets 63%, the city would get 30% and we got 7% joint fund money to be used for some type of joint project which would give the same ratio as in the last TSPLOST.

Commissioner Flowers then asked if the county could prepare a list for projects that could be utilized as joint projects.

Commissioner Reid-Ward stated she is not in agreement with that split.

Commissioner Davis reiterated that he did not want to force a decision at today's meeting, stating that he would like open dialogue to see if there is something else that we have not thought about. His final thought is that we can have another meeting like this.

Commissioner Flowers stated she would be comfortable leaving here today if there was some information presented that would say what could be considered as a joint project.

Commissioner Reid-Ward stated she would have to know that before she would even consider anything less than the city was getting in the last TSPLOST.

Commissioner Flowers stated that she would consider this a fruitful meeting if a list comes out of it of possible joint projects that the city and county could agree on.

Mayor Hollberg brought up sidewalks, mentioning Carver Rd., N. Hill Street to McIntosh Rd., Spalding Street out High Falls Rd.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor mentioned sidewalks out to the aquatic center, also mentioning bike trails. Commissioner Brock asked if when the County made the decision to put the aquatic center in the industrial park, were sidewalks part of the money spent. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor answered no, and that she has always been concerned with the decision to put the aquatic center in the industrial park. She stated that she was not happy with that site because it is not easily accessible by all the citizens. If someone has to walk or ride a bike, that person must walk or ride down a state highway with no protection. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that it would be interesting to review the joint comprehensive transportation plan for possible projects.

Commissioner Davis noted the short time frame for the T-SPLOST schedule. The staffs of the County and Griffin will pull together possible joint projects for the Commissioners to review.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor suggested calling the transportation person at Paragon who works on the transportation issues.

Consensus is that the County, Griffin, Orchard Hill and Sunny Side meet next Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 4 p.m. to discuss possible joint projects that the Staffs have identified.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/Second by Dutton/Bowlden to close the meeting for Spalding County

Motion/Second by McCord/Flowers to close the meeting for the City of Griffin.

Motion by Mayor Slaughter to close the meeting for the City of Sunny Side.

Motion carried unanimously by all at 5:05 p.m.