

After Agenda

**Board of Commissioners of Spalding County
Extraordinary Session
Monday, September 20, 2021
6:00 PM
Room 108, Annex Building**

The Spalding County Board of Commissioners held an Extraordinary Session in Room 108 of the Spalding County Annex on Monday, September 20, 2021, beginning at 6:00 p.m. with Chairman Clay Davis presiding. Commissioners James Dutton, Rita Johnson and Gwen Flowers-Taylor were present for the meeting. Commissioner Ryan Bowlden joined the meeting at 6:29 p.m. Also present were County Manager, Dr. Steve Ledbetter, County Attorney, Stephanie Windham and Charlie Hearn, Administrative 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 James R. Dutton, District #2, will delivered the invocation.

III. PLEDGE TO FLAG

Commissioner Rita Johnson, District #3, led the Pledge to the Flag.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/PROCLAMATIONS

1. Consider request from the Metro Atlanta Young Marines for the Board of Commissioners to issue a proclamation in support of Red Ribbon Week, a nationally recognized illicit drug awareness event.

Dr. Steve Ledbetter, County Manager, then read the Red Ribbon Week Proclamation.

Proclamation

WHEREAS: There is hope in winning the war on drugs, and that hope lies in education and drug demand reduction, coupled with the hard work and determination of organizations such as the Young Marines of the Marine Corps League to foster a healthy, drug-free lifestyle; and

WHEREAS: Governments and community leaders know that citizen support is one of the most effective tools in the effort to reduce the use of illicit drugs in our communities; and

WHEREAS: The red ribbon has been chosen as a symbol commemorating the work of Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, a Drug Enforcement Administration agent who was murdered in the line of duty, and represents the belief that one person can make a difference; and

WHEREAS: The Red Ribbon Campaign was established by Congress in 1988 to encourage a drug-free lifestyle and involvement in drug prevention and reduction efforts; and

WHEREAS: October 23-31 has been designated National Red Ribbon Week, which encourages Americans to wear a red ribbon to show their support for a drug-free environment;

NOW, THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, I, Clay W. Davis, Chairman, do hereby proclaim October 23-31 as **RED RIBBON WEEK** in Spalding County and urge all citizens to join me in this special observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the County to be affixed this, the 20th day of August, in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-One.

Clay W. Davis, Chairperson

Steve Ledbetter,
Ex-Officio County Clerk

Dr. Ledbetter then advised that he had reached out to the Marine Corp and to the Youth Marines, there is a group in Atlanta, there is a group in Austell and a group in Macon and none of them could make the meeting this evening.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Dutton to approve the proclamation in support of Red Ribbon Week, a nationally recognized illicit drug awareness event. Motion carried unanimously by all.

2. Consider presentation of Service Award for recognition of 25 Years of Service to Brent Foster, Animal Control Supervisor.

The Board then recognized Brent Foster for his 25 years of Service to Spalding County as the Animal Control Supervisor.

Mr. Foster stated that it has been an honor to work for Spalding County and he appreciated the Board's recognition of his service.

V. PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Consider approval of financial statements for the two months ended August 31, 2021.

Jinna Garrison, Administrative Services Director advised that she was present to answer any questions the Board may have regarding the financial statements.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Johnson to approve the financial statements for the two months ended August 31, 2021. Motion carried unanimously by all.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT

Speakers must sign up prior to the meeting and provide their names, addresses and the topic they wish to discuss. Speakers must direct your remarks to the Board and not to

individual Commissioners or to the audience. Personal disagreements with individual Commissioners or County employees are not a matter of public concern and personal attacks will not be tolerated. The Chairman has the right to limit your comments in the interest of disposing of the County's business in an efficient and respectable manner.

Speakers will be allotted three minutes to speak on their chosen topics as they relate to matters pertinent to the jurisdiction of the Board of the Commissioners. No questions will be asked by any of the commissioners during citizen comments. Outbursts from the audience will not be tolerated. Common courtesy and civility are expected at all times during the meeting. No speaker will be permitted to speak more than three minutes or more than once, unless the Board votes to suspend this rule.

Brenda Stoerkel, 304 Cedardale Drive, Griffin, Georgia, spoke regarding the Aquatic Center and updated the Board of the Griffin Gator swim team.

VII. MINUTES -

1. Consider approval of Minutes for the Spalding County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting on August 2 2021, the Spalding County Board of Commissioners Special Called Meeting on August 10, 2021, the Spalding County Special Called Meeting, Executive Session and Extraordinary Session on August 16, 2021, the Spalding County Special Called meeting on August 19, 2021, the Spalding County Zoning Public Hearing on August 26, 2021 and the Spalding County Board Of Commissioners Special Called Meeting and Executive Session on September 1. 2021.

Motion/Second by Johnson/Flowers Taylor to approve the Minutes for the Spalding County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting on August 2 2021, the Spalding County Board of Commissioners Special Called Meeting on August 10, 2021, the Spalding County Special Called Meeting, Executive Session and Extraordinary Session on August 16, 2021, the Spalding County Special Called meeting on August 19, 2021, the Spalding County Zoning Public Hearing on August 26, 2021 and the Spalding County Board Of Commissioners Special Called Meeting and Executive Session on September 1. 2021. Motion carried unanimously by all.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS-

1. Consider request from the Spalding County Water & Sewerage Facilities Authority to appoint a new member to replace David Lamb who has submitted his resignation effective June 30, 2021.

Chairman Davis then explained the process for nominations for a position on an authority, committee, or board for Spalding County. He explained that the opening is advertised and individuals who are interested can fill out a nomination form and submit it. Members of the Board then review and approve the nomination forms for consideration. All nomination forms must be endorsed by one member of the Board in order to be presented for consideration. The nominations are then taken in the order that they are placed in the book for consideration.

Dr. Ledbetter advised that the first name that was submitted was Mr. Jeff

Brandon on July 12, 2021. Chairman Davis submitted the nomination and he has a considerable amount of experience in this area.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Flowers-Taylor to appoint Jeff Brandon to the Spalding County Water & Sewerage Facilities Authority to appoint a new member to replace David Lamb who has submitted his resignation effective June 30, 2021. Motion carried 3-1 (Johnson).

2. Lift from the table and consider quotes for the 2021 LMIG Contract.

Motion/Second by Johnson/Dutton to lift from the table and consider quotes for the 2021 LMIG Contract. Motion carried unanimously by all.

Dr. Ledbetter then stated that Brian Upson is here this evening to discuss the bid process for this contract and the staff recommendations.

Mr. Upson then advised that bids for the LMIG project were submitted in August of this year. There were 11 roads selected for the bid. We received bids in the amount of \$1,483,468 up to \$1,649,625. The budget for the LMIG was approximately \$1 million. E.R. Snell was the low bidder for this project. We received a total of 4 bids from: E.R. Snell, Quality Construction, McLeroy, C.W. Matthews and Blount Construction. After determining we were over budget on all bids, we went back to the low bidder and asked them to provide us with ideas on how we can get within budget. The recommendation was that we reduce the scope to 4 roads and would be within our budget at approximately \$941,000.

Mr. Upson then stated that the 4 roads recommended were: Baptist Camp, Morgan Road, Liberty Hill Road and Melissa Circle. Baptist Camp is the longest of the roads at 2.3 miles with the remaining roads varying from .3 to .36 miles in length. Staff recommendation based on budget limitations is to move forward with the 4 roads recommended to keep us within budget this year and that the award be given to E.R. Snell who is the apparent low bidder for this project.

Mr. Upson then advised that in public bids, unless there is a legitimate reason that we can disqualify a bidder, E.R. Snell would be the responsive bidder. This vendor does a tremendous amount of work statewide doing work for GDOT and other Counties. They are experienced in LMIG projects and have the qualifications they have the references and they have received no information that would deem them nonresponsive and move to the next bidder.

Chairman Davis then advised that the plan was to do 6 miles this year under the LMIG program, but because of the cost we are having to reduce this to be able to bring this project in within budget.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Johnson to approve a contract with E.R. Snell for the 2021 LMIG paving program. Motion carried 4-1 (Flowers-Taylor).

IX. PUBLIC HEARING -

1. Conduct the 2nd Public Hearing on the 2021 Tax Levy.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Flowers-Taylor to go into a Public Hearing on the 2021 Tax Levy. Motion carried unanimously by all.

Dr. Ledbetter advised there are five people who have signed up to speak:

Spoke against a millage rate increase:

Ralph A. Dogherty, Jr., 1595 Cabin Creek Trail, Griffin, Georgia
Patricia Wilson, 1535 East McIntosh Road, Griffin, Georgia
Peter Cabrel, 3980 N. Expressway, Sunnyside, Georgia
Richard Crowley, 64 N. Walkers Mill Road, Griffin, Georgia
David Lynch, 185 N. Walkers Mill Road, Griffin, Georgia

Dr. Ledbetter then stated that he would like to reiterate the comments that he had made during the first Public Hearing on the Tax Levy.

In 2020, Spalding County set the millage rate at 16.138 mills. This year, the Tax Commissioner calculated our tax digest at 15.562 mills.

On March 11th of this year, the American Rescue Plan Act became law and in July, we received our first tranche of funds. Section M – Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, in Section 602, the law states:

A State or territory shall not use the funds provided under this section or transferred pursuant to section 603(c)(4) to either directly or indirectly offset a reduction in the net tax revenue of such State or territory resulting from a change in law, regulation, or administrative interpretation during the covered period that reduces any tax (by providing for a reduction in a rate, a rebate, a deduction, a credit, or otherwise) or delays the imposition of any tax or tax increase.”

Staff interpreted this to mean that should we reduce our net tax revenue, we are subject to forfeiting the \$12,956,276 received through the American Rescue Plan.

A law called the Georgia Taxpayer Bill of Rights requires that local governments either roll back their millage rates to compensate for rising property values or announce the revenue gain as a tax increase. This year's situation is somewhat unusual in response to a terrible pandemic and an unprecedented situation. Staff is recommending that the Board of Commissioners NOT accept the rollback. We would ask the Commissioners to adopt the same millage rate from 2020 – 16.138 mills.

By accepting staff recommendation, the taxpayers of Spalding County who have a home that assessed for \$100,000 and the home retained its value from 2020 to 2021, and the homeowner filed homestead exemption, the difference between the proposed millage rate of 16.138 and the rollback 15.562 would equate to \$23. But again, if your home held the same value as last year, the homeowner would pay the same amount of taxes as last year.

He then stated that staff's recommendation is to retain the same millage rate levied in 2020 of 16.138 mils.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Bowlden to close the Public Hearing. Motion carried unanimously by all.

2. Conduct a Public Hearing on a street light district for Callie Road located in Hale Subdivision.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Bowlden to go into a Public Hearing on the street light district for Callie Road located in the Hale Subdivision. Motion carried unanimously by all.

Dr. Ledbetter stated that no one has signed up to speak at the public hearing for Callie Road located in the Hale Subdivision.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Johnson to close the Public Hearing on the street light district for Callie Road located in the Hale Subdivision. Motion carried unanimously by all.

3. Conduct a Public Hearing on a street light district for Stonebriar Subdivision Phase II.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Bowlden to go into a Public Hearing on the street light district for Stonebriar Subdivision Phase II. Motion carried unanimously by all.

Dr. Ledbetter stated that no one has signed up to speak at the public hearing for Stonebriar Subdivision Phase II.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Johnson to close the Public Hearing on the street light district for Stonebriar Subdivision Phase II. Motion carried unanimously by all.

4. Conduct a Public Hearing to consider a minor amendment to the 2017 Spalding County Comprehensive Plan to amend the definition of Suburban Neighborhood Character area, to clarify the application of Suburban Neighborhood Primary Land Uses.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Bowlden to enter a public hearing to consider a minor amendment to the 2017 Spalding County Comprehensive Plan to amend the definition of Suburban Neighborhood Character area, to clarify the application of Suburban Neighborhood Primary Land Uses. Motion carried unanimously by all.

Dr. Ledbetter advised that Debbie Bell, Community Development Director, is here this evening to walk the Board through this minor amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Bell then advised that this is the minor amendment that was discussed a couple of weeks ago which will make the descriptions of the character area and the bulleted point items for the character area align more closely. She had originally misunderstood the directive from the Three Rivers Regional Commission, and she now understands that it had to be advertised and come before the Board for a Public

Hearing in order to make the change. The change will remove the language regarding multi-family, because in the narrative it is described as single family residential; however, in some of the descriptors it included the language for multi-family and this amendment will clarify the intent of the language so that both of the sections will match up.

Dr. Ledbetter then advised that the Board had previously heard and approved the language; however, a Public Hearing had to be held in order to conform with the guidelines for an amendment. He then added that no one has signed up to speak for or against this item.

Motion/Second Dutton/Johnson to close the public hearing to consider a minor amendment to the 2017 Spalding County Comprehensive Plan to amend the definition of Suburban Neighborhood Character area, to clarify the application of Suburban Neighborhood Primary Land Uses. Motion carried unanimously by all

X. NEWBUSINESS -

1. Consider request from the Spalding County Board of Health to appoint Dr. Richard Chewning to the Spalding County Board of Health.

Georgia statutes require a practicing physician on the county Board of Health. In the event that a practicing physician cannot be found, the statute provides for the appointment of a retired physician.

The Spalding County Board of Health has not been able to find that practicing physician willing to serve on the BOH. They have identified a retired physician willing and excited to serve on the Board of Health. The Spalding County Board of Health respectfully requests the Spalding County Commissioners to appoint Dr. Richard Chewning to the BOH.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Dutton to appoint Dr. Richard Chewning to the Spalding County Board of Health. Motion carried unanimously by all.

2. Consider approval of a street light district for Callie Road located in Hale Subdivision.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Dutton to approve a street light district for Callie Road in the Hale Subdivision. Motion carried unanimously by all.

3. Consider approval of a street light district for Sweetbriar Subdivision Phase II.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Flowers-Taylor to approve a street light district for Sweetbriar Subdivision Phase II. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Johnson abstained due to her living in this Subdivision).

4. Consider request to allow Staff to move forward with adding wireless Internet antennas as the first step in delivering high-speed internet to Spalding County. Staff recommends expending \$80,000 from the general fund now and would ask the Board to agree to move this expense to the American Rescue Plan when the full

detailed plan is developed for the expenditure of these federal funds. Providing broadband to our community is an authorized expenditure for American Rescue Plan Funds, but to reduce the administrative burden on staff, we would ask the board to afford us the opportunity to bring a full plan for expending these funds at one time for your review and approval.

Adding antennas to our county owned towers will provide high-speed internet access to two remaining fire stations that currently do not have high-speed internet. Additionally, any of our residents who have direct line of sight access to the towers will have the ability to connect to the broadband network. Again, this would be a first step in delivering internet to parts of our community who remain underserved.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Flowers-Taylor to approve a request to allow Staff to move forward with adding wireless Internet antennas as the first step in delivery of high-speed internet to Spalding County. Staff recommends expending \$80,000 from the general fund now and would ask the Board to agree to move this expense to the American Rescue Plan when the full detailed plan is developed for the expenditure of these federal funds.

Dr. Ledbetter stated this is the first step that will afford our community access to the internet in the unincorporated areas of the county. Mike Windham has done a great job in partnering with the City of Griffin. We are looking to put wireless antennas on each of our current towers (there are seven of them) and this will allow residents outside the City of Griffin access, affording those who have line of sight access the ability to purchase equipment and afford them the opportunity to connect to the system. We are not looking to use this as a money-making opportunity. We are working to afford internet in parts of the County that is currently underserved. Specifically at tri-county on the southside of the County down toward Orchard Hill, and it would be very beneficial for us to deliver high speed internet in these areas.

One thing we have been able to accomplish over the last few weeks is that the Board of Education has agreed to invest an equal amount of money as a part of this project to support our efforts to offer broadband to their students. They are going to put in approximately \$75,000 to our \$80,000. We feel this is a win, win, win opportunity because Spalding County, the City of Griffin, the Board of Education are all engaged to offer this service to our community.

Mr. Windham has already been able to deploy one of the wireless internet systems to the new Animal Shelter. Mr. Windham shared the experience he has had with the one deployment.

Mr. Windham advised that installing a wireless antenna is an alternative to laying fiber cable at a significant cost savings. We were able to extend the internet service from the Public Works facility and direct it across the street to the new Animal Control Facility where the internet was received and is in use at no extra cost to the County. This is a cost savings on the installation and the ongoing service.

Mr. Ledbetter then stated that for residents to be able to access the internet, they will need a proprietary antenna they will need to purchase. Then residents will have a service agreement they will need to sign with a monthly cost decided by the Board

so they can access the internet system. We will be coming back to you next month with a rate structure for internet service.

Motion carried unanimously by all.

5. Consider request from the Griffin-Spalding Airport Authority to enter into a contract with ARPA GDOT for a reimbursement grant for 6A2 in the amount of \$32,000.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Dutton to approve a request from the Griffin-Spalding Airport Authority to enter into a contract with ARPA GDOT for a reimbursement grant for 6A2 in the amount of \$32,000. Motion carried unanimously by all.

6. Consider a lease agreement from the Georgia Department of Human Resources for the Spalding County Department of Family and Children Services location at 411 E. Solomon Street, Griffin, Georgia.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Bowlden to approve a lease agreement from the Georgia Department of Human Resources for the Spalding County Department of Family and Children Services location at 411 E. Solomon Street, Griffin, Georgia.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor expressed her concern over the amount of square footage involved in this lease and the fact that the Courts are needing additional space and then questioned if this was indeed the best use for this facility. She questioned if this was good stewardship of the taxpayer dollars as we have to maintain the facility and the compensation from the State does not seem to be adequate for that amount of square footage. She then advise that she doesn't have a problem in renewing the contract, but she does have a problem with their renewing at the same price she does have a problem with.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor then rescinded her motion and Commissioner Bowlden rescinded his second.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Flowers-Taylor to table the lease agreement from the Georgia Department of Human Resources for the Spalding County Department of Family and Children Services location at 411 E. Solomon Street, Griffin, Georgia to allow staff an opportunity to address the possibility of a multi-year lease with an annual increase in the rental. Motion carried unanimously by all.

7. Consider request from Griffin Ballet to rent the upper section of the Parking Lot behind the Annex Building for their Halloween Performance on October 30 and 31, 2021.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Bowlden to approve the request from Griffin Ballet to rent the upper section of the Parking Lot behind the Annex Building for their Halloween Performance on October 30 and 31, 2021.

Mitch Flanders, Director of the Griffin Ballet Theater, clarified that the dates for the show are October 28th through the 30th, there are three days of performances. They will be doing the Adams Family the Broadway Musical and they have already received permission from the City of Griffin to use their part of the parking lot. Last year they used all three sections of the parking lot, but this year they feel they will only need the one section up where the dumpsters are located and the remainder of

the parking lot will be available for County vehicles. He then stated that last year the rental for the three lots was \$2000 for the days rented and he is asking that the rent be reduced to 1/3 of that amount.

Motion carried 4-0-1 (Commissioner Johnson abstained due to a business relationship with the Griffin Ballet Theater).

8. Consider adoption of a community wide strategic plan as recommended by the Archway Executive Committee.

Motion/Second by Johnson/Flowers-Taylor to approve adoption of a community wide strategic plan as recommended by the Archway Executive Committee.

Chairman Davis advised that the reason we agreed to do this was to get the elected officials behind a strategic plan that the County Manager, the City Manager, and the Superintendent could all hold us accountable to do. Then we found out that none of the elected officials would be included in any of the work groups. He then stated that he isn't sure that this accomplishes the objective that they were hoping to accomplish.

Chairman Davis then stated that this group doesn't have a head, these are groups that were working independent of the elected officials. All that being said, this is a group that is doing something with no funding and he feels that is a heavy requirement, if they don't need funding from us and we have representatives who are making things happen that's okay, but in the end he's not quite sure how it all fits together.

Stephanie Windham then stated that currently it will be the Archway Partnership and the Executive Committee who will be the hub of this initiative. As Archway leaves our community this is intended to be a living document and will move into other organizations that can keep it going forward.

Commissioner Dutton stated he has been apart of strategic plans for a number of organizations. However, this plan was developed in subcommittees that we had no participation in and now we are expected to adopt the plan. We are now being asked to approve something that we have had no input into and that bothers him.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the fact that the elected officials were asked to stay out of it was because they wanted more community involvement. She feels that we need to be supportive of this plan. The purpose of the Archways Retreat was to learn about the plan.

Motion carried unanimously by all.

9. Consider request from the Spalding County Sheriff's Office to surplus a 2010 Ford Crown Victoria, Vin # 2FABP7BV5AX129639, with 135,000 miles and donate the vehicle to the Griffin-Spalding Airport Authority to use as a crew car.

Motion/Second by Dutton/Johnson to approve a request from the Spalding County Sheriff's Office to surplus a 2010 Ford Crown Victoria, Vin # 2FABP7BV5AX129639, with 135,000 miles and donate the vehicle to the Griffin-Spalding Airport Authority to use as a crew car.

Dr. Peters, Griffin-Spalding Airport Authority, advised that most general aviation airports have a vehicle available for pilots and their crews.

Motion carried unanimously by all.

10. Consider on first reading a request from Community Development to amend the Spading County Code of Ordinances to provide revisions to facilitate code enforcement for property maintenance issues.

Ms. Bell stated that in the spring when we adopted the Georgia Minimum Building Codes and the International Building Code which makes things a lot better and supports our efforts in “raising the bar” by standardizing the building code and making it easier to keep up with State codes as they are modified; however, it did have some unintended consequences. There were some items in the international property maintenance code that did not meet some of our needs in Code Enforcement. This will reinstate some of the old Code Enforcement codes in order to address problems specific to our County. It doesn’t get rid of any of the building codes adopted previously, but it enhances our ability to fine tune Code Enforcement and address Code Enforcement issues. This will reinstate some of the older Code Enforcement definitions.

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Dutton to table the request from Community Development to amend the Spading County Code of Ordinances to provide revisions to facilitate code enforcement for property maintenance issues. Motion carried unanimously by all.

XI. REPORT OF COUNTY MANAGER

- Dr. Ledbetter shared some of the comments received back from the APP Tournament:
 - Absolutely wonderful.
 - I was able to punch my ticket for 2022 Nationals this week thanks to the Atlanta Metro APP Griffin.
 - Just want to give a shout out to all the hard-working people at Griffin tournament this weekend in Georgia. With all the rain they still put together an excellent tournament

He advised that he has pages after pages of kudos for the great team from Public Works and for Parks and Leisure Services and all the Board members. All comments received have been over the top supportive and very beneficial for what we are trying to accomplish. The APP Tournament is coming back in 2022.

- Our lights for the pickleball courts will be delivered and installed on October 24th or shortly thereafter.
- We are working on the CIE & CIP and we are looking forward to approval before the deadline of October 31st.
- Our final interview for the Citizen Engagement Employee will be on Wednesday.
- Dr. Ledbetter advised that he had received the redistricting sponsorship letter from our three representatives: Senator Harbin, Representative Mathiak, and Representative Knight. Within 24 hours of submitting the letters of sponsorship to the Reapportionment Office at the State we have received information from them to schedule time with the Board to start talks about the redistricting lines and how those lines are going to look. Moving us forward and setting us up for Public Hearings.
- The Partnership for Inclusive Innovation with Georgia Tech, the grant, is coming up.

We should be starting by the end of next week.

- The RFP for the Comprehensive Plan is posted. We are looking to get those bids back within the next few weeks.
- Ms. Bell is working on additional zoning ordinances and we will be working over the next four meetings between now and the end of the year to “raise the bar.”
- Staff is working on the Christmas Light display and you will be hearing a lot more regarding this.

XII. REPORT OF ASSISTANT COUNTY MANAGER

XIII. REPORT OF COMMISSIONERS

Rita Johnson – Thanked the County Manager for his explanation on the Tax Levy. She then thanked the Board for approving the Stonebriar Street Lights. The Downtown Council is currently selling reservations for tables on the “Feast on East” and she feels it would be nice if the County purchased a table for this event on October 17th from 1-3 p.m. They are also requesting use of the port-a-potties. Pickleball was wonderful this weekend.

Ryan Bowlden – Stated that he wants to keep the problem of addressing youth centers and working toward opening these Community Centers at the forefront. He believes there is a need for these types of activities. He then shared with the commissioners that he would like to have them consider reducing the speed limit on Crabapple Road, a county owned road. It is a short road with a current speed limit is 50 mph and he believes drivers take this as a dare to reach this speed as quickly as possible. He has already spoken with the Sheriff and has his support to reduce the speed. It’s now in our hands to make this adjustment.

Commissioner Bowlden stated that he was surprised at how many young people were participating in pickleball this weekend, and that had changed the way he looked at this sport. Also, he complimented the Public Works on how well the grass was cut on the sides of our roads in the ditches. I’ve never seen Cowan Road look so good.

He then stated that he knows that in keeping the millage rate the same and it appears to be a tax increase, but it’s not. He stated that he had been doing some research of the tax rolls and he didn’t mention any names, but there is one individual who has bought a number of historic buildings, he started off in 2017 and has bought multiple buildings and has yet to pay any taxes. When he was in the Sheriff’s Department, he posted these buildings with notices. Commissioner Bowlden then stated that he is a citizen of Spalding County and he pays taxes, if everyone paid their taxes it would help all of us out.

Gwen Flowers-Taylor – Stated that she didn’t want to talk about those people who sit on the assessment board. However, she did want to talk about the fact that nobody asked tonight what the extra money was going to be used for and she feels it’s important for the residents to know that Spalding County is in a crisis with our first responders and Sheriff’s Department, EMS, because our pay is so low. Recently, the city of Griffin gave all of their police and fire officers a \$3 per hour raise. And, if you can work right across the street and make \$3 an hour more, why would you stay. We feel we have a good law enforcement group and a great Sheriff here and part of that money is going to help and to bring their pay up to something equal to what other entities in our immediate area are paying, because if we don’t they’re going to leave and go somewhere else for it. She knows that all of y’all want if you call the Sheriff or 911, for the Sheriff to come to your

house...maybe not him exactly, but you want somebody to show up and they're not gonna to come if they're not working.

That's part of what's going on, but we have other employees who's wages have not kept up and that's part of what we're trying to do. We're just trying to keep people here, people to answer the phone, people to make sure they come out and get trees off the road, we're trying to keep butts in a car seat for the Sheriff's Department and the Fire Department. She just wanted to share that with people so they will know we're not hoarding, we have a designated direction for this money. It's really, really hard not to ask for a tax increase because what we need to make those first responders equal to their colleagues at the other places is not gonna be covered by keeping the millage rate the same.

She then asked that someone to go to the building on the Northeast Expressway, southbound lane, before the skating rink, it's down in a hole, it's a strip mall, there's not a single parking space in that place. If you pull in, there's no place to park. We need someone to go up there. Her other concern is a little further north, past Darby's Furniture. There are seven or eight mobile homes up there. The two in the front have no windows, no doors, one doesn't even have a roof on it. We talk about what we want people to see when then come into the county. People coming to Tyus Park this weekend drove right by here. Things like that, she just thinks we need to do a better job.

We need to sit down and talk about a strategic plan regarding what we want our county should look like. What we want from our County Manager, what we expect and want our employees to do when they drive by a place and there is an obvious code violation or a problem, they should make a note and report that to someone. They may not be the one to take care of the problem, but they should do something at least notify the appropriate department there is a problem.

She then asked if the Development Authority was an Industrial Development Authority or a Development Authority? We shouldn't just focus on Industry, but we should get our Development Authority to bring in that person who wants to open a beauty shop or a grocery store. I'm not sure how we're going to get there, but that's on my list.

James Dutton – If only we had a strategic plan. Pike County does have a person to call franchises and asks them what would it take to get you here. The City of Griffin has a person like this. We have that amazing inSpalding app. Within 24 hours it has to be responded too. We've got to get more people to use this. He thinks we could solve a lot of these problems if we would use this more – even our employees should use this more.

Commissioner Bowlden talked about the Community Centers, he thinks this is a cool idea. He loves this idea. We were talking with the transportation folks about the same idea. We need to buy all of these buses and get new bus drivers. We have a whole fleet of buses and bus drivers – school buses. We have hundreds of school buses that most of the day are not doing anything. We don't need to come up with a MARTA, we don't need to come up with a new system, we can put existing infrastructure to better use just like with this community initiative.

Kids go home at 3:00, administrators are out of there by 4:00, the extracurriculars are out of there by 5:00. So those buildings most of the day are sitting empty. Let's use them. Let's have those playgrounds. My kids are always asking when we go by can we go down to the playground. There's some great ideas out there that needs to be explored.

The other great idea is NewTown Macon. They were less than 20% occupancy in downtown Macon. Now, they're over 80% and closing in on 90% occupancy...not just of

the businesses, but also with the lofts on the second stories the basements, the event space, people who are downtown, people want to be there. So, all of a sudden their populations are going up and its young families that want to come and raise their kids and open businesses an be good tax paying citizens. This is the kind of growth that we need. They do have a river walk that we don't have, but the same steps that they took we can take. Macon did a bond to give them the initial money and NewTown has made back that bond money and paid off those bonds and still has a huge pile of money that they can grant out that money or low-cost loans so that these businesses can come in and open. I know they're coming to make a presentation to us soon, but like I'm tripping over myself to make this happen. The sooner we can do this the better.

We can bring in amazing tournaments like pickleball, but I asked those players where they were staying. Some of them said they were staying in McDonough or Fayetteville. A lot of them were saying Air BnB all over the county. It's the same with the Aquatic Center. It was the last thing on the SPLOST, we can't do all of those things on the SPLOST all at once. It's going to be a great center. It's been so long, people are coming in and asking is it still going to happen. It is going happen; we are going to do it...it's going to be great!

Lastly, he wanted to talk about the tax increase. We have the same millage rate as last year. We went to the meeting; he went in ready to argue about lowering taxes and lowering the tax rate and he found out that we legally can't do that and he thinks that's ridiculous, I think it's absurd that Washington, DC now gets to come in and tell us on a county level what we can do, but I'll leave my rant about the Federal Government alone. That said, there were people who went into the meeting and wanted us to raise the tax rate. Not just keep it the same, but actually raise it. We are not doing that! So again, because of the State law we have to advertise this as a tax increase, but we are not raising taxes. The five of us are not raising taxes. We are keeping the rate the same as last year, because we can't lower it legally. We went into that meeting wanting to, but we found out that we can't.

That said, what's happened, the reason we're getting more money is that everyone's valuations went up. We have nothing to do with that evaluation. We can't. We're also, by law, separated from that process. I can't go and say, hey...can you lower the taxes...I can't...by law that's separate. That said, I would love to remind everyone that we have this great thing called the Board of Equalization. So, if your house went from \$88,000 to \$288,000, you get to go in and call BS and say this is not gonna happen. If they don't say what you want them to say, you can appeal their decision to Superior Court. You have a right to do that. Other than that, we've done all we can do to lower taxes. Even tonight, we've had people come in and asking, what are you going to do with this extra money. We're super glad that you're here tonight, but where were you when we set the budget. No one showed up and that is incredibly disappointing. I would encourage you to be here when we set the budget.

Clay Davis – Regarding the Pickleball Tournament this weekend, the figures we're supposed to use that the State talks with us about is about \$1 million worth of economic income into this county. That money went to gas stations, hotels, food places and stuff like that, but there's a whole bunch of people who are better off because of that tournament coming.

Next, commended Commissioner Dutton. He saw a problem, it was going to be raining, you took action and got a hold of the school board to use space. Stepping forward is a powerful thing that we all need to do. Next, he commended the school. He expected them to say there's a liability issue if we bring people in here, or there's a parking problem,

oh...we've got, we've got, we've got. They immediately said, nope. Within 30 minutes they said, bring those people on and here's the time we can use them and everything else. So, great work together between us and the schools.

Last, there was a comment tonight about us changing the educational taxes. That's not us. It's not in our jurisdiction. We can't do that no matter how we feel about it. So, anybody who's saying Board of Commissioners you need to change the school taxes. We can't do that. That's not us. Sorry. We take a lot of hits, but that's not one of the hits we can't do anything about.

XIV. CLOSED SESSION

XV. ADJOURNMENT

***Motion/Second by Johnson/Dutton to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m.
Motion carried unanimously by all.***