

**MILLER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**REGULAR SESSION MEETING**

**07/12/2021, 6:00 P.M., Courthouse Courtroom**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Chairman Kreg Freeman, Vice-Chairman Ladon Calhoun, Commissioner Allen Worsley, and Commissioner Cristene Edwards. Others Present: Sherrie Stewart, Faye Whittaker, Doug Cofty, Claude Newsome, Sylvia Newsome, Betty Miller, Arleen Worsley, Heather Trejo, Barry Morse, Alex Cook, Dottie Brown, Dot Wainright, Shelton Gibson, Ricky Carpenter, Susan Taylor, Terry Taylor, Stella Phillips, Keith Bowen, Jajuan Bowen, Emanuel Haire, Joanne Holland, Suzi Fitzgerald, Dorita McCracken, Paul Fryer, Sherry Henley, Marth Cox, Earl Cox, Jeffery Cox, Eloise George, Brad Bell, Wanda Griffin, Leroy Bush

Chairman Freeman calls the meeting to order. Regular session 7/12/2021, and called for a moment of silence and pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Freeman called for the approval of the agenda and stated that on the new business the library appointment was done at the last regular meeting 6/14/2021, Chairman Freeman also wanted to add department raises. Commissioner Edwards made motion to approve, Commissioner Calhoun seconded the motion, all in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Freeman called for approval for the regular session minutes 6/14/2021 Chairman Freeman asked the board if they wanted the minutes condensed or left in long form. All Commissioners said leave in current form. Commissioner Calhoun made motion to approve, Commissioner Edwards seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Freeman then called for approval special session minutes from 7/6/2021. Commissioner Edwards made motion to approve, Commissioner Calhoun seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Freeman called for approval of accounts payables. Commissioner Calhoun made motion to approve, Commissioner Edwards seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Freeman called for a motion to approve financial reports, Commissioner Worsley made a motion to approve with Commissioner Calhoun seconding, all in favor, motion carried.

## **Appearances:**

**Jujuan Bowen-** Ms. Bowen addressed the board stating she has been a resident and taxpayer in Miller County for 36 years. She attended the meeting in May and thanked the board for passing the second amendment sanctuary county resolution. She then stated she also attended the June meeting and after leaving the meeting she felt that there were major problems in Miller County. She stated it was very hard to watch what happened at the meeting. She felt there was a breakdown in communications between the board and the constitutional officers, it was not pleasing to the lord and no beneficial to the residents of Miller County. She went on to state that the seat that each held was of servant for your district and county and she thanked the board for serving and stated it was an extension of We the people. Ms. Bowen states that James 3, 16 says for where envy and selfish ambition exists there is disorder in every kind of people, she stated when she left the meeting, she saw disorder, confusion, and turmoil. She stated God is not the author of confusion, the enemy is. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy our nation, our government, and this local body here. She states he wants us to be divided because when we are divided, we are weak but when we are united, we are strong. Isiah when he predicted Jesus's birth, he said that government will be on his shoulders, what that means is that he is even the authority over government, he is the final authority. She offered a few solutions to the board to help to be able to have a whole government approach. She states when you speak remember what it says in Ephesians chapter 4, it says to speak the truth and love. This means that what you are speaking is pleasing to the Lord, it is kind, and it is used for solving problems and building up others, and not tearing down. Second, she encouraged the board to attack the problems and not people. The pattern now through out the United States at a government level and local level is to attack people and not problems. She encouraged the board to follow the rule of law, we are a nation of laws, they must be followed to have order and prosperity. She strongly encouraged the board as elected official to act and assess the problems and situations and not to react inappropriately. We are imperfect people and make mistakes. The event at the annex last month concerned her as a taxpayer as official documents of the board were being requested to be changed in a setting that did not follow the open meetings act of Georgia and that the meetings held by this board are subject to the Georgia sunshine law. She goes on to state that it stipulates all meetings except those exempt by law are to be opened to the public and states no resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance, or action is binding unless it is made in accordance with open meetings act and it is unlawful for any governing authority member to conduct or participate in a meeting not in accordance with the act. When minutes or documents are vote and approved here in the view of the public, it then becomes an official protected document of the board, county and state, OCGA title 45-11-1 states any public officer or other person shall alter, deface or falsify any minutes, documents, books or any proceedings that belongs to the public office within the state shall be guilty of a felon and upon conviction shall be punished by imprisonment, the law further states any public officer or employee may detain and question any person whose conduct cause reasonable grounds for suspicion that such person is engaging in

damage to records in a public office. She states that official documents are protected and can only be changed in the open with the public present according to the Georgia sunshine laws. She then says she is glad the official documents were correct in an official way by calling a special meeting with the sunshine act and a potential law was not broken. She wanted to encourage the board and the constitutional officers to act, do not react and inquire with organizations such as ACCG and other legal means to solve problems in a lawful manner. Ms. Bowen states we have larger problems here such as Hurricane Michael recovery, 2020, hyperinflation, loss of jobs, loss of family and closure of businesses, and that we need focused, united leadership that benefits all in the community. Remember ACCG code of ethics that says always remember, In God we trust in pursuit of the American way, of free enterprise and independence through local government. Ms. Bowen thanked the board.

**Miller County Senior Citizens** – Chairman Freeman asked if there was going to be one speaker or how was the board going to address it. Clyde Newsome stated he would like to thank the board for allowing them a few minutes to bring their issue to the board. Mr. Newsome stated before the center closed they had about 25 to 30 attending everyday and the center was a place to get together for fellowship and visit with one another and that it helped the senior citizens him being one of them. He stated he attended the senior center for about 20 years. He stated he done minor maintenance work on the building the entire time he has been there. He stated a lot of the seniors attending the meeting did not have family close by, so it was a place to meet like it was extended family. They had Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners there and it was something they all cherished. They feel that since it closed, they have been put aside. They are getting their meals like they always have, but now it is from Mural city Café, and that it's a dangerous place, they are serving 65 meals a day and the traffic comes around the curve, someone was going to get hurt, it's a dangerous place to be trying to serve meals so they need their building back to serve the meals and fellowship. And they are pay taxes just like everyone else, he states the building was built by a grant for the senior center in 1998. He feels that the build has been confiscated from them and they did not have any say so about it. He feels the county should fund the building and give it back to them so they can have it like they have for the last 20 years. He then thanked the board for their time. Dot Wainright then stated Mr. Newsome was a member of the senior center board, she then states the other members of the board she states that if business is to be done that their board is ready to talk to the commissioner's board. She wanted to say that up until now the business of the senior center was a joint effort by the seniors, city, and state but now the seniors are totally left out, they do not know what is going on, in fact they were told Leigh Ribolzi was going to be there tonight to present a plan, but she was not there, but they did not know anything about the plan. She states they were not part of making a plan and she feels like they should be a part of it, they do not want to cause trouble, but they want to be treated right. She then asked when the board made the decision about the building being rent to the hospital did the board vote on it. Chairman Freeman stated yes ma'am, she then asked did every member vote to do that, Chairman Freeman stated they all did. She

replied you all did. She asked did the board feel that had enough information about the seniors to do that, Chairman Freeman stated that the building had been down there vacant, and the county had the opportunity to get money, which was 3000.00 a month rent and that the board would have been criticized if they had not taken the opportunity and left the building vacant. Chairman Freeman states the county did not shut the building down, the federal and state government shut the building down and cut the funding off. Ms. Wainright stated the pandemic closed the building down, Chairman Freeman agreed. She then told Chairman Freeman that they had a conversation where he told her they were going to rent the building to the hospital for one year and she stated that year has gone and they are vaccinated and ready to go back to their home gathering place but that it isn't there and that the county has taken all their stuff. Chairman Freeman stated the county had an accountability for the stuff and that he knows where every piece is at, Ms. Wainright states she appreciates that but wants to know about the piano and states that it was donated by the Bradford's. Chairman Freeman states he had a conversation with Dorita about the piano and that she did not want the piano in storage because she did not want the rats to nest in it, he then said he asked her was it ok to place it at the nursing home because they had offered to take it and use it and it would be safe there and well kept. He stated its in a safe place. Ms. Wainright asks about the building. Chairman Freeman stated that Deon came and present a proposal to the board and that the entire board was for it, and that the building is being rented for a while longer. COVID has not gone away and most of the other counties are not going to open the centers back up. He stated he is not going to state that is not the case there. The other counties are already reassigning the buildings and that he has information he will share with them that shows the other counties are not reopening. He states he sees a lot still wearing masks and until the county has guidelines from the medical community it was on hold and that if something happened to someone it would not be good. She then asked what the county's intention for the building was in the future, Chairman Freeman states the building was rented with a clause and that he is on the hospital board, and that they know the building is not for sale and on hold until the county feels they are safe and can gather back up. The building was being occupied by physical therapy and the nursing program but that the county has not abandoned them. The board is on the same page with that. Chairman Freeman state Commissioner Worsley made the comment as long as the building was not to be disposed of it would be there for them in the future. Ms. Wainright stated the county never included them in any of their planning or anything the county was doing. She stated all has been vaccinated and they want their building back again. She stated that the money they raised bought the ice maker, freezer, and refrigerator. Chairman Freeman stated the freezer and refrigerator are still there and that the ice machine is at the rec department and that there was a misunderstanding that it was going to the police station but was not the case. He stated that the county was going to have to buy an ice maker anyway, Ms. Wainright asked if the county wanted to buy that from them. Chairman Freeman stated whatever the county need to do to get them back in the ice business when it all was in the clear they would do. She then told the board that the

seniors are the ones who started swamp gravy and how many thousands of visitors and how everyone was proud of it and put logos on vehicles. She states that they are responsible for the murals. She states the main problem is a lack of communications. She asked that the board get in touch with their board and include them in any planning so this would not happen again. Chairman Freeman asked Dorita to talk next, Dorita stated she talked to Chairman Freeman and that they feel that they were not included in the loop and that they knew nothing of Deon moving in and she had asked to be kept included so she could update the seniors, but she was not. She stated she had to call the hospital when she heard about it because she knew it was going to cause a lot of turmoil. She stated they did not have a problem with keeping the building going with the understanding that the board was not going to sale the building and they could move back in, but the problem started when their stuff was being moved. She stated all their stuff was purchased or donated to them, the problem was they were left out. She states that she has seen several go down because they have no family and nothing to go to. She states she understands the closing was not the counties' fault but that the way they found out that Deon was going in there was wrong. She stated she knows the stuff is being stored but concerned of rats She just feels that they were left out and feels if they were included it would have been ok. Chairman Freeman then states that the nursing class had been down there and then one day they started moving stuff, He then stated the county had to step in and stop the moving. She then asked Who was they? Who was doing the moving? She said they are the ones the seniors were upset with. Chairman Freeman stated an employee at the hospital started the moving, she asked whoever that person was for them to know they were upset with him. Chairman Freeman stated he did not know if that person just took charge and decided to move. Mr. Newsome then tells the board that the storage shed out back belonged to them and that someone asked where they wanted it moved, Chairman Freeman stated that building was not being moved. Ms. Wainright asked who the big boss was at the hospital that oversaw moving. Chairman Freeman stated Brad Bell assisted but that Hank Wilson from the hospital was the one started telling them to move the stuff. Chairman Freeman called on Terry Taylor who stated he was born here, grew up here and moved off and returned. He talked about the senior center and how it cares about the seniors. He stated that it was place everyone could tell each other their problems. He was glad to hear that the county was holding the building for them when they could have it back. He told the board where they are the seniors have been and where the seniors are they will be if lucky. And maybe when the time comes, they will be there. Commissioner Worsley asked Chairman Freeman if he could throw something out to the board, he stated until they can get it resolved his wife came up with it, that the collaborate building have a big room and kitchen was there any way that the seniors could use the building until all is resolve. The seniors asked Commissioner Worsley to restated it so they can hear, he asks them about the collaborate building, a citizen asks to speak and says she is still dealing with SOWEGA and she does virtual programs, she states the seniors are like her family. She appreciates the senior building. She states that SOWEGA stated that if they needed someone to come in and

help with exercises and stuff like that they would come and do that for the citizens of Miller County. She stated July 1<sup>st</sup>, Albany opened the senior building for exercise and not dining, she believed eventually open to other stuff. She stated there was no reason Miller could not follow suit. She stated they need the companionship. Ms. Wainright asked how long before the building would be available again, Chairman Freeman stated they would have to look over everything before they could answer. Chairman Freeman stated that Deon had to move close to the hospital or possibly shut down because his partner retired. He stated that the board wanted them to make sure COVID died down before they could open it, it then stated that the board had not abandoned them. The Citizen then spoke again stating the SOWEGA asked to check on churches to see if they could provide the space for exercise. Another citizen asked why they could not take the advice of Commissioner Worsley and use the collaborative. Some of the seniors stated that the collaborative building was already in use. Chairman Freeman stated he would talk with the hospital to see what plan they could come up with and that they would keep them updated. Ms. Wainright asked Chairman Freeman that the building would be returned when Deon was able to get out, Chairman Freeman and the board agreed.

**Cook Redlands** – Representative of Cook Redlands present to request the tax penalties be waved because their CPA is in New York and that New York was shut down, she stated that the CPA didn't get them the paperwork and that's why it is late. William Smith asked the Chairman if they were supposed to bring that to the tax assessor's office and Chairman Freeman told him it was collection of taxes, so it was Tax commissioners office. Cook Redlands stated they had not received the tax bills and that the CPA from New York sent the paperwork down late because of the shutdown. William Smith with the assessor's board stated that was the accountant's responsibility and if they had issues, they needed to take that up with him. Chairman Freeman stated they put a policy in place about COVID and that this was not COVID related and that if they gave them a break then anyone could come and requested it for whatever reason. Chairman Freeman stated that if you didn't pay your taxes on time, you would get a delinquent notice and the representative stated they had all that but the accountant it New York was shut down. that if they could provide some excuse from a physician, they may would consider. Commissioner Calhoun stated that unless the accountant or accounts payable person had COVID he could not see it. Commissioner Worsley stated that Miller County already gives them a big tax break. All agreed. Chairman Freeman stated unless they could provide a doctor's excuse where the accountant had COVID and that Cook Redlands were going to have to provide documentation. Discussion for 2019 penalties as well as 2020, Commissioner Calhoun stated COVID was not in 2019 so that was out. Commissioner Worsley stated all the delinquent notices. The address on file was discussed. The board stated that they would have to produce documentation showing the accountant office closed and they will review for 2020 but that 2019 taxes would not be waved.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

***Commissioners Office damage*** – Servpro will be coming Tuesday to give an air quality test to determine presence of mold. Will update the board.

Leigh Ribolzi will be placed on August agenda to address the Senior Center.

Archival and indexing of the deeds – Chairman Freeman stated that the records would be placed on microfilm. Doug Cofty stated that the initial quote was \$65,000 for 20 years and that the new quote is \$32,000.00 for 10 years. The funding will possibly come from the ARPA funds if not Chairman Freeman stated that the board needed to consider doing it even if the ARPA funds would not pay for it. The commissioners stated they would make a decision next month and see if we can use the ARPA money.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

***DFAC appointment*** – Melanie Williams. Commissioner Worsley made a motion to appoint. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion, all in favor, motion carried.

***Rec Board appointments*** – Mandy Roland, Brian Donley. Chairman Freeman asked how many open seats were on the board. The board was informed that 3 seats were open, Commissioner Calhoun asked Red Director if he had an additional name, Brad Bell stated Jason Suggs. Commissioner Worsley asked what name was that he was told Jason Suggs. Leroy Bush asked how they determined the names for the board, was it sent out to the public, Chairman Freeman stated some of those names were Coaches down there. Mr. Bush asked how they go about picking the names, Chairman Freeman stated they have children that participate down there. Mr. Bush asked again how they went about determining the names, he stated they discussed this before and asked was not it a community thing and asked if they just pick who they want. Chairman Freeman stated they pick creditable people to be on the board. Mr. Bush asked who is we, Chairman Freeman stated the board and stated to Mr. Bush that it wasn't his decision, Mr. Bush stated back that it wasn't the chairman's decision neither. Chairman Freeman stated it was the board's decision. Chairman Freeman then stated that he was not on the agenda to talk and that he cannot butt in, Mr. Bush stated he was just asking. He asked the chairman didn't he ask could he as a question, and the chairman responded that he answered it. Commissioner Worsley then asks the audience is there anyone that would like to throw their name in the hat. No one spoke up. Chairman Freeman called for a motion. Commissioner Worsley made the motion to appoint, Commissioner Calhoun seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

***GSI Software agreement*** – Tax Commissioners Office. Commissioner Worsley made motion to approve, Commissioner Edwards seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

***Raises for departments*** – Chairman Freeman stated that some departments like the tax commissioner and clerk of court have already put raises in effect and that the budget will be delayed so some departments like 911 and EMS wanted to follow suit. Faye explained that all departments have already added it to the proposed budget and that the budget would not be approved for a month or so. Commissioner Calhoun stated he was ok with that. Commissioner Edwards asked about the road department, Faye stated she thought that he had also put in for raises but was not sure that he had not asked. Doug Cofty stated he would contact Andy Moore tomorrow morning and ask him what his plans were. Chairman Freeman called for a motion to proceed with the raises. Commissioner Calhoun made the motion, Commissioner Edwards seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

Chairman Freeman asked was there anything else with department heads. Commissioner Worsley stated that the road department was having issues with the dump trucks. Chairman Freeman asked Doug Cofty about the status of the new dump truck. Doug informed the board that the new truck was in Albany getting the bed put on. Commissioner Worsley stated he was having engine problems for the larger dump truck and that if we didn't fix it we would not have the excavator if we had a storm because that was the only thing to tow it. Commissioner Worsley stated he need to tow the dump truck to the shop and wanted to make sure it was ok. All agreed to tow the dump truck. Discussion continued on the age and condition of the other dump trucks. Doug Cofty advised we would begin looking for grants to replace a dump truck.

Chairman Freeman asked was the water working at the dump site yet. Commissioner Worsley stated that it was not working. Chairman Freeman stated that Brad Bell was head of maintenance now and that if the site needed a bathroom installed that Brad would have his workers install one. Commissioner Worsley stated that the dump site worker has been out at the dump a lot more lately. They are going to look into the bathroom and water.

Chairman Freeman asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Worsley made motion, Commissioner Edwards seconded it, all in favor, motion carried.



**MILLER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BY:**

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**Kreg Freeman, Chairman**

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**Douglas Cofty, County Manager**

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**Ladon Calhoun, Vice-Chairman**

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**Allen Worsley, Commissioner**

**Nicole Nixon, Commissioner**

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**Cristene Edwards, Commissioner**