



Miller County

Board of Commissioners

179 S. Cuthbert St.
Colquitt, Ga 39837



SPECIAL SESSION MEETING
11/12/2021, 9:00 A.M., Courthouse Courtroom
MINUTES

Present: Chairman Kreg Freeman, Vice Chairman Ladon Calhoun, Commissioner Allen Worsley, Commissioner Edwards, and Commissioner Niki Nixon. Others

Present: Finance Director Faye Whittaker, County Manager Doug Cofty

Chairman Freeman calls the meeting to order. Special session 11/12/2021 Meeting is about Christmas Bonuses and Hospital Board appointments.

Chairman Freeman stated that on the Christmas bonus what they have been doing was \$250.00, he stated that is why he said the other night, do you all want to do what we have been doing. He stated that the extra \$100.00 was for the COVID. He stated that all employees were exposed just like the emergency personnel. He stated that there was some debate back at that time and it was agreeing to give an extra \$100.00.

Commissioner Edwards stated that the question at hand is when you say the same, she stated she was getting calls about what is the same. She states that the employees watched the meeting. Chairman Freeman states it is writing in the minutes but that it doesn't say it's a onetime thing but that was the general understanding. Commissioner Edwards asks that it was a one-time thing. Chairman Freeman states that if we give them the \$350.00 it will set a precedence that they will get \$350.00 from now on. Commissioner Edwards stated she understood but that we needed to put it someone where or written that this was just for COVID. Finance Director Faye Whittaker stated that there was something listed in the minutes about it. Commissioner Edwards stated she was writing the minutes from last year and it did not state it was a one-time thing.

Commissioner Worsley stated that some of the surrounding counties were giving more money than we were because they were using the money that was given to us. He asked Ms. Whittaker if we could us that money, she stated you could, but you cannot call it a bonus you call it premium pay. Commissioner Worsley states Seminole County gave \$1300.00 to employees and the city is giving \$1800.00, he stated several counties around us were doing something similar. Chairman Freeman stated that everyone over at the courthouse was out with COVID or something similar except Judge Josh Suggs office. He stated that they were either sent home or tested but that they got paid the entire time. He stated there is a pile of money that floated through over there and that those offices over there had gotten paid a week at a time. Commissioner Worsley stated he agreed, but that if we do not use that money up, we are going to have to give it back.

Chairman Freeman stated that the county has already preplanned, and that Faye is already preplanning what the county is going to do with the money in the future.

Commissioner Worsley states he does not see anything wrong with giving the employees a decent Christmas bonus. Chairman Freeman states \$250.00 was decent and that something that was supposed to be nice has grown into something almost

ugly. Commissioner Edwards stated that what she was saying that if we are going to give them the \$250.00 that it should be documented. Commissioner Nixon stated what you are saying is that the \$250.00 was just for COVID. Commissioner Edwards stated yes, she was not arguing for giving them the money she is saying if they decide on it needs to be written in the minutes \$250.00 one time only, and that going back to the previous minutes it does not say that on the minutes from last year. She then asked did they want to go ahead and give the \$350.00 and draw up something that states this is the last year since we are still in the COVID window and next year go back to the \$250.00 because they have nothing to stand on as far as the minutes.

Commissioner Nixon also stated they needed to know because she was reading the letter from the Tax Commissioner that stated the \$350.00 amount after taxes. Doug Coffy stated that they would raise the amount up to reflect the taxes, Commissioner Nixon asked is that what we did last year, she wasn't aware. Chairman Freeman address the board that the Constitutional Officers is not supposed to get a bonus period, Commissioner Edwards stated ok, Chairman Freeman stated he talked with the auditor Perry Henry. He then stated that they were talking about getting the money out of an old payroll account left over there, he said they can give their employees one out of there whether it be a bonus or raise. But they can not give themselves one, he stated the Auditor did not say it was against the law but did not look good, and it doesn't look good. He stated to Commissioner Edwards that it would be like you writing yourself a check. Commissioner Edwards stated she understood. Chairman Freeman stated he wanted it noted that he is recommending against the Constitutional Officers from giving themselves an increase from that money because he didn't want this board to be responsible if there was to rise up from it. Commissioner Edwards stated she agreed with that. Commissioner Nixon asked does the Constitutional Officers normally get the bonus, Faye Whittaker stated that they have never gotten a bonus in the past but last year they voted to give them one last year to be nice for COVID. Vice Chairman Calhoun asked did they get the full \$350.00 or just the \$100.00. Faye stated they got the whole thing. Chairman Freeman stated they are not supposed to get anything extra their salary is set by the State of Georgia, they get a cost of living raise and stuff like that but that it was not governed by the board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Edwards stated they needed that in writing so they can have something to stand on. Commissioner Worsley stated once the budget was approved, they couldn't do anything about that. Chairman Freeman stated they can not give themselves a raise life that. He stated they cannot give themselves a raise nor can they give themselves a bonus. Commissioner Worsley then stated that we needed to consider giving more than the \$350.00 because we keep losing employees and that there are going to be employees upset when they find out what the other counties giving their employees. Commissioner Nixon stated looked at Early County, they have the Papermill, they got the money, we don't. She then stated I know we must take care of the people, but we can't. Chairman Freeman then stated Seminole County has Lake Seminole, Decatur County has industrial sites down there and way more business, they have Walmart, and we don't have that, even Cairo you are looking at the same thing. The only one that is close or under us is Baker County. Commissioner Worsley stated he was talking about the money that was handed to us. Vice Chairman Calhoun stated that money was going to help balance the budget. Chairman Freeman stated that was the comment that Perry Henry made, you all aren't in bad shape, but you aren't in the black. Chairman Freeman stated that is \$100.00 extra per employee then asked Faye how many employees we had. Faye stated 80-85, he then stated that's 8,000.00. Commissioner Worsley stated

we gave them \$75,000.00 to redo the rentals over there. Chairman Freeman stated that was match money, Commissioner Worsley stated we are still obligated to that \$75,000.00. Chairman Freeman stated he would call for a motion. Commissioner Edwards stated she is just saying if we. Vice Chairman Calhoun stated you want it spelled out. Commissioner Edwards stated yes if we do it this year going forward, we say next year the \$100.00 is not included because we are out of the COVID window. Vice Chairman Calhoun asked if we went with giving them \$250.00 then added another \$100.00 before the end of the year would that work. Faye stated that is just adding more payroll. Commissioner Edwards agreed. She stated if we go ahead and give them the \$350.00 and put it in writing. She agreed we cannot do what the other counties are doing that is clear, but that she requested it in writing because as of now they have nothing to stand on.

Chairman Freeman stated he is calling for a motion for \$350.00 and this is a one-time thing, and it is the end of that. He stated he wanted to add the note that Constitutional Officers cannot give themselves a bonus or draw out of that old payroll account, it needs to be noted that they do not give themselves anything out of that payroll account and that it is on everyone's mind now, if something came up next year and they just came up and done it and that he was not going to be responsible for it. Chairman Freeman asked was there a motion for the \$350.00, Commissioner Edwards stated yes, she makes the motion to go with the \$350.00 one time with it returning to \$250.00 next year. Commissioner Worsley seconded the motion and wanted to be on record that they should get more. Commissioner Edwards stated she thinks they should get more but if we can just. Chairman Freeman stated he wanted to clarify this and asked if at sometime that money was in the account we would give it, Faye then stated we talked about if we get that money next year going ahead and giving the employees extra. Doug Cofty stated that we needed to be cautious because we were told we may or may not receive the funds next year. Commissioner Edwards then stated ok so if we receive the check next year premium pay will take effect, Faye stated it would be a one time. Vice Chairman Calhoun stated you all are making it like we are promising it, we need to wait until we get it. Chairman Freeman stated we have a motion, anyone seconded it? Commissioner Worsley stated he did. Chairman Freeman called for vote, all in favor, motion carried with the notes added to the minutes.

Chairman Freeman stated the next thing on the agenda is the Hospital board appointment, He stated Doug has some names he will call out to you all and if you have additional names to add. He stated they needed they needed 2 names for each seat along with the ones the hospital said would be reappointed. Doug then stated why its on agenda, he stated he got a phone call from the hospital and that they were not happy that the commissioners elected to advertise that in the paper because it was not a publicly advertised position and that you guys needed to provide the names and that it was possible, they would reject any of the names submitted. Commissioner Worsley stated they will reject them. Doug then stated that the hospital stated it their bylaws. Chairman Freeman then stated that the hospital did not want to get into a riff but that it was not a publicly advertised position. Commissioner Edwards stated they did not know that at the meeting, and that if they knew that at the meeting, they wouldn't have suggested that. Commissioner Edwards also stated that to touch on it, they should not be pressured to make a decision right then and there. Chairman Freeman stated that the hospital sent that at the last minute but that the two had agreed to reserve in their positions. Commissioner Edwards stated not just about tis but in general. Commissioner Worsley asked how many days was it that they said they didn't like this?

Chairman Freeman stated he called Jill Brown the night of the meeting at told her that they didn't get the appointments done because she slipped it in there at the last minute, he could not get it done. He then stated that the reason they needed it done was because the 2 positions had expired. He stated he told her the board wanted it advertised in the paper and she stated you cannot do that. Commissioner Worsley stated he didn't know about it and was not notified to find some names. Commissioner Edwards stated that with anyone, not just the hospital authority, anybody that hands them something wanting a decision right then and there without research, she doesn't think that is a conscious decision for them to make right then and there. Chairman Freeman stated he understood, in that situation it was those 2 willing to serve again for another term, and it wasn't like you had to come up with names if those seats were empty. Commissioner Edwards stated she understood. Chairman Freeman asked Doug to call out the names and stated if they had any names to submit it needed to be in the minutes. Doug called out Jo Mock, Chris Wilkins, Wes Vann and Linda Cleveland, Doug stated those were the only 4 names now and if they had any names, he would add them. Commissioner Nixon asked about Susan Griffin, Doug stated these were new names and those were already added from the minutes. Vice Chairman Calhoun asked so the hospital is wanting to reappoint the 2 that expired, Chairman Freeman stated yes. Vice Chairman Calhoun stated he understood and asked they have been on there a while. Chairman Freeman stated Dr. Reardon has been on there for about 1 year that position was Jerry Thorntons or maybe Sandra Womble took that one but that he has been on the for about 1 year.

Commissioner Worsley asked that they are wanting to put the ones back on that expired correct. Chairman Freeman stated yes. Commissioner Edwards also asked if they wanted to stay on. Vice Chairman Calhoun asked did he need a motion to reappoint. Chairman Freeman stated that there were 2 other names from the other night, Ben Clenney and Rick LaGardia, did the board want to add them as well. Commissioner Worsley stated yes. Chairman Freeman then stated they needed to pick 2 other names didn't matter to him man or woman. Commissioner Edwards stated Susan Griffin. It was also said that Jo Mocks name be added. Doug read off the names that were being submitted as Ben Clenney, Rick LaGardia, Jo Mock, Susan Griffin, Roy Reardon, and Carolyn King. Chairman Freeman called for a motion to submit those names, Commissioner Worsley made motion, Vice Chairman Calhoun seconded the motion, all in favor, motion carried.

Vice Chairman Calhoun made motion to adjourn, Commissioner Edwards seconded, all in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting Adjourned.