MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SEPTEMBER 22, 2022
CONTINUED SESSION
MINUTES

The Macon County Board of Commissioners held a joint meeting with the Franklin Town Council and the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners at 6 p.m. on Thursday, September 22, 2022 in the boardroom of Franklin Town Hall, located at 95 East Main Street in Highlands.

All five members of the county's board of commissioners were present, as were County Manager Derek Roland, Deputy Clerk Mike Decker and County Attorney Eric Ridenour. Finance Director Lori Carpenter did not attend.

Franklin Mayor Jack Horton, all six members of the town council (Joe Collins, David Culpepper, Stacy Guffey, Adam Kimsey, Mike Lewis and Rita Salain), Town Manager Amie Owens and several other staff members were present.

Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor, three members of the town commission (John Dotson, Amy Patterson and Marc Hehn), Town Manager Josh Ward and Town Clerk Gibby Shaheen were present. Commissioners Eric Pierson and Brian Stiehler did not attend.

Representatives of the news media and several citizens were also in attendance.

Mayor Horton welcomed those in attendance and offered an opening prayer before the group enjoyed a meal together.

Mayor Horton reconvened the meeting at 6:30 and provided a history of similar joint meetings that had been interrupted because of COVID-19. He noted that this is an effort to resume these meetings as he believes the three entities will "find out we have a lot of things in common." Introductions were made around the room.

Mayor Horton then provided an overview of activities and upcoming events in Franklin, including: the hiring of the town's first code enforcement officer, attempts to fill vacancies in the town's police force, street and sidewalk improvements, fall decorating and the upcoming Pumpkinfest festival and other events, a recent property purchase near the Macon County Library and the Little Tennessee River, a feasibility study that will look at possible uses for the now vacant Angel Community Hospital facility, a Request for Proposals for a salary

study, an upcoming council work session to determine the future use of the town-owned "Whitmire property," future downtown development, opportunities for young people and plans for the proposed skatepark and the local "housing issue."

Mayor Taylor then shared items of interest in Highlands, including: the completion of a $13-million performing arts center, the town's new fire department facility, an update on the fiber network project, challenges in dealing with short-term rentals, sidewalk and paving improvements, a $3.3-million grant to address water and sewer needs, an update on recreation programs (especially pickle ball), planned electric vehicle charging stations, housing, childcare and pre-K needs, and continued demands on water/sewer, solid waste and recycling services.

Board chairman Jim Tate provided the county's update, and noted that as he is not seeking re-election, this was very likely his last time in a joint meeting of the boards. He began his remarks with matters related to the Macon County School System, including: the completion of the $10.5-million renovation to Macon Middle School (MMS) in August, funding for a new locker room facility at MMS, architectural proposals for the addition of pre-K classrooms at Highlands School, details on the Franklin High School (FHS) project, with a public meeting on the proposed design of the new school set for October 18, and comments on the one-quarter-cent local option sales tax, which is on the November 8 ballot as a referendum. He noted the additional tax could generate as much as $2-million annually to assist with school capital needs. Chairman Tate also updated the group on the status of broadband expansion efforts, other community improvements, and partnerships with the Town of Franklin related to the Little Tennessee River Greenway and the proposed skatepark.

Other comments included:
- County Vice-Chairman Ronnie Beale inviting all of the elected officials to the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization (RPO) meeting on Monday, September 26th.
- Franklin Vice-Mayor Joe Collins urging county officials not to build the new Franklin High School "too small."
- Franklin Councilmember Stacy Guffey suggesting that the town and county work together on mental health, housing and recreation issues.
- Commissioner Josh Young inviting Town of Franklin officials to lunch, at his treat, to discuss downtown development and to consider moving offices in the courthouse to the old hospital facility.
- Franklin Councilmember David Culpepper and Mayor Taylor discussing funding alternatives for sidewalks and bicycle and greenway projects.
- Mayor Taylor expressing his appreciation to Chairman Tate for his years of service on the county commission.

- County Manager Derek Roland said he needed to inform the county commissioners that he and other county officials are reviewing any potential mitigation projects that might qualify for the Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) funding for Flood Mitigation Funding (FMA) for 2022. He noted that some $2.3-billion is available from the BRIC program and $800-million is available from the FMA program, and that letters of interest are due October 3 and he would have an update for the board at the October regular meeting. Mr. Culpepper questioned if the sewer pump station on Wayah Road would qualify?
- Franklin Town Manager Amie Owens provided a brief update on the skatepark project.
- Chairman Tate offered to have the county host the next joint meeting.
- Hazel Norris, a member of the audience, commented on the need for accessible playground equipment for disable children at county recreation facilities.

At 7:53 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the county commissioners voted unanimously to adjourn.

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Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

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Jim Tate
Board Chair