



**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JANUARY 14, 2025  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All Board Members, Interim County Manager Warren Cabe, Deputy Clerk Tammy Keezer, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, and County Attorney Eric Ridenour were present, as were a number of citizens.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- (A) Mr. Cabe reminded board members of the joint meeting between the county and the boards of the Town of Franklin and the Town of Highlands to be held on February 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at Old Edwards Inn in Highlands. He said a meal for board members will be served at 6:00 p.m.
- (B) Mr. Cabe shared that Soil and Water Director, Doug Johnson, is working on funding to clean debris out of the waterway on the Cullasaja River and there should be an update at the February meeting.
- (C) Mr. Cabe announced that an organization change has been made to combine the Code Enforcement and Planning Departments so the new department will be Planning, Permitting, and Development and will have one director and that Joe Allen has been hired as the director. Mr. Cabe said there are not any items on the agenda tonight about the watershed or floodplain issues as those will be tabled indefinitely while we wait on some FEMA mapping and other information. He said the Lake Emory Dam recommendation has been referred back to this board and discussion about that will happen during the budget sessions.
- (D) Mr. Cabe announced that Chairman Young had finalized the committee and liaison assignments for the year and read them in to the record. Ms. Keezer indicated that the liaison assignments were also being updated on the county website.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Chairman Young requested all in attendance rise and a moment of silence was observed.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Commissioner Shields, the pledge to the flag was recited.

**PUBLIC HEARING(S):** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** **Betsy Baste** made some comments about money and taxes that are entrusted to the county. She requested the board not ask another non-profit supporting animal services have to do a fund-raiser to raise additional funds for the operation of the organization. Ms. Baste ended her comments requesting enforcement of laws, not weakening of ordinance. **Scott Baste** spoke about the proposed pickle ball and tennis courts stating that the plan needs more bleachers for the tennis court area. He also requested the board reconsider the topic of social districting and said approval of opening up the restricted areas would allow better flow for different events in the downtown area. **Kerry Keys**, Executive Director of Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands provided a handout to board members and spoke about a request for property tax exemption. Attorney Ridenour commented that he has provided all the information to Mr. Keys explaining the qualification for exemption and the process. Mr. Cabe said he has also corresponded with Mr. Keys via email and according to the law the ownership is based on a specific date and who owned the property on that date and said the Tax Office will do everything possible to make sure they are taken care of next year.

**ADDITIONS, ADJUSTMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

**REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS:** None.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- (A) UPDATE ON HIGHLANDS SCHOOL PROJECT** – Kaitlyn Jones, Project Manager for Vannoy Construction informed the board that the preexisting fuel oil tank has been remediated and they are ready to move forward with footings for the middle school. She said that by the end of the month the permanent heat should be installed and the temporary heat removed then vertical work should begin in February. Mr. Cabe said a project meeting is held twice per month to provide updates. Ms. Jones indicated that the project is on target with budget. Mr. Cabe shared the next update will be at the regular meeting in March and every other month after that.
- (B) APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION ACCEPTING BID AND AUTHORIZING SALE OF SURPLUS REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 88 NO NAME ROAD IN FRANKLIN** – Attorney reminded the board of the offer and the conditions requiring removal of the existing structure within six months of purchase which was included in the agreement. He said there were no upset bids received and explained that the board can now accept the bid of \$1,000 or reject it. Motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to accept the bid of \$1,000 and sell the property as surplus property. The vote was unanimous.
- (C) CONSIDERATION OF SURPLUS PROPERTY OFFER FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 651 EAST MAIN STREET** – Attorney Ridenour said an offer in the amount of \$50,000 had been received and asked whether the board wanted to start the upset bid process at this amount or if the board wanted to continue to wait until a more reasonable offer is made. He explained the advertising process and the cost involved. Commissioner Shearl said we had an offer some time ago at a larger amount and the board had rejected that offer. Commissioner Young said we have a precedence set of not accepting offers less than the tax value. No action was taken.
- (D) DISCUSSION CONCERNING ANIMAL SERVICES OPERATION** – Mr. Cabe reminded the board of the conversation last month regarding having another organization take over the animal services operations. He asked for guidance

on how the board wanted him to proceed. After some discussion, there was consensus Mr. Cabe to invest time in researching the options.

**(E) UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT OF COUNTY MANAGER** - Ms. Keezer provided an update indicating that six applications have been received and that three of those applicants are qualified for the position. She asked how the board wanted to proceed. Commissioner Antoine requested the board establish a deadline for applications. After a few moments of discussion, no action was taken.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**(A) DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF BID PACKAGE FOR PHASE IA OF THE RECREATION MASTER PLAN** – Commissioner Young said he and Commissioner Shearl attended the Recreation Board meeting earlier today and that this report is being considered for use in advertising for bids for this phase of the project. Mike Norris with McGill and Associates said the scope from the original plan was kept in tact but some changes have been made in regard to the restrooms, changing rooms, and picnic facilities. He explained that the land and water analysis indicated the building had to be shifted further back in order to meet the permitting requirements and showed a model layout and explained the details. Mr. Norris stated that this area will continue flood as it always has and that the proposed bridge shown in the layout is not part of this bid project. Board members engaged in some discussion regarding the design and where buses would park since this is going to be the new high school facility for tennis. Mr. Norris said buses could park at the recreation center and walk across the proposed bridge once it is complete. Commissioner Antoine said he recalled the original design having more parking options and separation between tennis activities and pickleball activities. Mr. Norris indicated the original design of the park was based on the information they had prior to the analysis. Commissioner Breeden said he would like to go back to the drawing board and see if we can get a little closer to what we originally presented to the public. Mr. Norris stated they will take a second look, but to keep in mind they already have a lot of construction documents completed and any redesign will impact that. No action taken.

**(B) DISCUSSION REGARDING CLOCK TOWER RENOVATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF BID** - Mr. Morgan reported the board had previously asked for a scope of work that makes the clock tower look as good as new and presented three bids he believes meets that request. He requested to award the bid to Carolina Builder Services in the amount \$25,082.41 plus a ten percent contingency. After some discussion of clarification regarding the contract Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden to accept the recommendation and bid as requested, and to approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$27,600 from contingency. The vote was unanimous. Mr. Morgan then provided a handout to board members showing where trees are damaging sidewalks surrounding the square and other areas near where the clock tower is located. Commissioner Shearl commented that the Garden Club is taking care of the area and about how nice it looks and said the rest of the area not maintained by them is an eye sore. He said he is surprised someone has not gotten hurt and the trees have outlived their life. Mr. Cabe said the Town of Franklin is more than willing to assist us in the logistics of getting the trees removed. There was consensus among board members authorizing Mr. Morgan to move forward with removing the trees.

**(C) UPDATE ON MACON EARLY COLLEGE ASSESSMENT** – Mr. Morgan reported that Architect Peter Looper has developed an architectural plan and scope of work and the project is ready to bid. He said the school has asked for the front of the building to be enclosed and converted in to two offices with a secure entrance. Mr. Morgan said the architect has estimated \$9,250 to add the

addition to the project as an alternate for the bidding process. After some discussion regarding security of the school and the budget, Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to approve the request as presented as well as a budget amendment in the amount of \$9,250 from contingency. The vote was unanimous.

**(D)DISCUSSION REGARDING UPDATE TO RULE 11 OF THE MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RULES OF PROCEDURES** – Attorney Ridenour explained the request to change the Rules of Procedures regarding the order of the agenda. He said the change would allow for additions to be made to the agenda before the public comment section to allow the public to comment on an items that were added to the agenda at the meeting. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to approve the change as requested. The vote was unanimous.

**(E) SCHEDULING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR THE COUNTY MANAGER** – Commissioenr Young said performance evaluations for the County Manager has been in discussion for a couple of years. He said this is common practice and he would like to have an evaluation for the two employees of the board near the end of the fiscal year. Commissioner Young suggested January or February as an annual timeframe. After some discussion, board members consented to perform evaluations for Mr. Cabe and Attorney Ridenour on January 23, 2025, at noon with the board and the HR Director present.


**CONSENT AGENDA:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented which includes: (A) Minutes of the December 10, 2024, regular meeting, (B) Budget Amendments #159-164, (C) Tax releases for the month of December 2024 in the amount of \$991.60, (I) Monthly ad valorem tax collection report for which no action is necessary.

**APPOINTMENTS:**

**(A)Macon County Library Board of Trustees (1 seat):** Commissioner Antoine thanked board member Linda Tyler for her service and made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, to appoint Debbie Franken to the vacant seat. The vote was unanimous.

**CLOSED SESSION:** None

**ADJOURN:** With no other business, at 7:50 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to recess until 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 23, 2025.

  
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Warren Cabe  
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

  
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Josh Young  
Board Chair