



Walker County Governmental Authority
101 South Duke Street, P.O. Box 445
LaFayette, GA 30728
706-638-1437

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
September 12, 2024 - 6:30 PM

- I. **Call to Order:**

Chairman Shannon Whitfield called to order the Public Hearing of the Board of Commissioners held at Annex III, 201 S. Main Street, LaFayette, Georgia at 6:30 PM on September 12, 2024.
- II. **Attendees:**

The following were present: Chairman Shannon Whitfield, Commissioner Robert Blakemore, Commissioner Mark Askew, Commissioner Brian Hart, Commissioner Robert Stultz, Legal and Policy Director David Gottlieb, and Communication Specialist Dakiya Porter. Other guests signed in at the meeting as well. Please see the attached sign in sheet.
- III. **Approval of Agenda:**

Commissioner Hart made a motion to approve the agenda with one modification to add Purchase Order 2024-00002733, seconded by Commissioner Askew, 4 ayes and 0 nays, motion carried.
- IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioner Stultz made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Scheduled Meeting held August 22, 2024 at 6:30 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Blakemore, 4 ayes and 0 nays, minutes were approved.
- V. **Public Hearing (Budget):**
 - A. Chairman Whitfield presented the FY2025 General Fund Budget and FY2024 Enterprise Funds & Special Revenue Budget of the Governing Authority of Walker County, Georgia.
 1. Melissa Hulsey came forward with questions about the Hotel/Motel tax.
- VI. **Public Comment:**
 1. Chairman Whitfield presented a Statement on Public Meeting Decorum (attached).
 2. Tim Bennet spoke about items that are forbidden to come inside the courthouse building. There is a sign posted on the south entrance to the courthouse and Mr. Bennet claims this sign is unconstitutional. He referenced several O.C.G.A.s. He also stated that employees can bring their cell phones into the courthouse and if it is forbidden then it needs to be forbidden for all. He stated that the courthouse is a mixed use of offices and courts. He did not finish what he wanted to say within the five minutes, but stated a letter had been mailed to the commissioners office. Chairman Whitfield responded that he would have the county attorney look into these concerns.
 3. Jim Pope spoke about the board's governing jurisdictions and authority. He questioned Commissioner Stultz and pressed for an answer as to how Commissioner Stultz interprets the exception clause and the law. Commissioner Stultz responded that he does not have anything different then what he has previously stated in prior meetings.
 4. Jamie Hulsey spoke about the hotel/motel tax and MOU. He referenced R-004-18.
 5. Melissa Hulsey asked how the hotel/motel tax is specifically broken out and if the budget reflects this. Mrs. Husley questioned the enterprise and special revenue fund budget and referenced page 19 of 31, 7540 tourism line item 523300.90 regarding an expense for \$700,000.
 6. Steven Keith came forward to discuss the animal shelter and animal control. He asked the board to do better for the animals.
 7. Frankie Martinez, a local home builder, spoke about fixing Angland Road. He stated that this road was in poor condition. He questioned how long the process took to get the road fixed. Mr. Martinez wants to buy land on this road and build homes and the condition of this road is not traversable to everyone.
 8. Frederick Ufford thanked Chairman Whitfield for his service to the County. He also expressed his opposition for the Chickamauga Battlefield Connector Trail. He claimed there is not enough traffic, not enough walkers or bicycling in this area.
 9. Jay Tankersley stated that the Ag center is looking good and that Ag day is this weekend. He referenced several documents pertaining to McLemore. He stated that he understands that they do need some help starting up, but 30 years is a long time. He is in opposition of the agreement due to the length of time they are asking for.
 10. Jennifer Hayes spoke about the Connector trail. She stated that she feels the bridge is not regulated. She claimed that the bridge has almost collapsed twice. She stated that she has a working hayfield and does not want this to take away from her personal business. She stated that in the past she has asked for speed bumps and regulations to be put in place. She is concerned the trail will bring in more people she simply does not want.
 11. Robbie Tate spoke on the McLemore agreement. In his opinion 30 years is way too long. He stated that Shannon did a great job at getting the county out of debt but he is opposed to this agreement. He also

stated that he wanted to follow up on having his road (Foster Mill DR) repaired. He claimed that they did spray some areas but no other action has been taken. David Gottlieb responded that he would need to get with Carlen Bowers, the Public Works Director, to discuss where they were at with this process.

12. Ned Yates came forward to discuss his opposition in the McLemore agreement. He urged the commissioners to table this agreement until Chairwoman elect Angie Teems takes office.
13. Karen Bradley stated that she is opposed to the McLemore agreement. She also discussed the damages to Chamberlain Rd and Little John Rd. She claimed that these roads have severe damage, drains have been washed out and it has been temporarily fixed and not fixed properly. She requested that the roads be patched before winter and the guardrail that has been knocked over fixed.
14. Gary Williams came forward with questions about the connector trail. He specifically asked what the county was contributing to this trail and what the requirements and obligations were for the county. Mr. Williams questioned where the rest of the money was coming from to complete this project. He stated that he would really like to know more information about this project.
15. Kathy Eubanks came forward to request District 4 to vote against the McLemore agreement. She questioned the board on whether McLemore had to pay any property tax and if they were paying the fire service fee. She urged the board to table this agreement.
16. Scott McNabb expressed that he was opposed to the McLemore agreement. He asked Commissioner Blakemore to give it some thought when he went to vote on this matter.
17. Angela Pence came forward to ask Commissioner Askew to table the McLemore agreement. She complimented Chairman Whitfield on his service and bringing the county out of debt.

VII. New Business:

1. Resolution R-031-24 to adopt the General Fund Budget for FY2025.
 - A. Commissioner Hart motioned to approve the budget, Commissioner Blakemore seconded. 4 ayes, 0 nays. The resolution was unanimously approved.
2. Resolution R-032-24 to adopt the Special Revenue and Enterprise Funds Budget for FY2025.
 - A. Commissioner Stultz motioned to approve the budget, Commissioner Hart seconded. 4 ayes, 0 nays. The resolution was unanimously approved.
3. Resolution R-033-24 to appoint a new Chief of Walker County Police.
 - A. Chairman Whitfield motioned to appoint Police Chief David Gilleland as Walker County Chief of Police. Commissioner Blakemore seconded the motion. 4 ayes, 0 nays. The resolution was unanimously approved.
4. The Development Agreement and Grant of Temporary Access and Construction Easement for the Chickamauga Battlefield Connector Trail.
 - A. Noel Durant came forward to speak about the connector trail and answer any questions citizens had about the trail. He stated Walker County has committed \$50,000 and the city of Chickamauga has committed \$50,000, foundations and grant money would cover the rest. He stated that with no public areas for visitors, it is hard to conserve the history. He believes this will be a benefit to the county. He mentioned several foundations and stated that his team is still working to raise more money. The trail has an estimated construction time of six months and would be made out of compacted concrete. Parking was discussed. Additional parking will not be constructed as this is to help attract people to the businesses of Chickamauga.
 - B. Commissioner Askew motioned to approve the agreement. Commissioner Blakemore seconded the motion. The agreement was unanimously approved.

Chairman Whitfield requested a 10-minute recess which occurred from 8:25 p.m. to 8:35 p.m.

VIII. Board Discussion (McLemore Agreement):

1. Chairman Whitfield stated that McLemore has been up on the mountain for several years. The previous administration was trying to create a public-private partnership. Chairman Whitfield believes that this will be a revenue stream for Walker County. He stated that when you have a tourist destination, it relieves tax dollar pressure on the school system, health department etc. he stated that all previous hotel/motel tax was going to the cities because that is where they are located, having McLemore helps our county. Whitfield stated that the last thing he wants to do is bring financial hardship to this county. Whitfield stated that he has no personal or family investments in McLemore for personal gain.
2. Commissioner Askew stated that when this matter was brought to him, he wanted the primary and secondary legal council to review the terms, conditions, and legalities of the agreement before making a decision. Commissioner Askew stated that he and Chairwoman elect Angie Teems went to McLemore for a meeting. He believes that this will be a beneficial agreement to the county because we will still receive sales tax from the incoming tourists.
3. Commissioner Stultz questioned if we knew what the estimated numbers would be on the tax revenue Walker County would receive.
4. Commissioner Hart states that he thinks this is in our county's best interest and is a good idea.
5. Commissioner Blakemore states that a percentage of what McLemore is saving will be reinvested into the resort to continue to draw in more tourists.

Chairman Shannon Whitfield asked to suspend the rules to open the meeting to public comments on the McLemore Agreement only. Commissioner Askew made a motion to open the public comment section for discussion on the McLemore project. Commissioner Stultz seconded the motion. 4 ayes, 0 nays motion carried.

1. Jay Tankersley came forward with a memorandum of understanding and a resolution that states the county will get 3% for hotel/motel tax. Mr. Tankersley wants to see the documents that say that a deal with the MOU.
2. Jamey Hulsey questioned where the letter of intent was. Mr. Hulsey wants to know if there is something happening that the citizens do not know. He would like to see the supporting documents.

3. Melissa Husley stated that the lack of documentation is a concern. She stated that McLemore is great for the county. She does not agree with the time frame of 30 years. She suggested a 10 year term with the right to renew it.
4. Ned Yates stated that he understands that if you give your word, that integrity is very important. He emphasized that transparency of the deal is the problem.
5. Rusty Hayes came forward to question if McLemore had any intentions of buying the Mountain Cove Farms as he knows that they have toured it a few times. The commissioners confirmed that there are no pending agreements for Mountain Cove Farms.
6. Gary Williams referred to the project agreement fund agreement page 1 section 4.
7. David Gottlieb stated that Hotel/Motel tax is a complicated issue. He stated that the 3% is unrestricted and can go to the General Fund or be used elsewhere. Mr. Gottlieb also stated that the MOU is readily available, it has not been requested, but can be provided to anyone that would like to see it.
8. Angela Pence thanked the board for going over everything in depth. She stated that she does agree that McLemore does benefit the community. She claimed that the board needs to do better at informing and explaining things.
9. Robert Tate came forward in opposition to the McLemore agreement as he stated 30 years is a long time and the documents are not available.
10. Roy Hambrick questioned how long this information had been available to the public. He recommended taking a step back and tabling the agreement to review the MOUs.
11. Scott McNabb came forward stating that he did an open record requests for the MOU and has it. He claimed that it states that the hotel/motel tax would be 8%. He requested that the board hold meetings to explain their positions on this agreement.

Commissioner Askew made a motion to allow Gary Williams to speak a second time on the McLemore topic. Commissioner Blakemore seconded the motion. 4 ayes, 0 nays motion carried.

12. Gary Williams asked if this is a new funding agreement.

IX. New Business:

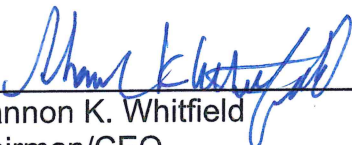
1. Agreement with Scenic Land Company per Cloudland at McLemore Project.
 - A. Commissioner Stultz motioned to approve the agreement, seconded by Commissioner Hart. 4 ayes, 0 Nays the agreement was approved unanimously.
2. Tourism Product Promotion and Development Agreement
 - A. Commissioner Hart motioned to approve the agreement, Commissioner Blakemore seconded the motion. 4 ayes, 0 nays the motion was approved unanimously.
3. Purchase Order 2024-00002722 Topo Industries, LLC in the amount of \$40,000 for grinding brush at the Landfill.
 - A. Commissioner Blakemore motioned to approve the purchase order, Commissioner Hart seconded the motion. 4 ayes, 0 nays the purchase order was approved.
4. August 2024 Departmental Statistics
 - A. Chairman Whitfield stated that the stats were included and available in the packet but due to it being so late he was going to forgo reading them.

X. Commissioner Comments:

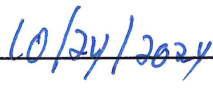
1. Commissioner Blakemore said appreciates everyone coming out and being involved. He thanked all the first responders, residents and employees of Walker County for all their hard work.
2. Commissioner Askew expressed that the board is trying to do their best. He explained that the McLemore project was brought to his attention about three months ago and he wanted to do his due diligence so the board had primary and secondary council review all items. Commissioner Askew stated that he believes that this vote was in the county's best interest. He thanked everyone for coming out and thanked all the county employees for all their hard work.
3. Commissioner Hart spoke about Beacher Garmany. He stated that he was a great man and will be missed. Commissioner Hart reminded everyone that the AG Festival is this Saturday September 14, 2024 at the newly revamped AG Center from 8am-5pm. This event is rain or shine.
4. Commissioner Stultz commented on Beacher Garmany. He stated that he was a great man and will be missed. Commissioner Stultz thanks all the employees for all their hard work. He stated that he believes McLemore will bring money in for Walker County and relieve some tax burdens.
5. Chairman Whitfield thanked everyone and expressed his appreciation of the citizens and their confidence in the team to handle matters for the county. Chairman Whitfield expressed that he believes the community will prosper because of the vote for McLemore. He stated he appreciates everyone being here tonight, being professional and courteous of each other. He thanked all the county staff.

XI. Adjournment:

Commissioner Hart made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Stultz seconded the motion. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 10:22 PM.



Shannon K. Whitfield
Chairman/CEO
Walker County Georgia



Date

Minutes prepared by: Walker County Deputy County Clerk, Jessica Staton

Commissioner Meeting

Statement on Public Meeting Decorum

As Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, I have been tasked with addressing the issue of public meeting decorum tonight.

We reside in the greatest nation in the world, and we have the privilege of raising our families in one of Georgia's most desirable communities. As citizens, we have the right and obligation to actively participate in our local government. Public meetings serve as a crucial platform for us to voice our concerns, share our ideas, and engage in constructive dialogue. However, it is imperative that we conduct ourselves with respect and civility during these gatherings.

Disruptive behavior, personal attacks, pounding on the podium, and vulgar language have no place in our public meetings. Not only do they impede the Commissioners' ability to conduct business effectively, but they also create an atmosphere of hostility and intimidation that discourages other citizens from participating.

It is essential to recognize that we all share a common goal: to improve our community and make it a better place for everyone. While we may hold differing opinions, it is crucial that we express them respectfully and constructively.

I urge all citizens to be mindful of their behavior when attending public meetings. Let us strive to create a positive and productive environment where everyone feels welcome, respected, and heard. The board desires that Walker County be known throughout the region as a community that can assemble and engage in meaningful public discussions professionally.

To ensure that everyone has an opportunity to address the Board of Commissioners, we offer each person up to 5 minutes of speaking time. We kindly request that you focus your remarks on issues, concerns, or ideas directly related to Walker County. While we recognize the importance of national and global issues, our primary responsibility is to address matters within our jurisdiction.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation. Together, let us foster a respectful and productive public meeting environment that encourages active participation and positive outcomes for our community.

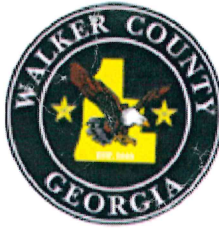
Regular Scheduled Board of Commissioners Meeting

Walker County Annex III

September 12, 2024

6:30 PM

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Present/Absent</u>
Commissioner Blakemore	Present
Commissioner Askew	Present
Chairman Whitfield	Present
Commissioner Hart	Present
Commissioner Stultz	Present



Sign In Sheet

Regular Scheduled Board of Commissioners Meeting

September 12, 2024

6:30 PM

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
Angie Teems	Chickamauga
M. Hulse	Chickamauga
G. Hulse	" "
Bruce Rhinco	
Paine Gily	Lawrence
Cathy Bredley	Rossville
Charles Bredley	Rossville
Gary Williams	Chickamauga
Ray Hambrick	Lafayette
Jeff Conley	Flintstone
Kathy Eubanks	Cedar Grove
Duby Quinn	
Fredrick Ufford	Chickamauga
Jim Pope	Villanova
Laurel Quirk	Lafayette
Randy Pittman	ROSSVILLE
Gina Pittman	ROSSVILLE
Bobby A. Smith	Road Dept
W. J. Yates	Rising Fawn
Smithman	Rossville
Brandon Wilson	Lafayette
Tom Purkey	Hammy
Jennifer Hays	Chickamauga
Travis Muller	Flintstone Gd
Franky Morley	Hammy Rossville
Michelle Marsh	Chickamauga
Karen Bradley	Lafayette
Gene Klesow	FLINTSTONE