

**MINUTES OF THE CRISP COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 13, 2023**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Chairman, James Dowdy, III, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in Room 305 of the Crisp County Government Center, with Commissioners Larry Felton, A. James Nance, Jr, Sam Farrow, and Mark Crenshaw in attendance. Others present were County Administrator Clark Harrell, County Attorney Rick Lawson, Finance Director Sherrie Leverett and County Clerk Monica Irwin. Rick Smarr gave the invocation and Administrator Harrell led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. Chairman Dowdy welcomed all in attendance.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to adopt the agenda for the June 13, 2023 Commission Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.**

**APPROVE MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 9, 2023, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried unanimously.**

**SHERIFF'S REPORT**

Sheriff Hancock reported deputies served 382 subpoenas last month and as of today 226 inmates occupy the jail. The Sheriff stated his Office is busy due to calls for service. He reported the community suffered an unfortunate loss this past weekend due to a 15 year old drowning at the Veterans State Park. He also stated a murder suspect from Ocilla, GA was taken into custody last Thursday, which resulted in the arrest of five other people. As a result, several weapons were taken off the streets of the community. Sheriff Hancock reported he remains to be 12 people short of a full staff. Also, Sheriff Hancock requested approval from the Board to proceed with the grant applications for the Hazard Mitigation Funding, GA DPH/Georgia Southern University Confinement Facilities Covid 19 Mitigation Project Fund, Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant, and Victims of Crime Act Grant. **Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to approve the application process for the four grants mentioned above, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

**CRISP COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR – SEAN SAMMONS**

Chief Appraiser, Sean Sammons, the Crisp County Tax Assessor's Department Director, gave a brief summary of the Tax Assessors responsibilities and guidelines. Mr. Sammons stated the primary responsibilities of the Tax Assessor's office is assessing property at the correct level of value and insuring uniformity of these assessments. This includes Real Property, Personal Property, and Manufactured Homes and also managing the Public Utility Digest. The Assessor's Office reports to a Board of five residents and property owners of Crisp County. Mr. Sammons stated Crisp County is fortunate to have dynamic Board members with professions in accounting, business management, finance, real estate sales, and real estate construction. The Tax Assessor's Office is required to pass audits each year by the Department of Audits and Accounts. Mr. Sammons stated the assessments to sales ration must be 36%

to 44%. Basically, the Tax Assessors has to be within 90% to 110% of market sales. The DOAA also audits assessment bias with the Price Related Differential and they audit uniformity with the Coefficient of Dispersion. If the values are out of compliance, the county can be fined \$8 per parcel which would equate to \$100,000 per year that the county is out of compliance. Counties the size of Crisp typically contract revaluations with a cost ranging from \$450,000 and up. This cost over a three year term would be \$150,000 per year. The in-house work completed this year by the Tax Assessors Office is saving the county \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year. Mr. Sammons also stated the Tax Assessors office manages real and personal property exemptions. Crisp County has a great local senior homestead exemption for individuals 65 and over that exempts a portion of the school and county taxable value. There is also agricultural and forest land covenants that exempt significant amounts of value for bona fide agricultural uses. Mr. Sammons also informed the Board this year the Governor and the General Assembly of the State of Georgia have enacted a homeowner tax relief grant that applies an additional \$18,000 property exemption to all millage rates except Bond Millage.

**PUBLIC HEARING: FY JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024 BUDGET**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, informed the Board the Current FY 2022-2023 operating budget is \$34,589,988.00. The proposed FY 2023-2024 budget is \$33,798,556.00. In order to balance the budget \$1 million will need to be pulled from the Reserve Fund. The Board's approval will be needed for this process. A called meeting is scheduled for June 29, 2023, to adopt the FY 2023-2024 budget.

**PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED 9:55 a.m. NO DECISION MADE AT THIS TIME**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS: ROBERT DAVIS – RELIEF ON PROPERTY TAX**

Mr. Davis was not present for the meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, advised the Commissioners of several items under new business needing their consideration:

**HEALTH INSURANCE - CIGNA**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, informed the Board healthcare and insurance is an issue. Currently, the county has coverage with Blue Cross Blue Shield at a yearly cost of \$2,109,211.80. Renewal cost with BCBS will be a yearly cost of \$2, 500,000.00. Over a several week process, the decision was made to renew coverage with Cigna at a yearly cost of \$2,347,000.00. Mr. Harrell introduced the County's insurance broker, Noel Williams, to speak to the Board. Mr. Williams advised the Board he was very confident Cigna was the better choice for the County at this time and this carrier is just as good if not better as the current carrier, Blue Cross Blue Shield. Cigna has an A+ rating and excellent customer service. Mr. Williams also reported the current plan will remain the same with Cigna, i.e. deductible and out of pocket expenses. Mr. Williams assured the Board his office will be available to help with any hiccups during this transition. Mr. Harrell also stated to the Board he recommends the county does not increase deductions and leave the current employee insurance deductions as is. **Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to renew insurance coverage with Cigna and leave current employee deductions the same, seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously.**

## **ORDINANCE 2023-012 TIMBER HARVEST**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, advised the Board of an overview of the Ordinance, Georgia Legislature passed House Bill 897 regulating timber harvesting operations and a statewide notification system has been created and changes to the requirements in the Bill. This Bill has been recommended to be adopted by all counties in Georgia. The adoption of this Ordinance brings Crisp County into full compliance with all the provisions of the state law. The Timber Harvester must submit notifications to the Georgia Forestry Commission with the new website and Crisp County will be notified via portal when timber operations occur. The Harvester is also required to post a \$5000.00 Surety Bond or a letter of credit to cover any potential damage to county roads or right of way. **Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to adopt Timber Harvest Ordinance 2023-012, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL DRUG COURT GRANT**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, advised the Board this is a Federal Grant fund of 245,348.00 matching funds totaling \$33,457.00, \$15,000.00 of which coming from Crisp County. Total award is \$278,805.00. This award is made under the Council of Accountability Court Grants program to local courts and judicial circuits to address offenders arrested for drug charges or mental health issues. **Motion was made by Commissioner Felton for award approval for the CJCC Drug Court Grant, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.**

## **SECOND AMENDMENT – POWER PURCHASE CONTRACT MEAG**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, advised the Board this has already been taken care of by the Crisp County Power Commission. It is a second amendment to the power purchase contract between MEAG and the solar participant, Crisp County. The amendment is to the power purchase agreement between Pineview LLC and MEAG. **Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to approve the second amendment contract between MEAG and Crisp County, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried unanimously.**

## **HOLT PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, advised the Board this agreement is between the Board of Commissioners and Holt Consulting Company. Holt Consulting Company was selected by the Board for airport construction, engineering, and architectural projects. This is a five year agreement needing the Chairman's signature. **Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to approve the Chairman's signature on the five year professional services agreement, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

## **RESOLUTION 2023-013 IMPOSING A 1% SALES TAX (SPLOST)**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, advised the Board the resolution to impose a one percent sales tax for the purpose of financing certain capital outlay projects. Mr. Harrell read the Resolution. **Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to adopt Resolution 2023-013 imposing a 1% sales tax, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

## **FINANCE REPORT**

Mrs. Leverett gave a preliminary report and executive summary on the major funds of the County as of the end of May. The monthly and YTD activity for the General & three major Special Revenue Funds combined and including preliminary numbers for May, these funds are reporting YTD Expenditures exceeding revenues by about -1% leaving us in a negative -\$275,353 position at 5/31/23. The Water Fund monthly revenues and expenditures increase the YTD net income to \$127,889. Usage billed for the month totaled 6,566,000 gallons to 1,492 customers. The USDA Bonds are current at \$1.1 million. The Landfill Fund is reporting \$1.3 million in accrued year to date income at the end of eleven months. Total tonnage for the month was 5,597.05 tons. Approximately 37% of that was delivered under the commercial hauling contract, 7% under the City of Cordele's residential contract and 5% under the County's curbside contract. The GEFA Loans are current at \$963,152. The cash on hand report as of May 31, 2023, ended the month with \$17.8 million in the General and Special Revenue Funds combined, \$10.7 million in the proprietary funds and \$12.7 million in the SPLOST & TSPLOST funds giving a county wide total at 05/31/23 of \$41.2 million. The schedule on the 2011 SPLOST, all the funds have now been obligated. As soon as the invoices are actually processed, we will be closing this fund out. The 2017 SPLOST Issue Report, Distribution No. 64 in the amount of \$445,635 came in under last year's number by -8%. It does bring issue to date collections to \$24.9 million and as of May 31<sup>st</sup>, actual expenditures and appropriations have exceeded \$17.0 million. Projects benefiting from our Special Local Option Sales Tax penny for the month of May were EMS, Recreation, Sheriff's Office, Roads, Public Works, Sanitation/Solid Waste and the cities of Arabi and Cordele for a total amount expended of \$338,348. Issue to date report for the 2012 TSPLOST revenues, in summary, collections remain at \$8.3 million, combining that with LMIG and GDOT Revenue have expended and/or obligated \$13.9 million in local road maintenance and capital projects through the 2012 TSPLOST fund. The new TSPLOST, collections to date have reached \$350,531, none of which has been appropriated at this point. L.O.S.T distributions, mirroring SPLOST, this month's distribution is also down about -8% from last year. The CDBG Revolving Loan Fund, which includes the balance and status of all our CDBG Revolving Loan Fund Accounts, ended the month of May with a total outstanding balance of \$1.7 million for the total of eight accounts. The revenues by fund and expenditures by department preliminary report for the eleven-month period of July 2022 through May 2023 shows the expended percentage of appropriations for each individual department and the total for each fund as of May 31<sup>st</sup>, all departments and divisions should actually be at or below 92% of their annual allowances. Overall, the preliminary numbers indicate the General Fund and Special Revenue Funds are right on target at 92%, the Water Fund & Landfill Funds are both good at 90%.

## **ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, reported the last month has been very busy working on the New Year's budget and insurance renewal. The Rock Road Railroad Project is still underway and coming together nicely. Meadow Park Subdivision/CDBG street and drainage improvement project is underway and ongoing. The bid for the 2023 LMIG will be let very soon. The amended contract for EMS is still ongoing. Mr. Harrell attended several meetings last month.

**GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PERSONNEL**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to go into Executive Session for personnel, property, and litigation, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried with all Commissioners agreeing to go into Executive Session at 10:47 am.**

**COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to come out of Executive Session at 11:50 am, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried with all Commissioners agreeing to come out of Executive Session.**

**LAND BANK BOARD MEMBERS**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to re-appoint Commissioner Larry Felton and Commissioner Mark Crenshaw to the Land Bank Board, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously. Both Commissioners agree to continue to serve on the Land Bank Board.**

**DFACS BOARD**

**Vanessa Haugabrook sent a letter of interest to serve on the Board of the Department of Family and Children Services. Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to appoint Vanessa Haugabrook to the DFACA Board, seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously.**

**SHERIFF SUPPLEMENT**

**Sheriff Hancock has requested a \$1425.00 increase to his yearly salary supplement. Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to increase the Sheriff's yearly supplement by \$1425.00 effective July 1, 2023, seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously.**

**ADJOURN MEETING**

**By common consent, Commissioners adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.**

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**James R Dowdy, III, Chairman**

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**Clark Harrell, County Administrator**