

**MINUTES OF THE CRISP COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING OF AUGUST 8, 2023**

July Meeting cancelled, no quorum.

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 Nance to adopt the agenda for the August 8, 2023 Commission Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to approve the regular meeting minutes of June 13, 2023, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES OF CALLED MEETING

Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to approve the called meeting minutes of June 29, 2023, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

Sheriff Hancock stated the office preparing for Grand Jury, deputies are busy serving subpoenas and warrants. Mr. Hancock reported Mr. Cross was indicted yesterday for the murder of Crisp County Deputy Tye Browne. Bond Hearing is expected this week. The jail population is at 233 with only 33 being Federal Inmates. Total 911 calls for the month is 6371, total CAD calls is 3046, and miles patrolled is over 77,000 miles at 0.33 cents per mile. Cost is up due to several accidents caused by hitting deer. Sheriff Hancock reported the FLOCK TAG READER SYSTEM has been purchased and will give insight and helpful information to deputies about who is entering Crisp County and our communities. The Sheriff also reported the Sheriff's Office has hired three certified deputies effective July 1, 2023 but is still 9 deputies short from full staff. Mr. Hancock thanked the community and surrounding areas for the out pour of support for the loss of Deputy Tye Browne.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ROBERT DAVIS – RELIEF ON PROPERTY TAX

Mr. Robert Davis resides at Lakeshore Drive near the lake but not on the lake. Mr. Davis and his wife have lived at this residence for 55 years. Mr. Davis requested the Board to consider making changes to the property tax assessment methods. Mr. Davis stated the property tax values have consistently

increased every year. Mr. Davis stated the Crisp County Tax Assessor has increased his property value 150% in the last few years. Mr. Davis explained the make-up of his property, 87% thick woods, 5% home, 5% pasture, and 3% pecan orchard, which is not productive. Mr. Davis stated his assessed property value 4 years ago was \$150,000 this years assessed value is \$351,000 and the property taxes have increased from \$1300 to \$3500. Mr. Davis stated he is here asking the Board for some help to keep senior citizens from being pushed out of their homes and to consider exempting property owners from school taxes over the age of 65-70, limit current valuations to the original cost of the home, and limit assessed value increase to no more than 15% a year. Crisp County Tax Assessor, Sean Sammons, explained the process of the yearly tax assessments and the state guide lines the Tax Assessor's office must follow to be in compliance. Mr. Sammons explained the Department of Audits and Accounts audits his office every year and requires the Tax Assessor's Office to be within 10% of the market value and if not the penalty is a fine. Mr. Sammons stated he and his staff work hard to make values fair. Mr. Sammons also stated there are several exemptions offered that Mr. Davis and other senior citizens can take advantage of to help reduce assessment increases and property taxes.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: JOEL AND APRIL OWENS – INCREASE IN STARTING PAY FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Owens thanked the Board for their service and all they do for the citizens of Crisp County. Mr. Owens reported the starting salaries for a few local business, the Cordele Fire Department, and other surrounding city and county Fire Departments. Mr. Owens also explained some of the different skill building drills and exercises used to train our local firefighters. Mr. Owens stated the County made a plan 6 years ago to have 6 Fire Stations strategically placed through-out the County for the quickest response to citizens. Currently, the station located on Old Hatley Road has been closed for months. The County does not have enough firefighters and will have more firefighters leaving soon for more pay. The issue at hand is our County is the lowest paying County right now for starting pay as a firefighter. Mr. Owens stated the ISO rating for different districts within the County is highly important and is affected by the number of operating fire stations and their location. If the County continues to lose firefighters and has to close more stations, ISO ratings are going up which will significantly increase home owners' insurance premiums and that is not going to be good as well as safety risks for citizens and call times for emergencies going up dramatically. Mrs. Owens stated Crisp County is a stepping stone for a firefighter's career. Firefighters are being hired, trained, and leaving Crisp County for more money elsewhere. Mrs. Owens also quoted an article from the Atlanta Fire Department stating there is a national firefighter storage. Both Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens stressed the importance of increasing the starting pay for firefighters in order to be competitive in obtaining and retaining firefighters. Chief Postell confirmed Crisp County is the lowest starting pay for a firefighter and is one of the reasons why we are losing firefighters, the other being not having enough man power - the pressures of one firefighter doing the job of 3 firefighters when on a shift. Mr. Postell stated to the Board the Fire Department is behind and has been for years, it's time for a change.

NEW BUSINESS

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

RESOLUTION 2023-015 TO HONOR THE LIFE AND SACRIFICE OF DEPUTY TYEE BROWNE

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, informed the Board of Mr. Browne's accomplishments, as well as his commitment, dedication, and service to Crisp County. County Administrator, Clark Harrell, read the resolution. **Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to adopt Resolution 2023-015, forever remembering the life and sacrifice of Deputy Tyee Browne, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY LEASE

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, requested authorization allowing the Chairman to sign a commercial property lease for the county. Mr. Harrell informed the Board this lease is a continuation lease made between Crisp County Board of Commissioners and Middle Flint Behavioral Health Care Facility. The lease is in the amount of \$2,478.00 per month. **Motion was made Commissioner Felton to allow the Chairman to sign the continuation lease between Crisp County Board of Commissioners and Middle Flint Behavioral Health Facility, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried unanimously.**

RESOLUTION 2023-016 TO AMEND THE ASSOCIATION COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF GEORGIA DEFINED BENEFIT PLAN FOR CRISP COUNTY EMPLOYEES ADOPTION AGREEMENT

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, read the Resolution. Mr. Harrell requested the support of the Board in authorizing the Chairman to sign the Resolution and Adoption Agreement. **Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to authorize the Chairman to sign Resolution 2023-016 and the Adoption Agreement to amend the Defined Benefit Plan, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.**

2023 LOCAL MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENT GRANT BID AWARD

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the grant is for resurfacing .27 miles of Barry Road and 2.15 miles of North Cedar Creek Road. The low bid was entered by Reeves Construction Company for \$541,800.00. **Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to award bid to Reeves Construction Company to resurface roads, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.**

FINANCE REPORT

Mrs. Leverett gave a preliminary report and executive summary on the major funds of the County as of just one month of the new fiscal year. The financial summary report for the General & three major Special Revenue Funds is at a net -4% shortfall of -\$900,944 after the first thirty days of FY24. The Water Fund preliminary net income is \$12,916 at July 31. Customer usage billed for the month was 8,192,000 gallons to a total of 1,507 customers and the USDA Bonds are current at \$1.1 million. The Landfill Fund ended the month with a net income of \$282,354. 20,963.01 tons of municipal solid waste was delivered to the Landfill during the month of July. Approximately 77% of that was coal ash, leaving 9% delivered under the commercial waste contract, 2% under the City of Cordele's residential contract and 2% under the County's curbside contract. The GEFA Loans are current at \$903,460 thousand. Cash on hand report as of July 31st ended the month with \$16.9 million in the General and Special Revenue Funds combined; \$10.8 million in the proprietary funds; and \$12.6 million in the SPLOST & TSPLOST funds giving a county wide total of \$40.4 million. SPLOST reports: No change to report in the 2011 SPLOST over last month. All the funds have been obligated, just waiting to process some final invoices before closing out this issue. The 2017 SPLOST Issue

Report, Distribution No. 66 in the amount of \$505,536.45 is up 1.5% over this same period one year ago. It brings issue to date revenue to \$25.8 million. Expenditures and appropriations have reached \$17.6 million. Projects benefiting from Special Local Option Sales Tax penny for the month of July were the Airport, Sheriff's Office, Sanitation/Solid Waste, and the cities of Arabi and Cordele for a total amount expended of \$246,800. Issue to date reports on the TSPLOST Fund, including LMIG and GDOT Revenues, have expended and/or obligated over \$14.0 million in local road maintenance and capital road projects through the Transportation Tax. L.O.S.T distributions, for this month's distribution of \$247,310 is up slightly, 1.3% from this same time last year. The CDBG Revolving Loan Fund, which includes the balance and status of all our CDBG Revolving Loan Fund Accounts, currently have eight loans with a total outstanding balance of \$1.7 million. The revenues by fund and expenditures by department preliminary report for the first month of FY 24 show the general and special revenue funds are slightly over at 9%, the water fund is right on target at 8% and the Landfill is just under at 7%.

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 ongoing, the Meadow Park Subdivision/CDBG street and drainage improvement project is underway and ongoing. The bid for the 2023 LMIG paving project was opened July 27th and the bid award goes to Reeves Construction Company. Mr. Harrell attended several meetings last month.

GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PERSONNEL

Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to go into Executive Session for personnel, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried with all Commissioners agreeing to go into Executive Session at 10:50 am.

COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to come out of Executive Session at 10:55 am, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried with all Commissioners agreeing to come out of Executive Session.

TAX ASSESSOR BOARD


Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to re-appoint Arthur Parker to the Tax Assessor Board, term beginning August 31, 2023 and ending August 31, 2027, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES

Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to appoint Malcolm King to the DFACS Board, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN MEETING

By common consent, Commissioners adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.


James R Dowdy, III, Chairman


Clark Harrell, County Administrator