

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

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 James Nance, Sam Farrow, Larry Felton 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. Pastor Tania Montero 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 January 14, 2025 Commission Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

2025 ELECTION/APPOINTMENTS

CHAIRMAN – Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to reappoint Commissioner Dowdy, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried unanimously.

VICE CHAIRMAN – Motion was made by Commissioner Crenshaw to reappoint Commissioner Felton, seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously.

COUNTY CLERK – Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to reappoint Monica Irwin, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.

COUNTY ATTORNEY – Motion was made by Commissioner Felton to reappoint Rick Lawson, motion seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to approve the regular meeting minutes of December 10, 2024 and the work session minutes of December 10, 2024, seconded by Commissioner Farrow, motion carried unanimously.

SHERIFF REPORT

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated Sheriff Hancock is unable to attend the Commission meeting but he did send a \$57,967.04 check for inmate housing along with a copy of his report for each of you.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the first public hearing is a request for consideration to close a portion of Muller Road due to illegal dumping. Muller Road is located between Mckensie Road and Highway 90. Mr. Harrell stated he received a letter several months ago from Mr. Wesley Mathis requesting consideration for closing Muller Road. Notices of this morning's public hearing was posted

on Muller Road and an additional notice was posted in the Cordele Dispatch. Mr. Wesley Mathis spoke requesting the road closing because of all the illegal dumping causing trash build up on the road and would like to improve the look of the property. Mr. Mathis asked for the Board's consideration to close the road as well.

No Opposition; Public Hearing Closed 9:07 am

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the second public hearing is a request for consideration to close Pate Road. Pate Road is located in a loop from Watson Road back to Watson Road. No current residents live on Pate Road. A letter was received from Mr. Charles Bobo and other citizens requesting the Board's consideration to close Pate Road. Mr. Charles Bobo spoke requesting Pate Road be closed to the public due to illegal dumping and illegal shining for deer.

No Opposition; Public Hearing Closed 9:11 am

NEW BUSINESS

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

MULLER ROAD

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, requested the Board grant the request to close the portion of Muller Road as discussed. **Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to close the portion of Muller Road as discussed, seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously.**

PATE ROAD

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, requested the Board grant the request to close Pate Road as discussed. **Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to close Pate Road as discussed, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION LIGHTING AGREEMENT

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the Georgia Department of Transportation sent an Intergovernmental Agreement for roadway lighting. The lighting shall be administered in the form of a Local Government Lighting Project Agreement. It will be the responsibility of the county to provide energy, operation, and maintenance for the system. Mr. Harrell stated the entrance/exit ramps to I-75 at the 33 Connector will be rebuilt and redesigned in 2027. Upon installation of the lighting system, the county will assume the responsibility of the cost for the power bill. Mr. Harrell requested the Board's approval to allow the Chairman to sign the agreement. **Motion was made by Commissioner Crenshaw to allow the Chairman to sign the Georgia Department of Transportation Intergovernmental Agreement/Local Government Lighting Project, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously**

PROPOSED BUDGET/AD VALOREM TAX CALENDAR 2026

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated Sherrie Leverett, Finance Director, has put together a calendar with significant dates concerning taxes and the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026. Mr. Harrell asked that the Board approve the proposed budget and ad valorem tax calendar. **Motion was**

made by Commissioner Felton to approve the proposed budget and fiscal year 2026 ad valorem tax calendar, seconded by Commissioner Nance, motion carried unanimously

**2025 VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Sub Grant C23-8-249**

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the grant award is through the District Attorney's office from the Prosecuting Attorney Council of Georgia. The VOCA Grant is for the amount of \$124,700.00 with waived match funds of \$31,175.00. This is no cost to Crisp County it is all grant funds. Mr. Harrell asked for the Board's approval to allow the Chairman to sign this agreement. **Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to allow the Chairman to sign the agreement to allow the District Attorney's office to receive the 2025 VOCA grant funds from the CJCC Sub Grant C23-8-249 in the amount of \$124,700.00, seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried unanimously**

SOLID WASTE RESIDENTIAL COLLECTION SERVICES

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the most significant item for your consideration today is trash service for Crisp County. Waste Management Contract is up for renewal and I have bid out this service to find a new residential collection service for Crisp County. Mr. Harrell stated Crisp County continues to have issues with the current services of Waste Management. I am still receiving complaints from citizens daily and have been for several months now. Several citizens are going two weeks or longer with no trash pick-up. Yesterday I had a conversation with Waste Management concerning the issues and the response was "I guess we're shooting ourselves in the foot with the vote the Commission will take tomorrow." I replied, "Yes ma'am, I would say so." The trash service is awful, enough said about it. We received bids from five different companies. My recommendation is we change trash service from Waste Management to Express Disposal effective April 1, 2025. Price will be \$17.85 per month for trash only pickup. This is slightly less than the current price from Waste Management. A \$25.00 per month fee is offered for trash plus yard debris pickup. Customers that do not have the combo subscription can still have yard debris pick-up on an as needed basis for an additional fee at the time of service. Express Disposal Vice President, Clint Eudy, stated Express Disposal has had great success the past year with the City of Cordele and looks forward to providing the same good service to Crisp County. Mr. Eudy also stated the main office is located in Albany, GA and an office is also located here in Cordele, GA. County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated he recommends the Board of Commissioners authorize myself, and the County Attorney, Rick Lawson, to draft a contract with Express Disposal effective April 1, 2025. The contract will be on a year to year basis. **Motion was made by Commissioner Crenshaw to not renew Crisp County's contract with Waste Management and approve the new contract with Express Disposal effective April 1, 2025, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

While still standing at the podium, County Administrator, Clark Harrell, asked for the Board's permission to address House Bill 581. Mr. Harrell stated he wanted to try to get some accurate information to the public. There is a lot of information circling that is not accurate. Last Thursday, as you all are aware, the Board of Commissioners had an intergovernmental meeting with the School Board, the City of Cordele, and the City of Arabi. I thought the meeting was a really good informational meeting allowing an understanding of the positions of each government entities in Crisp County. First, there was a house resolution put on the ballot in November, House Resolution 1022. This Resolution was a constitutional amendment stating shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended

so as to authorize the general assembly to provide general law for a state wide homestead exemption that serves to limit increases in the assessed value of homesteads but which any county can consolidated government municipality or local school system may opt out upon the completion of certain procedures. That ballot question was passed in Crisp County by the voters of Crisp County, 4,872 to 2,581, total of 7,453 votes passing over 60% of the electorate. It has been and continues to be my recommendation to the Board to follow the will of the Crisp County voters. Therefore, Crisp County will not opt out. The legislature passed House Bill 581 which coincides with the House Resolution 1022. The opt-out clause caps the homestead properties. There is only 3,200 homestead properties. This bill provides for a 1% sales tax to be put on the ballot in November for the electorate and the voters of Crisp County to then consider if they wish to have another 1% sales tax. This is the Flexible Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST). If the City of Cordele opts out of this then we will not be allowed to place this on the November ballot and there will be no Flexible Local Option Sales Tax. The Flexible Local Option Sales Tax mirrors the Local Option Sales Tax. There are four pennies that stay local, one is the ESPLOST (Education Special Local Option Sales Tax) and the other is SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax), which is the one used to build and maintain county buildings and make capital purchases such as vehicles. The Local Option Sales Tax has to roll the millage rate back and the roll back year after year is three mills of tax for Crisp County. This money is 2.7 million dollars that rolls back three mills of tax. The fourth penny is a 1% TIA tax (Transportation Investment Act) which is only used for transportation projects. If the city of Cordele decides to opt out of this the county cannot put this on a referendum. The Bill as a whole is good for homeowner, homestead exemptions will be capped. This is what the citizens voted for and this is what the Crisp County Board of Commissioners will continue to support. The impact will be about a \$130,000.00 for Crisp County and for the City of Cordele it will about \$23,000.00. Two things will happen if the opt-out takes place: (1) Crisp County will have to raise the millage rate if we do not have the opportunity to put the Flexible Local Option Sales Tax before the voters to have the opportunity to vote yes or no. (2) In order for the School Board and the City of Cordele to opt out, three public hearings will have to take place. Our legislation delegation within this law can also opt-in the City of Cordele regardless of the City's decision to opt-out of the bill. The School Board has nothing to do with the Flexible Local Option Sales Tax.

FINANCE REPORT

Mrs. Leverett's executive summary report includes a preliminary report of revenues and expenditures as of 12/31/2024 for the County's General & there major Special Revenue Funds combined. These funds report year to date revenues of just under \$13.0 million, less expenditures of \$13.3 million leaving a slight deficit of -1% at the half year point of FY25. As of this report, the Finance Department received about 50% of the ad valorem tax revenue projections for this fiscal year. The proprietary funds, December activity increased the Water Fund net income to \$59,952 for the year. Water consumption billed for the month was 5,408,000 gallons to 1,519 customers and The USDA Bonds are current at \$1,035,123. The Landfill Fund, accrued revenues and expenses at 12/31/24 reduced this funds net lost by \$75,435 down to -\$203,090 YTD. The total tonnage received for the month of December was 4,094.09. 42% of that being received under the Commercial waste contract, 9% under the City of Cordele residential contract and 5% under the County's curbside contract. The GEFA loans are current at \$468,228. The General and Special Revenue funds combined are reporting cash on hand of \$17.5 million; the proprietary funds \$12.1 million and the SPLOST & TSPLOST funds \$14.5 million. Expenditures from the 2017 SPLOST Issue as of Dec. 31st totaled \$20.1 million. Distribution #11 under the 2023 Issue came in at \$502,751, which is up about 3.1% from this same reporting period from one year ago. It also exceeds the six-year average for the month of November from the 2017 Issue. Issue to date collections have reached \$5.2 million while

expenditures & encumbrances came at \$3.1 million. \$257,886 spent in Special Local Option Sales Tax Pennies during the month. Projects benefiting were Roads, Public Works, and Solid Waste, the Sheriff's office and the Cities of Cordele and Arabi. Issue to date report on the 2022 TSPLOST revenues, in summary, have collected \$2.1 million since January of 2023 under this ten-year Issue. Combining that with other State and Local Revenue Sources, the county currently has over \$7.0 million in Special Transportation Tax dollars programmed for local roads capital and maintenance projects. Local Option Sales Tax Distributions, similar to SPLOST, this month's distribution is up 3.1% over this same time last year. The last report is a preliminary revenue by fund and expenditures by department report. The summary report shows the expended percentage of appropriations for each individual department and the total for each fund. Because this report is preliminary all expenditures should be at 50% or below. As of this report, overall, the General and Special Revenue Funds combined are running slightly over budget at 51%; the Water and Landfill Funds are both good at 46%. The FY 24 Audit report is complete. It has been submitted to the State and other agencies as required as well as posted to the County's website. The Auditors should be here in February to make a formal presentation.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated the 2024 Paving Project - Local Maintenance Improvement Grant with road resurfacing continues. The resurfacing project is 10.26 miles of roads for portions of Williford Crossing, Dockweiller, Penia, and Twin Pines Road. The date of Crisp County's next ISO inspection is scheduled for January 22, 2025. Crisp County Fire & Rescue is working to present all information needed to at least maintain our rating of Class 5. Construction work continues for the 75x75 maintenance hangar at the airport. Mr. Harrell also stated House Bill 581 still seems to be of concern around the state. Last week Crisp County, City of Cordele, City of Arabi, and Crisp County Board of Education met on this issue. It appears the Crisp County Board of Education may opt out at well as the City of Cordele. House Bill 581 caps the homestead values. Crisp County has 3200 homestead properties. If the City of Cordele opts out, the county cannot place an additional 1% tax on the ballot in November. Flexible Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST), if passed, will provide for a 3 mill decrease for Crisp County and a 9 mill decrease for the City of Cordele, assuming the split would be 50/50 as discussed. Mr. Harrell also reported he is currently working with county attorney, Rick Lawson, to finalize the closure of the old Rock Road. Mr. Harrell also attended several meetings last month.

Motion was made by Commissioner Nance to go into executive session at 10:02 am for Personnel, motion seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.

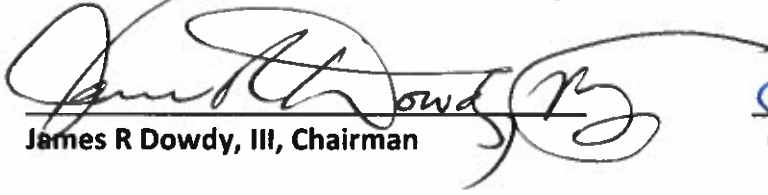
Motion was made by Commissioner Farrow to come out of executive session at 10:12 am, motion seconded by Commissioner Crenshaw, motion carried unanimously.

CRISP COUNTY RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

County Administrator, Clark Harrell, stated a letter of interest was received from Bradley Brown requesting to serve on the Recreation Advisory Board. Mr. Harrell asked for the Board's consideration in appointing Mr. Brown to the board. **Motion was made by Commissioner Crenshaw to appoint Bradley Brown to serve on the Crisp County Recreation Advisory Board, seconded by Commissioner Felton, motion carried unanimously.**

ADJOURN MEETING

By common consent, Commissioners adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.



James R Dowdy, III, Chairman



Clark Harrell, County Administrator