

**OCONEE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RETREAT
JAMES MADISON INN
MADISON, GEORGIA
DECEMBER 7, 2007**

PERSONS ATTENDING:

Melvin Davis
Margaret Hale
Chuck Horton
Jim Luke
Don Norris
Daniel Haygood
Alan Theriault
Jeff Benko
Wayne Provost
Gina Lindsey
B.R. White
Gary Dodd
Jimmy Parker

FACILITATORS:

Jim Dove
Mott Beck

The Oconee County Board of Commissioners held a retreat on Friday, December 7, 2007 to discuss various matters and to study future options regarding same. Pertinent staff were also invited to attend. The retreat was facilitated by Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center Executive Director Jim Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck.

UPDATE ON FINANCIAL STATUS

Jeff Benko provided an update on financial matters including:

- Draft statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2007.
- Current budget.
- Capital budget.
- Utilities.
- SPLOST.

Mr. Benko entertained questions from attendees. A copy of his handout is attached.

POTENTIAL SPLOST

A discussion on a potential SPLOST referendum was led by Alan Theriault.

- Current SPLOST ends July 2009.
- Commissioners do not want lag in collections.
- A SPLOST guide as developed by ACCG was presented to attendees.
- Range of next SPLOST is \$38 million - \$55 million.
- Ideas for future projects were:
 - Courthouse/administrative space (conduct short term study to determine needed square footage for courts and administration (as expressed by various departments) to also include location, access, and required parking facilities.
 - Water.
 - Sewer.
 - Roads.
 - Community center facilities (E-911, voting, etc.).
 - Prototype for new fire stations.
 - Library expansion.
- Explore possibility of partnering with Board of Education on building site.
- Educate public as soon as feasible as to need for another SPLOST.
- Attendees suggested a minimum of six months is needed to prepare for a successful referendum.

WATER RESOURCES AVAILABILITY

Jimmy Parker of Precision Planning provided an overview of the existing supply and capacity projections. He provided information on the water supply capacity under normal conditions compared to drought conditions with required Level 4 reductions. He provided 2008 through 2018 projections based on current capacity, high rating of the Bear Creek Water Treatment Plant, and Phase I of the Hard Labor Creek Project. His handout is also attached. Other issues discussed under this topic included:

- Rezoning – Potentially require replacement of capacity used by a specific subdivision (based on drought level at time of application).
- Control should be at the permit level - Legal Counsel and Planning Staff to development policy recommendations for presentation to BOC.
- Possible private wells for implementation.
 - Wells for review/discussion include Bogart (70+GPM), Tate (100+GPM), Ross (100+GPM), Presbyterian Church on Highway 53 (100+GPM), Old Farm Subdivision (100+GPM), and two in Northwest Woods Subdivision. Leases will be prepared.
 - Hillcrest and Elsner were not discussed.

WASTEWATER PLANNING

Mr. Parker also led a discussion on wastewater planning. Items discussed included:

- Rocky Branch LAS upgrade. The upgrade would be from 0.4 MGD LAS to 1.0 MGD MBR. The upgrade estimated cost is in the \$8 to \$10 million range, and the aggressive estimated completion date is October 2009. Two RFPs have been issued, the first for design services and the second for construction management.
- Reuse of treated water - possibilities include land application, schools, parks.
- Long term - Calls Creek can potentially be expanded to 2.0 MGD and Rocky Branch can be expanded by same amount. Also consider LAS upgrade as compared to cooperation with neighboring county regarding plant on Middle Oconee River.
- LAS may "fill gap" (8 - 10 years) but begin planning toward cooperative effort.
- It would be helpful for Mr. Parker to make an "educational" report to the BOC regarding enhancement of wastewater infrastructure.
- BOC regarding Westland - is it "wait and see"?

DISCUSSION REGARDING BEER/WINE/ALCOHOL BY THE DRINK

- SPLOST referendum should not be "tainted" with this issue.
- Letter from Chamber of Commerce requesting a vote on the sale of beer and wine by the glass be placed on BOC agenda was discussed.
- Members offered comment and considerable discussion on this matter.
 - Economic issue.
 - Chamber might gather enough signatures to request referendum.
 - Public needs to be engaged.
 - A strong, restrictive ordinance would have to be in place.
 - Legal Counsel was asked to continue work on ordinance.

ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL AMBULANCE SERVICE STATUS

Current level of ambulance service as provided by St. Mary's Hospital was discussed along with rumor of potential changes. There was concern that some locations in county were not fully staffed at times. Chairman Davis has been in contact with St. Mary's President/CEO Tom Fitz regarding this matter and will continue dialogue.

DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Commissioners discussed benefits pertaining to public safety volunteers, including a pension fund. Commissioner Hale indicated a desire to have a committee research benefits in other counties, explore options for benefits for Oconee volunteers, determine potential costs, and report to the BOC. Each Commissioner indicated this issue should be reviewed. The committee should be balanced in its makeup.

UPDATE ON LITIGATION MATTERS

County Attorney Daniel Haygood reported to the Board on several items involving potential litigation. Mr. Haygood will continue to update the BOC as appropriate.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED GEORGIA WATER COALITION RESOLUTION

Chairman Davis received correspondence from Friends of Barber Creek requesting passage of a resolution regarding water policy in our State. Specifically, the resolution would support fair apportionment of Georgia's waters to all portions of the State and also asked for legislation prohibiting future transfers of water across the fourteen river basins in the State. It was mentioned that ACCG does not support such a resolution.

Jim Dove expressed appreciation to the group for the opportunity to be of assistance and asked if there were any further comments. There being no further items for discussion, the retreat ended.

HANDOUTS ATTACHED:

- 1. Financial Update**
- 2. Water Resources**
- 3. Georgia Water Coalition Resolution**