

By policy, minutes are not official until approved by the Board at a future regular meeting.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**Work Session**

**January 22, 2013**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Cherokee Hall**

**MINUTES**

The Chairman began at 3:06 p.m. with all Commissioners present. The Chairman read from Mac Anderson's *The Essence of Leadership*. It named various well-known successful businesses whose owners had failed attempts to start but persevered by their "refuse to lose" attitude.

**1. Discussion of Regular Agenda Items.**

Ms. Vickie Taylor went over the **Public Hearing** portion:

Ms. Taylor stated the owners are requesting a small portion of their lot that has been zoned a buffer to be re-drawn. Commissioner Johnston asked what the neighbors (the Nevilles) thought about it. Ms. Taylor said that there have been disagreements. The applicants (Popes) have planted some 40 trees to create a buffer between the two properties. Commissioner Johnston asked if there was a possibility of a compromise. Ms. Taylor stated that any time a buffer is reduced there will be an enhancement of what's left. The Chairman asked about the reason for the 50-foot buffer for that size of lot. Ms. Taylor mentioned it was a part of the AG zone and mostly likely is there to protect the AG parcel that was developed. Commissioner Nelms asked why the Popes wanted to change what was already in place when they moved in. Ms. Taylor explained that the 50-foot buffer was there prior to the Pope's neighbors moving in as well as when the Popes moved in. Commissioner Gunnin asked if the Popes were not wanting to do anything additional to the property like adding structures, but simply wanting to be in compliance. Ms. Taylor stated that it is fair to say they just want it straightened out due to the conflict with the neighbors. Commissioner Gunnin asked who the titled owner

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of the buffer is. Ms. Taylor indicated it belonged to the Popes. Ms. Taylor offered to find out the timeline of ownership of the homes and return later at the end of the Work Session.

The Chairman referenced the zoning case scheduled at the regular meeting and she replied that the applicant had withdrawn.

Mr. Jeff Watkins went over the **Zoning Case**:

Mr. Watkins clarified that it the zoning case has been through the statutory requirements and that it is now the Board's decision. He also stated the applicant would have to withdraw as a whole. The applicant is asking the Board to allow them to withdraw without prejudice so they don't encumber the property owner for the next 12 months. Mr. Watkins went over the Planning Commission's original recommendation was for denial.

Chairman Ahrens went over the **Commission Business / Chairman's** portion:

The Chairman stated that minutes will be provided from the Commissioners' retreat at the next meeting. The Chairman gave a debriefing of topics covered at the retreat. He stated they begin by looking back at the previous year of what they had and had not achieved. They then looked forward to this year and what the priorities are. The Chairman went over the bullet points from that section.

Achievements:

1. The Budget Realization: The Chairman acknowledged the efforts made by Ms. Fund and Mr. Cooper as well as each Department to make that happen.
2. The Impact of Wellness Program: People participating are healthier and that is driving costs down.
3. Development Services Center: Statewide recognition last year.
4. Partnership between Northside Hospital-Cherokee, GDOT, and the County: Worked together to get road built from Hwy 20 to Hwy 140.
5. The second Opportunity Zone.
6. The Aquatic Center.
7. The Riverwalk Interchange at Exit 9 and the Widening of Sixes Road.

Did not Achieve:

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1. Did not make the progress hoped for with the Ball Ground Recycling facility: financially, legally, and operationally.
2. TSPLOST and HOST: Though voted no by the County citizens, they would have provided benefits for the County.

The Chairman stated that goals going forward in 2013:

1. To be at or under budget.
2. To continue pursuing the Ball Ground financial, legal, and operational goals.
3. To open the Aquatic Center and the new Fire Training Center on time and on budget.
4. Moving forward on the Canton Park.

The Chairman mentioned the County owns the downtown Canton Jones Building. There have been several attempts to sell, but they fell through. Some alternatives would be to remove the façade to make it more attractive, to look at parking alternatives and to consider moving the Cherokee Office of Economic Development from their current site.

The Chairman moved on to the risks in 2013 to achieve the budget:

1. Could be additional costs associated with the Ball Ground issue.
2. Potential costs with Obamacare.
3. The auto sales tax.
4. The "one time" revenues.
5. The Board is striving to come up with cost of living values.

The Chairman mentioned Ms. Misti Martin's visit during the retreat and the discussion about economic development process and the gaps; the tools they don't have. They're on a very tight budget. There wasn't really much money left for advertising or trade shows and such that can produce potential opportunities. They also discussed more possibilities if the resources became available.

The Board discussed Lifelong Communities and the Chairman said he would get together with Senior Center Director Mr. Brandon to discuss further. He said that they have a working draft on how to move forward with it.

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The Chairman asked if any of the Board members had anything they wish to add. Commissioner Nelms referred to the discussion with Ms. Martin and the marketing angle of the County and what we have to offer and the population projection and the opportunities that come with the growth. He stated it will be tough but we need to try to get her the resources she needs to help make it happen. The Chairman mentioned Commissioner Johnston attending a full-day session at the Georgia Resources Center. Commissioner Johnston stated it was very informative to see how the process works to move forward with prospects and where they might locate and what various counties have to offer as well as what do's and don'ts are associated in trying to attract quality new companies that bring in the kind of jobs we're looking for. He stated they discussed on more of the larger scale companies, but the County is looking for mid-scale.

The Chairman asked the new Commissioners if they had new appointments to add. Commissioner Gunnin stated he did, Commissioner Poole stated that he did not.

Mr. Cooper went over items under the **Consent Agenda** portion:

- Consider approval to accept Georgia Office of Homeland Security Grant and budget amendment in the amount of \$90,578.00 to increase revenues and expenditures for FY2013 the Multiple Grant Fund (Fund 250). There is no match required for this grant.
- Consider approval to accept a contribution from Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission for an amount up to \$7,620.15 for the purchase of trauma related equipment and budget amendment to increase Fund 580 (EMS Contributions) revenues and expenditures in the same amount.
- Consider final acceptance of all public right-of-ways, roadways, and appurtenant drainage structures in the Three Branches Subdivision.
- Amended: Consider approval of budget amendment reducing Indigent Defense Budget by \$40,000.00 and increasing State Court Budget by \$40,000.00 to allow the creation of a secretary for the third State Court Judge. Commissioner Johnston thanked Mr. Cooper for working that out. He stated this is a great example where the demand in the work load for the State Court system is such where the judge is warranted and the State covers most, but does not cover a secretary for the judge.

Mr. Cooper went over items under the **County Manager's** portion:

- Consider approval to purchase twelve (12) new vehicles for the Cherokee Sheriff's Office from low bidders Cherokee Dodge and Hardy Chevrolet for a total amount of \$403,161.00. Cherokee Dodge was the low bidder of the Dodge Charger at

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\$32,317.00. Hardy Chevrolet (state contract holder) was the low bidder of the Chevrolet Tahoe at \$35,412.00. Commissioner Johnston confirmed this was budgeted in SPLOST.

- Consider approval of Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Georgia for reimbursement of costs incurred in an amount not to exceed \$700,000.00 for construction of certain law enforcement training center facilities. Mr. Cooper added this is a cost-saving measure from the State. They're closing two other facilities consolidating operations. They have chosen Cherokee County as the location for their regional facilities. Commissioner Nelms commented on the contract and the first right of refusal on the State side.

Mr. Chris Hamilton went over items under the **County Attorney** portion:

- Consider approval of settlement agreement with Cornerstone Construction related to the Patton mold litigation. Mr. Hamilton stated this is the last link in getting this issue resolved.

Chairman Ahrens asked if there was anything else that needed discussion. Ms. Taylor revisited the Public Hearing issue stating the Popes home was built in 2006 and the Neville house was built in 2007. The Popes purchased the house in May 2009. The Nevilles purchased theirs in November 2009. Commissioner Nelms stated he believed the issue between neighbors is not related to the buffer. Ms. Taylor stated that during the Public Hearing, it needs to be clarified at the beginning that the issue is not with Laurel Ridge Subdivision; that it is specific to the Pope's property.

Commissioner Johnston stated he wanted to bring up a topic that may be a bit controversial. He began by mentioning the past discussions regarding security in front of the meeting room. He added he is a bit uncomfortable with the screening and did not want to send a message that they were afraid of their constituents. Commissioner Johnston asked the new Commissioners their thoughts on the matter. He mentioned he was under the impression that the Chairman and Commissioner Nelms felt that the current security was the right thing to do. The Chairman stated his position is that it is not about the Board's safety but about those who come to the meetings. Commissioner Nelms added that it was about putting Chief Collett in a leadership position and letting him make a decision, and standing behind him to assure the safety of those who attend the meetings. Chairman Ahrens mentioned the incident that occurred where a gentleman became upset with the Development Services Center and threatened them and was found to have a gun in the trunk of his vehicle. The shooting in Texas was mentioned as well. Commissioner Johnston commented that he understood those situations, but having the screening at the door of the meeting room would not help those in the Development Center. The Chairman mentioned that the same type of security was in place at the Justice Center and at the Bluffs on the main floor and that

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no one thought a thing about it. He said that the decision to move the metal detectors to the lower level outside of Cherokee Hall was because other doors are used frequently, particularly for rentals at the Conference Center. Commissioner Nelms commented that a criminal could find a way around security on the main floor if they wanted to. Chief Collett stated that he would rather have someone upset that he does the screenings than to have someone upset that something bad did occur and he had done nothing to prevent it.

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The Chairman asked if there was anything else. Hearing none, Commissioner Nelms made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 4:18 p.m. Commissioner Johnston seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session to Follow