

Pierce County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 07, 2023 6:00 PM

Commissioners in Attendance: Neal Bennett, Chairman
Harold Rozier, District 1
Graham Raley, District 2
Randy Dixon, District 3
David Lowman, District 4

Staff in Attendance Franklin Rozier, County Attorney
Chuck Scragg, Interim County Manager
Charles Yeargin, County Clerk

1. Call to Order – Chairman Neal Bennett called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 PM.
2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Commissioner Randy Dixon gave the invocation, and Commissioner Harold Rozier led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Agenda.
Commissioner Graham Raley made a motion to amend the agenda to add an item to the agenda, specifically, to discuss scheduling a Called Meeting for Tuesday, February 21st, 2023 at 6:00 PM at the NFC Building for discussion and/or approval of: a E-911 Advisory Board for Pierce County; Inmate Housing Intergovernmental Agreement between Blackshear and Pierce County; and a Yard Waste Intergovernmental Agreement between Blackshear and Pierce County. Commissioner Randy Dixon seconded the motion to amend the agenda. Commissioners Raley, Dixon, and Lowman voted aye, Chairman Bennett and Commissioner Rozier voted nay; the motion to amend passed 3-2. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, with a second made by Commissioner David Lowman. All commissioners voted aye on approving the agenda.
4. Approval of Minutes.
 - a. January 3, 2022, Public Hearing, Rezoning # RZ-10-22-15632, 2724 Midway Church Road.
 - b. January 3, 2022 Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting

Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to approve the January 3, 2022 Public hearing minutes and the January 3, 2023 Regular Meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner David Lowman seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and all commissioners voted aye. The motion passed unanimously.

5. 2022 Budget Amendments and Reconciliation.

Interim County Manager Chuck Scragg made a presentation on the 2022 Budget Amendments and Reconciliation, noting a \$2,737,544.07 deficit due to increase in fuel prices, the takeover of EMS from Grady EMS, necessary equipment purchases related to construction of the jail addition. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to balance the budget using unencumbered American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Commissioner David Lowman seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and all commissioners voted aye. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Resolution to abolish the Pierce County Hospital Authority

Chairman Neal Bennett presented a Resolution to abolish the Pierce County Hospital Authority, due to Pierce County no longer having a hospital. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to abolish the Pierce County Hospital Authority, and was seconded by Commissioner David Lowman. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

7. Discussion on County Hotel Motel Tax.

Interim County Manager Chuck Scragg offered for discussion that due to an increase in tourism in Pierce County that the Board may wish to consider in the future levying a Hotel Motel Tax in the amount of 6% for future commercial lodging facilities and existing AirBNBs and similar establishments. Discussion only, no motion necessary, and item will be revisited at the March Regular meeting.

8. Update on County Manager Position Search.

Interim County Manager Chuck Scragg reports that 9 applications have been received for the County Manager position, and proposes calling a special Called Meeting on Monday, February 13 at 6:00 PM to interview applicants and to narrow the field down to the finalists. Information only, no motion needed.

9. Discussion on Purchase of a Road Department Excavator

Chairman Neal Bennett reviewed the 5 vendors who had submitted bids for the excavator, and asked Road Superintendent Bruce Carter to state his thoughts on what machine would meet his department's needs. Superintendent Carter expressed that due to machine quality, reliability, service, and parts availability he recommended the John Deere 210GLCFTA from Dobbs Equipment Co. of Brunswick, GA. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to accept and go forward with this recommendation, and Commissioner Harold Rozier seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

10. Declare current Road Department excavator surplus property and trade-in for new excavator.

Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to declare a 2006 Hyundai excavator surplus property, and use it as a trade in for the new John Deere 210GLCFTA excavator referenced in item 9. Commissioner David Lowman seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

11. Authorize purchase of new vehicle for Fire/EMA department.

Chairman Neal Bennett presented the need to authorize the purchase of a new Ford F-150 pickup for Pierce County Fire/EMA to replace a 2005 Ford F-250 leased from Georgia Forestry that has been declared totaled after an accident involving striking a deer. Commissioner David Lowman made a motion to authorize purchase of a new vehicle, and a second was provided by Commissioner Randy Dixon. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

12. Sheriff Ramsey Bennett’s Annual Report: “2022 Office of the Sheriff’s Operations and Budgets”.

Sheriff Ramsey Bennett briefed the Board on the data in his 2022 Annual Report; information only, no motion necessary.

13. County Manager’s Monthly Report

Interim County Manager Chuck Scragg presented the following Report of Activities and Financials:

Financial Report:

1. Final Budget Amendments have been made for transfers-in, from ARPA and the Insurance Premium Tax Refund to cover the costs of the new classifications and pay grades for employees, as well as necessary road department equipment purchases.
2. We have balanced the budget as State law requires.
3. We still have unencumbered funds of \$1.43 million in ARPA funds to be utilized in 2023 to shore up the EMS service and pay for necessary vehicles and equipment.
4. Revenues in 2022 were 18.5% over budget. This is due to increased Prisoner Housing and EMS revenue and additional property taxes collected.
5. Fuel was running 75% over budget through 2022. It is down to 30% over budget.
6. The EMS deficit is \$217,236 (without the addition of the ARPA). Through November:

YTD Expenses	\$1,144,016	
Budgeted	- \$497,500	(Grady)
Sub-total	\$646,516	
Ambulance fees	+\$387,814	
Deficit	\$258,702	

7. Our application for the Local Maintenance and Improvement (LMIG) grant for 2023, was submitted, approved and funded. Funds in the amount of \$778,060.40 were deposited into our account in mid-December. Roberts Civil

Engineering will be the 2023 LMIG Administrator. They will put out an RFP bid for use of the funds in mid-January. Roads to be bid include: Meadow Wood Road from Cason Road to Old Alma Road, and portions of Sunset Road and Beulah Church Road for repaving.

8. We are preparing an application for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in the amount of \$750,000 for paving roads. Bids from engineering firms are due February 27, 2023.

Pierce County Government Departments:

9. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- We are back to our higher call volume in January with 284 EMS responses. This is an average of 9.2 calls per day. An increase from December's volume of 262 calls and 8.5 calls per day.
- As of 1/27 collections are at \$69,317.61 per the Elevos report. That will probably turn out to be our best month to date when final numbers are received.
- This week we were notified that our RAM chassis order for our two new ambulances has been cancelled by the manufacturer due to "worse than anticipated production shortages". This is far from Ideal considering our current state of vehicles as you are well aware.
- We have been added to an order bank for two 2023 Chevrolet 3500 chassis at no increase in cost. Per the sales manager at Custom Truck and Body Work the new estimated arrival time of our ambulances is September 2023 to December 2023.

10. Fire Department

- Pierce County Fire Department responded to 57 incidents as of 1/31/2023.
- Staffing consists of 1 – Full Time with vacant position and 65 Volunteer Firefighters.
- Fire 2 Interviews conducted on January 27, 2023.
- 20 Firefighters sized and measured for Structural Fire Gear.
- Planning annual hose testing and Fire Apparatus pump testing in February and March 2023.

11. Emergency Management Administration (EMA)

- Hosted January EMAG Meeting at the NFC BLDG with 35 participants from neighboring counties, state and local partners for monthly training (Wildfire Weather).
- Attended meeting with GEMA and Dewberry reference Evacuation Zone mapping for coastal and inland counties.
- CPR training for ALL Fire Personnel in February 2023.

12. Tax Assessor

- GMASS will begin Land portion of re-assessment in January 2023.

13. Planning and Zoning

- 5 new houses
- Fees collected \$16,955.50
- Rezone from Agriculture/Forestry to Multi-Family on Youmans Chapel Road to build a duplex
- It goes to the Planning Commission on February 13 and then to the County Commission on March 7

14. Planning & Codes

- 87 inspections were performed.
- Plans and permits were approved for the construction of the new Dollar General at corner of Hwy 84 and County Farm Rd.
- Plans and permits were also approved for the Southern Roost restaurant on Hwy 84.

- Both projects are currently under construction.

15. Facilities Maintenance Dept.

- Parking lot lights have been replaced at the NFC, and the new doors for the conference room/stage area have been ordered.
- The mold abatement has been completed, by Crawlspace Mold Solutions, at the price originally quoted (\$78,813.00) and on schedule.
- Mock Mechanical replaced the control board for the chiller system and it is now operable.

16. Procurement

- Continuing to work on streamlining payment systems.
- Ensuring accountability and accuracy.

17. Clerk/Human Resources

- Processed 1 resignation and 1 retirement
- onboarded 1 seasonal employee for the Recreation Department,
- Attended Clerk/HR Ethics class for a 7-hour ACCG CORE Human Resources training class to be held in Lawrenceville, GA on January 27th, as
- Scheduled for mandated County Clerk training at Jekyll Island on February 5-7.
- We have successfully closed out 2 open records requests.
- Benefits Open Enrollment for 2023-24 will be in June 2023

18. Road Department

- Work continues on cutting the shoulders of 103 miles of road in Pierce County as we “re-stripe” 103 miles of paved roads and make them safer.
- Roads Clipped – Trudie RD (12/28/2022 – 1/4/2023), Aarons WAY (1/4/2023 – 1/17/2023) Sinclair RD (1/17/2023 – Present)
- Roads built up – 0 (Due to seasonal weather and manpower.)
- Ditches dug – 52.
- Outfalls Cleaned/Dug – 23
- Culverts installed/Replaced – 4
- Potholes Patched – 78, 3 Major
- Signs replaced – 36.
- Total Road Grader Miles – 263.10
- Road signs Put up – 3.
- Loads of Dirt hauled – 80.
- Yards of Dirt Moved – 1,280 CuYds

Special Projects:

- **Cathleen Drive:** Underground Excavating completed headwall. Backfilling is underway around the headwall by county crew. Water shed bypass will be closed next week if weather permits.
- **Ramah Church Rd:** K-Dug has begun project completion date is to be determined based on seasonal weather.
- **Mill Branch Rd:** Start date to be determined based on seasonal weather. Underground Excavating will do an assessment of the area on Monday February 6th to see if work can begin.
- **West Horseshoe Rd:** Paving is underway a completion date is to be determined on based seasonal weather.
- **Southside Dr. Ditching Project:** Ditching is complete. 2 drive pipes, 1 cross drain, and 1 out fall cleaning still needs completion. Shoulder clipping is coming to an end and project can continue to completion weather permitting.

19. Elections

- January was last month to use ENET-Ga voter registration system used the last 10 years- 31st was last day. All felons, new registrations, deceased and transfers cleaned up and off of dashboard.
- Athens- attended 4 days of hands-on training for new system
- Attended Appling County-Mandated 2nd training
- 5 days of in office webinar training
- Delivered 20 poll pads to SOS pickup in Wayne County
- Retrieved new Cellular Poll Pads (check- in tablets for election) that will now be replacing the old.
- Valdosta meeting with State Election Board judge and SOS about new legislation and proposed budgets/grants. There are still questions as to why it is required to have a voting machine for every 250 voters, due to the number of voters now participating in early voting. It is an added expense to the county.
- Qualifying resolutions from cities/notice in legal organ for November City election and qualifying dates
- Destroyed all ballots and absentees from 2020- per Georgia's 2-year retention law.
- Completed 3 open record requests

20. Parks and Recreation

- Next Recreation Board meeting is February 14, 2023, at 8:00 am. It is open to the Public. The meeting will be held at the NFC building, 2nd floor, 705 College Avenue, Blackshear, GA.
- Spring Sports (including baseball, softball, soccer, Big Kick soccer, Machine Pitch Lite and Kickball (new)) registration is ongoing until February 17.
- Basketball season ended Saturday, February 4th.
- Pierce County Rec Dept will be sending a total of 7 teams to compete in GRPA District Tournaments which begin on Feb. 17.
- Approximately 135 children have registered for spring sports so far. Projected date for opening day is April 10.
- Recreation revenues exceeded budget by almost 30% bringing in over \$167,500 in 2022.
- Expenditures for the Recreation Department in 2022 were \$441,761.

13A. Request for Action for a Called Meeting on February 13, 2023.

Commissioner Graham Raley proposed scheduling a Called Meeting for Tuesday, February 21st, 2023 at 6:00 PM at the NFC Building for discussion and/or approval of: a E-911 Advisory Board for Pierce County; Inmate Housing Intergovernmental Agreement between Blackshear and Pierce County; and a Yard Waste Intergovernmental Agreement between Blackshear and Pierce County. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to approve scheduling the Called Meeting, and Commissioner Harold Rozier seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

14. Executive Session for Personnel.

Commissioner David Lowman made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Commissioner Graham Raley seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye. The Board of Commissioners entered into executive session at 7:12 pm.

Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to enter back into Regular Session. Commissioner David Lowman seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye. The Board of Commissioners entered back into Regular Session at 7:40 pm.

At Regular Session Commissioner David Lowman made a motion to change one (1) part-time position with EMS to a full-time position, for an amended roster of 14 full-time EMS personnel, and 13 part-time EMS personnel. Commissioner Harold Rozier seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye, the motion passed unanimously.

At Regular Session Commissioner David Lowman proposed to approve the hiring of Michelle Lee as Deputy Fire Chief/Deputy EMA Director. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Graham Raley seconded the motion, and all commissioners voted aye. The motion passed unanimously.

At Regular Session Commissioner David Lowman proposed calling a Special Called Meeting on Monday, February 13 at 8:00 AM for the purpose of entering into Executive session to interview County Manager candidates. Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to approve the proposal, and Commissioner Graham Raley seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

15. Adjourn.

Commissioner Randy Dixon made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting. Commissioner Graham Raley seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye. Chairman Neal Bennett adjourned the Regular Meeting at 7:42 PM.

Neal Bennett
Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Harold Rozier
Commissioner, District 1

Graham Raley
Commissioner, District 2

Randy Dixon
Commissioner, District 3

David Lowman
Commissioner, District 4

Charles Yeargin
Pierce County Clerk