



Coweta County Board of Commissioners

Called Meeting/Work Session

22 E Broad Street
Newnan, GA 30263
www.coweta.ga.us

Shannon Zerangue
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Thursday, April 20, 2023

6:00 PM

County Building at Shenandoah

~ Minutes ~

COWETA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
John Reidelbach	District 4 - Chairman	Present	
Paul Poole	District 1 - Vice Chairman	Present	
Bill McKenzie	District 2	Present	
Bob Blackburn	District 3	Present	
Al Smith	District 5	Present	
Michael Fouts	County Administrator	Present	
Kelly Mickle	Assistant Administrator	Present	
Eddie Whitlock	Associate Administrator	Absent	
Michael Terrell	911/EMA Director	Present	
Robby Flanagan	Fire Chief	Present	
Jim Gay	Parks and Recreation Director	Present	
Tod Handley	Public Works Director	Present	
Fran Collins	Deputy County Clerk	Present	

The Honorable Board of Commissioners of Coweta County, Georgia met in Called Meeting/Work Session on Thursday, April 20, 2023.

Meeting Called to Order

Chairman Reidelbach called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Notification of Location of Rules

Chairman Reidelbach explained that the rules governing the meeting could be found on the County's website as well as on the table located at the entrance to the meeting room.

Pedge of Allegiance

Chairman Reidelbach led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner McKenzie.

REGULAR SESSION

SPLOST Presentations and Discussion

1. 13789 Discuss SPLOST Projects

Administrator Fouts provided a brief presentation regarding Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). He explained that the Board has requested that staff bring forward a referendum for the November 2023 election for the continuation of SPLOST. The sales tax rate in Coweta County is 7% which is comprised of \$0.04 (4¢) Georgia sales tax, \$0.01 (1¢) Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), \$0.01 (1¢) Education SPLOST (E-SPLOST), and \$0.01 (1¢) County SPLOST (SPLOST). He

highlighted the sales tax rates in Coweta, the State of Georgia, as well as the surrounding counties of Carroll (7%), Fayette (7%), Fulton (8%), Heard (7%), Meriwether (8%), and Troup (7%). Additionally, he explained that the four (4) counties in Georgia with a only 6% sales tax have higher average millage rates than Coweta. He provided a brief history of SPLOST law in Georgia, explained that it authorizes a county sales tax of 1% if approved by voters for a set period to be used for specific capital projects, noted that it may be levied for up to five (5) years, or six (6) years with an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the County and Municipalities. He reviewed allowable uses of SPLOST funds, explained that SPLOST is specific to capital outlay projects which are defined by law as major projects that are of a permanent, long-lived nature. Typical SPLOST expenditures include roads, bridges, public safety apparatus, garbage trucks and other major equipment, but the primary intent behind SPLOST is to fund specific capital projects, not to balance the budget or pay for other governmental expenses. He explained that the contributors to SPLOST include all transactions covered by state sales tax plus motor fuel, food and beverage, and online transactions. He pointed out that a large portion of retail transactions are made by individuals who do not reside in Coweta County. He further explained that SPLOST is beneficial because it reduces pressure on property taxes, provides a significant revenue source for capital projects that is generated by everyone who makes retail or online purchases, helps minimize long-term debt, and is a long-term investment in the quality of the community. He noted that in addition to the County, there are currently eight (8) qualified municipalities. He highlighted the percentage of allocation for each qualified municipality from the 2013 and 2019 SPLOST programs, and explained that should the 2023 referendum be successful, the allocation of the 2025 SPLOST revenues will remain the same as the 2019 SPLOST. He also noted that Chattahoochee Hills annexed property into the county and when notice is received from the Department of Revenue (DOR), they will be added to the qualified municipality list. Mr. Fouts reviewed how SPLOST has been utilized to add value to the community including maintenance of over 1,200 miles of roads and right-of-way, purchase of public works equipment used to maintain those roads and rights-of-way, intersection improvement projects and new roadways, bridges and culverts, the County's portion of the new Poplar Road interchange exit, purchase of public safety vehicles and equipment and technology, and parks and recreation facilities. He explained the projection for 2025 SPLOST collections based on historical trends is approximately \$250 million over a six (6) year period. The 2025 SPLOST referendum will be a continuation of the current 7% sales tax, not a new tax or additional tax, and the final language used on the ballot will be determined by the Board based on State law. When a final project list has been adopted by the Board and IGAs with qualified municipalities have been approved, staff will work with municipalities on information to share with the public. He also explained that education sessions will be held in early summer and before early voting. He reviewed the 2025 SPLOST timeline beginning with project input and joint meetings with municipalities beginning in April-May, the call for an election and adoption of the IGA in July, community education in August-September, early voting in October, and election day on November 7, 2023. If approved by voters, collections for the 2025-2030 period will begin January 2025. Lastly, staff is launching a SPLOST community input survey and is working to update the SPLOST information on the Coweta SPLOST website.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach regarding Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), Administrator Fouts explained that there are two (2) components in which the County receives sales tax revenues, SPLOST and LOST. LOST funds are used for general operations, and the County receives approximately \$20 million a year. The millage rate is rolled back based on the LOST revenue received, which decreases property taxes.

In response to questions from Commissioner Smith, Administrator Fouts explained that in addition to residents, visitors to Coweta County contribute to SPLOST and that counties and cities are prohibited from marketing and raising funds to campaign for SPLOST.

Commissioner Smith explained that the County cannot campaign to support SPLOST, but it is up to citizens to realize its value and to communicate the value to their neighbors and others in the community.

RESULT: ACCOMPLISHED

Comments from Coweta County 911/EMA Director Michael Terrell

Coweta County 911/EMA Director Michael Terrell explained that current SPLOST proceeds were utilized on two (2) projects. The first was an upgrade to the radio system to add a microwave array for increased coverage for public safety and to increase the number of talk groups that can communicate at the same time from eight (8) to fifteen (15). The second project was a remodel of the 911 facility including the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Immediately following the tornado in March 2021, the EOC was heavily utilized to coordinate emergency response including State agencies, non-profits, and private and public partners. Approximately five-hundred people utilized the EOC during the first week of response and provided the ability to bring in necessary resources. These facilities have been a tremendous asset to the community not only in dire emergencies, but also in increased service to the citizens of the county and public safety partners. He explained that if the upcoming SPLOST is approved, one of the major projects will be to upgrade computer aided dispatch (CAD) software which is almost twenty (20) years old and will be a benefit to all public safety personnel and service to the community.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Administrator Fouts explained that SPLOST law defines Level 1 and Level 2 projects that are designated to provide a county-wide benefit. Level 1 is specific to a courthouse, jail, correctional institute, or administration building for elected officials, and years ago the Historic Courthouse and the Justice Center projects qualified as Level 1 projects. Funds for those projects are taken off the top of SPLOST collections before allocation to municipalities because they also receive the benefits of those projects. The same holds true for Level 2 special projects which are specific projects other than Level 1 projects that are provided county-wide and are shared throughout the county.

Mr. Terrell reiterated that the Coweta County 911 and EMA departments serve the entire county (including all the municipalities).

Comments from Coweta County Fire Rescue Chief Robby Flanagan

Fire Chief Robby Flanagan explained that Coweta County Fire Rescue is responsible for countywide EMS (medical response), including the City of Newnan. Although the Newnan Fire Department provides fire services within the city limits, the County works with the City of Newnan as requested. Current SPLOST proceeds have been utilized to keep up with levels of growth in the county by purchasing apparatus (fire trucks, ambulances, etc.), necessary equipment, and other capital items that meet the criteria. As the county continues to grow, there is a need to add fire stations, apparatus, and personnel. Currently, there are fifteen (15) fire stations and nine (9) EMS units or ambulances.

Commissioner Poole explained that he was recently in a vehicular accident and EMS utilized equipment (Jaws of Life®) to extricate him from his vehicle. He expressed appreciation to Coweta Fire Rescue for their expertise, professionalism, and explained that their services are critical to the citizens of Coweta County.

In response to a question from Commissioner Poole, Chief Flanagan explained that staff has to respond and be in route to a call within sixty (60) seconds, and they aim to meet the national standard of an eight (8) minute on-scene response time.

Chief Flanagan stated that the Board and Administration supports all public safety agencies and noted that all fire trucks are equipped with the Jaws of Life® and ambulances are also equipped with modern technology and equipment. In addition, he explained that I-85 runs through the county and that services are also provided to those that may not live in Coweta or the state.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie, Chief Flanagan explained that Public Facilities staff works to make necessary building repairs in a timely manner. Several stations have undergone upgrades already, but continuation of SPLOST will help to perform upgrades to other stations in the future.

Administrator Fouts explained that most fire stations have a twenty-five (25) year life span, that a few stations have been built using Fire Bond proceeds, and plans are underway to build a new station in Senoia utilizing a modern design to prevent carcinogens on equipment being brought back into the station.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie, Administrator Fouts explained that in SPLOST law, there are some minor exemptions in terms of operating costs that can be funded by SPLOST proceeds.

Associate Administrator Mickle explained that on past road projects, the County has used SPLOST proceeds to pay for soft costs such as consultant, professional, and engineering fees.

Comments from Parks and Recreation/Event Services Director Jim Gay

Parks and Recreation/Event Services Director Jim Gay highlighted current SPLOST funded projects in the parks and recreation system including the Madras Park and Community Center, Leroy Johnson Park, upgrades to the existing Western Park, disc golf at Hunter Complex and Central Community Center, and lighting projects at Whitlock Park and Hunter Complex. He explained that Coweta County is experiencing a large level of growth in youth athletics and stressed the importance of recreation programs and amenities in Coweta for the community to utilize and enjoy.

Comments from Coweta County Sheriff's Chief Deputy/Colonel Jim Yarbrough

Chief Deputy/Colonel Jim Yarbrough from the Coweta County Sheriff's Office explained that Sheriff Wood is attending "Mantracker" training which is ongoing this week in Coweta County with over eight hundred (800) officers from various agencies and states in attendance. He explained that the Sheriff's Office has had to keep pace with population growth and with the increased numbers of people incarcerated. Current SPLOST funds have been utilized for purchase of patrol vehicles and related technology. Currently, there are two-hundred (200) vehicles assigned to the department with ninety-six (96) of those utilized for patrol. He explained that each patrol vehicle travels between 15,000-20,000 miles per year, over 49% of those vehicles currently have 75,000 miles and will have approximately 120,000 miles in a couple of years. In closing, he highlighted the importance of continuing SPLOST.

Comments from Public Works Director Tod Handley

Public Works Director Tod Handley explained that the County owns and maintains over 1,200 miles of roadways not including the State highways, the interstate, or roads located within cities and towns like Newnan, Sharpsburg, Turin, Senoia, etc. Current SPLOST funds are utilized on projects to maintain roadways and to replace culverts and bridges. Until recently, the County has spent almost \$9 million per year from SPLOST proceeds on roadways and this year a little over \$13 million will be used to rehabilitate and resurface approximately thirty-five (35) miles of roadway. In addition, this year increased SPLOST funds will be spent on bridge replacement and intersection improvement projects. Some of the most recent projects using SPLOST proceeds include intersection improvements at Corinth/Belk/Smokey Roads, SR 16/Old Hwy 85, Pine Road/Hwy 16/US 29 (SPLOST funds and GDOT), the addition of a turn lane at Fischer Road and SR 34/SR 54, construction of the Poplar Road interchange, and the bypass from Poplar Road to Turkey Creek and from Turkey Creek to Hwy 16. In closing, he explained that without continuation of SPLOST, the County will not be able to continue to maintain the roadways in the condition they have been thus far.

Commissioner Smith implored the public to slow down and relax while driving.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Regarding SPLOST)

Comments Regarding SPLOST

Chairman Reidelbach called for any comments regarding SPLOST projects.

The following citizens spoke regarding SPLOST citing the need for a current SPLOST expenditure list, need for a published projects list, and the need for new soccer fields to be funded from SPLOST.

- Mr. David Robinson, Abbey Court, Sharpsburg

- Mr. Dave Borngesser, Crescent Circle, Newnan

Administrator Fouts explained that the staff had estimated \$140 million in 2019 SPLOST collections. The County currently projects to collect approximately \$200 million over the 6-year period, however inflation has also increased the cost of the projects.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie, Public Works Director Handley explained that if a road is in very poor condition and has base failure, it requires a full depth reclamation (FDR) process that costs approximately \$375,000-400,000 per mile (using contracted workforce). Resurfacing/rehabilitation of a road that's condition is not too poor costs approximately \$200,000 per mile (using contracted workforce), and if the County can use its paving equipment (purchased through SPLOST), its employees and inmate labor, then the cost to resurface a road drops to approximately \$130,000-\$140,000 per mile. However, the County is limited on how much work can be performed using County employees and inmates per year and the remainder of work has to be let for bid. Lastly, to keep the 1,200 miles of roadways maintained properly, approximately sixty (60) miles require rehabilitation/resurfacing every year.

Additional Presentations and Discussion

2. 13790 Discussion with the Board Regarding Recreation Master Planning

Administrator Fouts explained that the County recently purchased 134± acres (Prowell property) located in between Andrew Bailey and Fischer Roads, and some years ago purchased 90± acres located next to the Fairgrounds. The purpose of this discussion is masterplanning for those properties. County staff went through a bid process to retain a consultant to assist with masterplanning and Goodwyn Mills Cawood (GMC) was selected. He pointed out that in the next few days as information from this meeting is consolidated, a survey will be offered to the public so they can provide input as well. Staff is looking for input from the Board that staff and the consultant can use to ensure they are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Matt Mitchell, Vice President of Landscape Architecture and Mr. Charles "Corkey" Welch, Senior Client Manager, from GMC were present. Mr. Mitchell explained that GMC performs architecture, engineering, planning, and landscape architecture for cities and counties throughout the state. Their goal is to garner feedback from the Board to identify some initial thoughts on programs for the two (2) park properties before heading into a conceptual design phase. Lastly, he explained that the scope of the project is to design plans for both properties.

Parks and Recreation/Event Services Director Gay explained that some youth sports programs are run by County employees, but associations/volunteer organizations are heavily relied upon to run baseball, softball, and soccer programs. He highlighted the number of participants enrolled in those sports, and explained that since 2019, enrollment has increased 48% (from 4,851 to 7,181 total participants). With continued increase in participation, the County has essentially outgrown its current athletic complexes. The goal of the project is to plan for current and future growth. He highlighted in-house sports programs and community event programs (yoga, arts, pottery, dog obedience, etc.), explained that all programs are growing, and noted that caps have been initiated on enrollment for some programs.

In response to questions from Commissioner Smith, Mr. Gay explained that futsal is an indoor soccer program for ages 3-6, the County operates both tackle and flag football programs, pickleball can be played at all indoor gymnasiums, and that one (1) tennis court at Temple Avenue Recreation Park has been converted to an outdoor pickleball court.

Commissioner McKenzie pointed out the lack of recreation facilities located in the western and northern portions of the county.

Director Gay noted that the Madras Park, Western Park, and Sargent Park were not on the map displayed.

Mr. Mitchell briefly reviewed initial design and proposals for the new park (Prowell property) including five (5) full size soccer fields, five (5) flexible sized soccer fields, twelve (12) baseball fields, concessions and restroom facilities, playground, passive park amenities, and relocation of the recycling facility on the property. The priority is to replace the soccer fields at Whitlock Park which has had issues with flooding. The development of the new park can be performed in phases with priorities created and designed as part of the process.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Mr. Mitchell explained that the initial design includes the addition of twelve (12) new baseball fields at the new park.

Mr. Gay explained that in order to access the property from Andrew Bailey Road, two (2) or three (3) of the existing baseball fields at Andrew Bailey Park will have to be eliminated. In addition, a large parcel on the existing side of Andrew Bailey Park could be utilized for disc golf and other passive recreation or in the space where the existing baseball fields will be removed.

Chairman Reidelbach requested that staff add information regarding the number of fields and recreation programs that are available in each district for citizens to understand what is offered. He also requested that the soccer fields remain a priority because of the ongoing issues with flooding at Whitlock Park.

Commissioner McKenzie suggested the addition of a dog park in the county.

Commissioner Poole warned that dog parks can present problems.

Administrator Fouts explained that a survey will be opened for citizens to weigh in their preferences and when prioritization and phasing of projects begin, the goal is to have a rough draft prepared later in the summer so that the public can see the Board's intentions. He explained that the Board previously approved changes to the County ordinances to allow leashed animals at parks, but they are not allowed on the fields or near spectators.

Assistant Administrator Mickle explained that there is an opportunity for passive recreation at Whitlock Park when the fields there have been replaced.

Commissioner Poole stressed the necessity of the continuation of SPLOST to fund each of the projects being discussed.

In response to questions from the Board, Administrator Fouts explained that because of the reconfiguration of the road through Andrew Bailey Park and the loss of a few fields, the fields will need to be replaced in the initial phases to add the soccer fields. The costs associated with maintenance and the addition of necessary staff will impact the operating budget long term.

Chairman Reidelbach pointed out that parks and recreation is one of the smallest portions of the annual operating budget.

Chairman Reidelbach called for any comments.

The following citizens addressed the Board regarding the number of participants in youth sports programs, the need for additional softball fields to relieve stress on Whitlock Park and Hunter Complex, the economic impact softball tournaments can have in the county, the importance of keeping children active and participating in sports in the county, and the need to keep up with current and projected growth.

- Mr. David Robinson, Abbey Court, Sharpsburg
- Mr. James Smith, Hendrix Road, Newnan
- Mr. Steve Ellis, Palmetto Tyrone Road, Sharpsburg

Mr. Matt Mitchell began the conversation regarding the 90± acres located on the

backside of the existing Fairgrounds. Proposed plans for the expansion of the Fairgrounds include a multi-use, covered, open-air pavilion to house the rodeo and other events throughout the year, along with expansion of parking capacity to host larger events.

Chairman Reidelbach pointed out that parking was not the issue at the tornado relief concert, ingress and egress to the property was.

Public Works Director Handley explained that there is a current project in the design phase to construct a new roadway located from the intersection of Millard Farmer Road across and into the back of the Fairgrounds property which will provide additional ingress/egress to the property.

Mr. Mitchell highlighted existing multi-use pavilions located in Bulloch County and Heard Counties.

In response to questions from the Chairman Reidelbach, Mr. Mitchell explained that the pull-out bleacher capacity is approximately 4,000-5,000 seats.

In response to questions from the Board regarding the scope of the proposed multi-use pavilion, Administrator Fouts explained that in addition to situating facilities on the property because of some drainage components and location of neighboring residential properties, funding of additional facilities is a concern. Initially, a multi-use pavilion can be constructed, and additional facilities can be added in later phases. Enclosing a pavilion and adding air-conditioning can greatly increase costs; however, feedback from the Board is important so that staff can look at options for utilizing the entire property, layout of the site, and phases of construction.

Commissioner Blackburn pointed out the need to have a top-notch facility.

Commissioner Poole expressed the need to have recreation opportunities for everyone and explained that there are costs associated with all programs.

Chairman Reidelbach called for any comments.

The following citizens addressed the Board regarding the Coweta County Cattleman's Association's annual rodeo, the return of proceeds to the County through financial support, donations and scholarships, growth in attendance at the rodeo, the need for a multi-use facility, the financial impact the rodeo has on the community, other events that can be held at the facility, long-term planning for the multi-use pavilion, the Chattahoochee Valley Poultry Association's annual poultry show, the number of participants in the poultry show, the need for larger space to host a national poultry show, and the economic impact the poultry show has on the community.

- Ms. Penny Bowie, Smokey Road, Newnan
- Mr. Ron Chamberlain, Bobo Banks Road, Grantville
- Bryan Massengale, Lawshe Road, Senoia

Chairman Reidelbach expressed appreciation to those in attendance and explained that their participation and engagement is extremely important.

In conclusion, Administrator Fouts explained that tonight is the first step in garnering feedback from the Board. A public survey will be launched after tonight's meeting. When input has been gathered, the projects will go into a development phase and concept refinement. He encouraged the public to reach out to staff with any questions and to follow the County on social media (Facebook) where information will continue to be posted.

RESULT:	ACCOMPLISHED
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ADJOURNMENT

Motion To: **Adjourn**

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Bob Blackburn, District 3
SECONDER:	Bill McKenzie, District 2
AYES:	Reidelbach, Poole, McKenzie, Blackburn, Smith