



Coweta County Board of Commissioners

Called Meeting/Work Session

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

Shannon Zerangue
770.254.2601

Thursday, April 18, 2024

9:00 AM

Commission Chambers

~ Minutes ~

COWETA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
John Reidelbach	District 4 - Chairman	Present	
Bill McKenzie	District 2 - Vice Chairman	Present	
Paul Poole	District 1	Present	
Bob Blackburn	District 3	Present	
Al Smith	District 5	Absent	
Michael Fouts	County Administrator	Present	
Eddie Whitlock	Associate Administrator	Absent	
Kelly Mickle	Assistant Administrator	Present	
Sandy Wisenbaker	Assistant Administrator	Present	
Tod Handley	Public Works Administrator	Present	
Nathan Lee	County Attorney	Present	9:33 AM
Shannon Zerangue	County Clerk	Present	

The Honorable Board of Commissioners met in Work Session/Regular Meeting on Thursday, April 18, 2024.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Reidelbach led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner McKenzie.

REGULAR SESSION

1. 14449 Discuss 2025 SPLOST Projects

Administrator Fouts explained that review of the 2025 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) projects, discussion regarding the future Administration building, and discussion regarding proposed amendment to the *Coweta County Code of Ordinances* are the three (3) areas of focus for the Work Session.

Mr. Fouts provided an overview of the 2025 SPLOST allocations explaining that there are three Level Two projects (countywide) including 911/EMA (\$5,000,000 allocated), Emergency Medical Service (\$2,305,000 allocated), and an Animal Adoption Center (\$3,745,000 allocated). Funding for Level Two projects comes off the top of the revenues collected prior to the allocation of SPLOST proceeds to the qualified municipalities. The other areas of focus are Fire/Rescue (\$12,740,814 allocated), Parks & Recreation (\$30,259,433 allocated), Sheriff's Office (\$15,926,018 allocated), and Transportation/Public Works (\$100,333,910 allocated).

Mr. Fouts also provided estimated expenditures and revenues by calendar year (during the 2025 SPLOST collection period) for the Leroy Johnson Park expansion, Prowell Park project, Fairgrounds arena and parking, Animal Adoption Center, Jail

Management System (JMS)/Records Management System (RMS), Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), and 911 phone system upgrade. He noted that advanced funding for the 2025 SPLOST projects is not fiscally feasible because of the current interest rates. Because of this, staff has recommended to cash flow these projects using General Fund fund balance until SPLOST funds are collected. Because of the timing for transportation projects (i.e., design, engineering, federal and/or state funding), staff has historically utilized transportation SPLOST funds to cash flow projects.

Administrator Fouts fielded a question from Chairman Reidelbach regarding cash flow projections and the timing of the projects. He further explained that staff may utilize SPLOST funds planned for transportation projects to cash flow the other projects up front because the timing for transportation projects can be lengthy.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie, Administrator Fouts explained that the \$1.2 million dollars planned to be spent in 2024 for the Leroy Johnson Park expansion project and the Prowell Park project is an estimate.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie regarding how much has been spent thus far on Leroy Johnson and Prowell Park projects, Assistant Administrator Mickle explained that engineering and master planning are basically the only expenditures on these projects to date.

Ms. Mickle also explained that the estimated \$1.2 million in 2024 will be cash flowed from the General Fund because SPLOST collections do not begin until January 2025. Essentially, when SPLOST collections begin, those funds will be returned to the General Fund.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Ms. Mickle and Mr. Fouts explained that final grading, field construction, fencing, and irrigation are some of the remaining items to complete the Leroy Johnson Park expansion that will be funded from the projected \$1 million in 2024. Mr. Fouts also explained that staff is hoping to begin this project very soon.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie, Mr. Fouts explained that Leroy Johnson Park is currently being utilized for recreation programs and the 2025 SPLOST funds will be utilized to expand the park to provide additional baseball fields.

Regarding Prowell Park, Mr. Fouts explained that it is planned to be completed in phases and the \$250,000 estimated to be expended in 2024 will be primarily for engineering and possibly some timbering.

In response to a comment from Commissioner Poole, Mr. Fouts explained that the County partnered with the City of Senoia for the acquisition of the Leroy Johnson Park property.

Administrator Fouts continued his presentation by providing actions to be taken and estimated completion dates for the Leroy Johnson Park expansion (4 baseball fields), Prowell Park, Fairgrounds (multipurpose covered arena and parking), Animal Adoption Center, and CAD/JMS/RMS (Sheriff's office and 911).

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Mr. Fouts explained that the estimated completion dates are based upon calendar year (not fiscal year).

Public Facilities Director Mike Johnson fielded a question from Commissioner Blackburn regarding restrooms at Leroy Johnson Park.

Administrator Fouts also explained that staff is working with an adjacent property owner to gain another access to the Leroy Johnson Park from the new roundabout on SR 16.

Public Works Administrator Handley and Administrator Fouts fielded questions from Commissioner McKenzie regarding the potential time frame associated with the

roundabout and acquiring the necessary property to add the second access point to the park.

Mr. Fouts presented a conceptual plan to the Board for the Prowell Park project. He focused on Phase 1 of the project including improvements at Andrew Bailey ballfields, relocating the existing compactor site on Andrew Bailey Road, construction of soccer fields off Fischer Road, adding parking, adding a large playground area, and possibly constructing a disc golf course.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie regarding when Phase 1 might be completed, Mr. Fouts and Mr. Handley explained that timing depends upon issues such as whether the County performs the grading in-house or must utilize a contractor. Mr. Handley also explained that engineering services for the project could take up to nine (9) months.

Mr. Fouts also explained that another factor is whether the County sprigs the fields or places sod on them to get them ready for use.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach regarding utilization of County forces versus a contractor, Mr. Fouts explained that the Public Works department has a schedule of projects underway, and it depends on the timing of those projects as to whether County forces can perform the work in-house.

Commissioner McKenzie requested that the Board be provided with a list of scheduled Public Works activities for the County's larger projects.

Administrator Fouts explained that staff will be happy to provide the Board with a list of projects but noted that the schedule is subject to change based upon several factors (i.e., funding, weather, emergency repairs, etc.).

Mr. Handley explained that Assistant Administrator Mickle has also asked that Public Works share a list of projects that are on the horizon as well as those that are currently underway.

Commissioner Poole explained to get the project started, the Board may have to decide to contract out some of the work based upon how many projects Public Works has underway.

Administrator Fouts pointed out the flooding issues at Whitlock Park have been an issue for years and it is difficult for Parks and Recreation to offer programs when the fields are not reliable. That, coupled with growth of the community, have dictated the need/demand for more recreation fields. The focus in Phase 1 of the Prowell Park is soccer fields. However, the timing of other projects such as the Public Safety Training Complex will determine if County forces can perform the grading at the park or if that task will need to be performed by a contractor. Historically, staff prefers to perform mass grading, stormwater, and infrastructure at one time. Then, as funding becomes available, various sections can be more easily built out.

Mr. Fouts provided a proposed diagram of the Fairgrounds expansion project which includes a connector road from Corinth Road and Millard Farmer into the back side of the site, a covered multipurpose arena, and parking.

Mr. Handley explained that staff anticipates being able to start construction on the connector road in the fall of 2024 with a plan for completion in the summer of 2025.

Administrator Fouts explained that the key to the Fairgrounds expansion project is that it does not get ahead of the connector road project because of the challenges with the current single access point and capacity.

Mr. Fouts fielded a question from Commissioner McKenzie regarding future connection of roadways and access to the Fairgrounds.

Mr. Fouts explained that staff and some Board members recently toured covered multipurpose facilities in other counties and most everyone agreed that the one in Newton County, except for seating capacity, closely meets the needs for Coweta (he provided photos of the facility in Newton County). Staff is now looking for feedback from the Board regarding the scope of the project to begin the design phase.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Events Services Director Tray Baggary explained that the annual rodeo attracts 5,000 attendees per day.

Mr. Baggary further explained that staff's goal is to construct a facility that can be utilized for multiple types of events.

County Extension Coordinator Stephanie Butcher added that staff also plans to incorporate existing structures with the new facility for ease of access and use.

Administrator Fouts also explained that the existing Ag building is somewhat limited in capacity, so its expansion could be incorporated into the project in coordination with the proposed covered multi-use facility. Staff is requesting direction from the Board regarding the scope of the project in order to begin the design phase.

Commissioner McKenzie expressed concerns regarding whether there is enough space at the Fairgrounds for the proposed placement of this facility without compromising the existing facilities; however, he likes the style of the Newton County facility and that the proposed covered facility can be utilized for various events.

Mr. Fouts explained that staff's initial goal was to provide a covered multipurpose/multi-venue solution. Given the constraints of the SPLOST "budget", acquisition of property will cause a delay because construction of the building(s) will exhaust the funds budgeted for the project. With the current use of the Fairgrounds, staff believes this project will add another component that can be utilized for various events.

Mr. Baggary explained that incorporating the new facility will complement the existing buildings at the Fairgrounds.

Commissioner Poole explained that the rodeo has grown exponentially in the thirty (30) years since it began, and the multipurpose venue is needed.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Administrator Fouts explained that staff is seeking the Board's direction prior to expending funds for design and engineering. He further explained that staff is trying to collocate with the existing facilities and support services to maximize the potential use of the Fairgrounds.

It was the consensus of the Board to proceed with expansion of the Fairgrounds by constructing a connector road from Corinth Road and Millard Farmer into the back side of the site, a covered multipurpose arena, and parking as presented by staff.

Regarding the Animal Adoption Center project, Mr. Fouts explained that at this time two (2) potential sites have been identified. The first is behind the Georgia State Patrol office and the Coweta County Fire Rescue Headquarters located off the Newnan Bypass near Turkey Creek Road. The second option is the former gun range property located off Millard Farmer Industrial Boulevard. The key factors for this project are access to sewer, location near a service center, and visibility for the public. Staff is seeking direction from the Board regarding location before expending funds for design and engineering.

Chairman Reidelbach expressed his belief that the former gun range property will be less visible to the public.

Mr. Handley explained that because of the topography of the former gun range, the building will sit lower on the site making it more difficult to see from the roadway.

Administrator Fouts explained that staff and some Board members also toured Adoption

Centers in neighboring counties to garner ideas for Coweta's project.

In response to a question from Commissioner Poole, Warden Larry Clifton (oversees Animal Services) explained that staff feels that a more central location for public visibility and access is important for this project.

Chairman Reidelbach noted that the site behind the State Patrol office contains a small pond and passive recreation such as a walking trail could potentially be incorporated there.

Administrator Fouts explained that the owner of the property behind the State Patrol office has expressed concerns regarding noise. Therefore, should the Board choose this location, the building will not incorporate any outside runs (they will be contained inside the building), and will be constructed in a manner that minimizes sound.

Commissioner McKenzie explained that both sites have pros and cons. The County already owns the former gun range property, so no land would need to be acquired. Also, there are fewer residences nearby, so it is less likely that anyone would be disturbed by noise. In addition, the property has access to sewer which is necessary for the building. However, the location is not near a service center and visibility for the public will be a challenge. He noted that the property behind the State Patrol building is closer to a service center, but he believes the logistics of transporting animals from the current shelter (which will serve as an intake facility) out to this location will be a logistically challenging.

Chairman Reidelbach expressed that Commissioner McKenzie has a good point about not expending funds to purchase property and taking those funds to put into the Center. He also agrees with the logistics of transporting the animals from the current Shelter out to the Bypass/Turkey Creek Road location.

Commissioner Blackburn explained that there is already a concentration of public services on the Bypass (Fire Rescue, State Patrol, future Administration building) in a more ideal location.

Administrator Fouts suggested that staff work with the architect of record to sketch a building on each parcel to get a better idea of what it would potentially look like on both.

Chairman Reidelbach explained that he would also like to see any potential walking trails on the drawings.

In response to a question from Commissioner Poole, Administrator Fouts explained that the capacity of the Center has not been determined yet.

It was the consensus of the Board to instruct staff to work with the architect of record to sketch a building and any potential walking/passive trails on each parcel to get a better idea of what those would potentially look like on both.

RESULT:	ACCOMPLISHED
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2. 14450 Discuss Future Administration Building

Administrator Fouts provided a timeline of events associated with the sale of the Administration building. He explained that in February 2023, the County executed a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire 17.5± acres located along Turkey Creek Road and Newnan Crossing Bypass. In March 2023, the appraisal report was completed for the Administration building property located at 22 East Broad Street. In May 2023, the County executed a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire 4.65± acres along Newnan Crossing Bypass located adjacent to the 17.5± acres. Also in May 2023, the County executed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)

with the Coweta County Development Authority associated with conveyance of the property located at 22 East Broad Street. In February 2024, Townworks, LLC executed a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire the 22 East Broad Street property from the Development Authority. As outlined in the Purchase and Sale Agreement, Townworks has 180-days for a due diligence period and closing shall occur on or before 45-days after due diligence. He noted that the County did stipulate some specifics/minimums in the Purchase and Sale Agreement to ensure that all parties knew what to expect. The County will have no input on the final product as long as the developer meets the thresholds outlined in the Agreement. The developer had incorporated County Administration office space in the initial plans; however, it is not a financially sound investment for the County to lease a building.

He explained that staff recommends constructing a facility on Turkey Creek Road at the Newnan Bypass that includes future growth for County functions. The proposed new Administration building (58,000± square feet) and separate facility (10,000± square feet) to house Facilities Management and Information Technology are currently estimated to cost \$40 million. However, this estimate is subject to change. He further explained that staff will most likely be seeking consideration by the Public Facilities Authority to issue bonds for the project and a 25-year bond for \$40 million will cost approximately \$2.8 million per year.

Mr. Fouts also highlighted the following major General Fund capital investments on the horizon not including annual operating capital:

- New Administration Building (estimated cost of \$40 million with 25-years debt service at \$2.8 million/year)
- Public Safety Training Complex (estimated cost of \$70 million with 25-years debt service at \$4.9 million/year)
- Judicial Support Facility (estimated cost of \$15 million with debt service to be determined)
- Justice Center Expansion/Judicial Annex (estimated cost and debt service to be determined)

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach regarding tiered bonds for the Administration Building project to capture some savings on interest, Administrator Fouts explained that the County has done this in the past on some projects noting that the current Jail Expansion project was done that way.

Mr. Fouts also noted that for several years the County shared use of a facility with the City of Newnan for Fire Rescue training. The City recently constructed a new facility and a design of a new Public Safety Training Facility to meet the County's needs is currently underway. The project is planned to be completed in at least two (2) phases and will include Fire Rescue and law enforcement training facilities. The facility will be located off Ishman Ballard Road on County-owned property near the landfill. At this point, phase 1 of the project is heavily geared toward Fire Rescue training with Phase 2 focused on law enforcement training. Timing and funding for the project will require more conversation with the Board.

He further explained that the County also has facilities that provide judicial support (Accountability Courts, Adult Probation, State Court and Superior Court Public Defender). Currently, the County provides leased space for the Superior Court Public Defender; however, the State Court Public Defenders operate in a mobile fashion in the courthouse, jail, and from their homes. With the growth of the community, the County will need to provide space for them in the future. In addition, the Justice Center will require future expansion that will need to be considered.

Assistant Administrator Wisenbaker and Administrator Fouts fielded a question from Chairman Reidelbach regarding the recent judicial circuit split and any impacts on Coweta's court functions or courtroom usage.

In response to a question from Commissioner McKenzie regarding space for expansion at the Justice Center, Mr. Fouts briefly highlighted some potential options.

In response to a question from Chairman Reidelbach, Mr. Fouts explained that the Public Safety Training Facility could possibly be utilized by other municipalities and there are multiple options to fund the project.

He noted that these estimates do not include annual operating capital. Staff receives approximately \$10-\$12 million per year in capital requests from the County departments and historically only \$3-\$3.5 million is funded in the budget. These items include roofs, vehicles, I.T. infrastructure, etc. He also pointed out that Fire Stations are not on this list because the County has historically utilized fire bonds or fire district taxes to fund those projects.

Administrator Fouts also provided a graph of the tax digest and unincorporated millage rate trend since 2001. He noted that the digest has grown from \$2.49 billion to \$9.35 billion with an increase in inflationary growth over the most current two (2) years. He also noted that the highest millage rate that the County has adopted is 7.15 mills in 2007 and through the years as the digest has grown, the millage rate was reduced. Historically, the Board and staff have been very fiscally responsible. Most likely the Board will need to consider increasing the millage rate in order to support the County's investment in these projects. He noted that in 2005, the Board voted to increase the millage rate to support mandated storm water requirements. In 2007, the Board voted to increase the millage rate to support a new county library system. Both of these instances were very strategic decisions to meet specific needs.

Mr. Fouts reviewed the General Fund fund balance explaining that the fund balance was \$36 million at 09/30/2022, \$32 million at 09/30/2023 (31% of operating expenses), and is projected to be \$28.6 million on 09/30/2024 (26% of operating expense). He also provided the preliminary Fiscal Year 2025 budget including revenues, expenses, and additional considerations. Currently, staff is projecting a deficit of approximately \$5.8 million which includes merit increases for employees (\$2 million), increases in general liability/property insurance deductibles (\$900,000), increases in workers' compensation insurance (\$450,000), increases in Sheriff's office and jail overtime (\$675,000), and increases to health insurance coverage (\$1.8 million). He noted that additional budget considerations for Fiscal Year 2025 include personnel for the Jail expansion and the third State Court Judge (\$1.2 million), debt service for the Administration building (\$850,000 interest expense if bonds are issued), market adjustment for employees (\$4 million), and recoupment of fund balance (\$2 million). Budget considerations for Fiscal Year 2026 and beyond will include debt service for the Administration building (\$2 million additional) and debt service for 2018 Certificates of Participation issued for the Public Works facility and Fleet Shop (\$710,000).

He explained that the Purchase and Sale Agreement for the current Administration building property does provide for County operations to continue on the current site for up to two (2) years or the purchaser shall pay the County to offset any lease expense. The purchaser has asked that the County accelerate the relocation process so they can begin demolition and construction. Based upon direction from the Board to begin relocating the County offices currently occupying the Administration building, staff anticipates that those offices will vacate the building by the end of this calendar year. Staff will be presenting a lease agreement to the Board for consideration at a future meeting, but the developer will be responsible for reimbursing the County for those lease expenses.

In conclusion, he explained that staff is requesting direction from the Board regarding how to proceed with the new Administration building.

It was the consensus of the Board to proceed with plans for the new County Administration Complex as presented by staff.

RESULT: ACCOMPLISHED

3. 14451 Discuss Proposed Amendments to the Coweta County Code of Ordinances

Administrator Fouts explained that staff is proposing amendments to the *Coweta County Alcohol Ordinance (Chapter 6)* and adoption of a *Solar Energy Systems Ordinance*. Following a referendum approved by the voters, the *Alcohol Ordinance* was amended to include package stores. At the request of the owners of the package stores, staff met with them several months ago to discuss their request that Sunday sales be allowed. This would require a resolution by the Board to call for a referendum to be considered by the voters. Based upon feedback from several Board members and the timing to consider a referendum, staff is not recommending pursuing Sunday sales. Another request was for the County to consider allowing tasting events. State law was amended in 2020 to allow tasting events, so staff does plan to present an amendment related to this for consideration by the Board at a future Commission meeting. The store owners also asked about allowing mobile deliveries of alcohol. This is a fairly new concept and staff has numerous concerns, so staff is not recommending that the Ordinance be amended to allow this. He also explained that in the past, a provision associated with wholesale dealers was included in the Ordinance. At some point, that section was removed and staff will be presenting an amendment to the Ordinance to address a process and fees related to wholesale dealers.

Mr. Fouts further explained that staff will also be presenting a proposed amendment to the *Coweta County Code of Ordinances* associated with solar energy systems. Outside of the typical residential rooftop solar panel, there has not been a lot of interest in this issue from the community. The proposed amendment will clearly outline the requirements for small solar arrays to larger solar farms for any potential applicant. Because this amendment will be a part of the *Zoning Ordinance*, a Public Hearing will be required so Community Development staff will be working to get the Public Hearing advertised and scheduled as required by law.

In conclusion, Administrator Fouts explained that staff will also be presenting an amendment to *Chapter 2* of the *Coweta County Code of Ordinances*. This chapter currently addresses the role of the Board, Administration, ethics, social media, communications, etc. Staff's goal is to add some components related to County policies that have been adopted by the Board. The plan is to discuss the proposed changes at the Work Session currently scheduled in July.

RESULT: ACCOMPLISHED

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion To: **Enter Into Executive Session**

The Board voted to enter into Executive Session for the purposes of discussing a real estate/litigation issue.

Members in attendance included Chairman Reidelbach, Commissioner Poole, Commissioner Blackburn, and Commissioner McKenzie. Commissioner Smith was absent. Staff members in attendance included Administrator Fouts, Assistant

Administrator Mickle, Assistant Administrator Wisenbaker, Public Works Administrator Handley, Attorney Lee, and County Clerk Zerangue.

RESULT: **APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER: John Reidelbach, District 4 - Chairman
SECONDER: Bob Blackburn, District 3
AYES: John Reidelbach, Bill McKenzie, Paul Poole, Bob Blackburn
ABSENT: Al Smith

REGULAR SESSION

Motion To: **Return to Regular Session**

The Board discussed a real estate/litigation issue during Executive Session and voted to return to Regular Session.

RESULT: **APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER: John Reidelbach, District 4 - Chairman
SECONDER: Paul Poole, District 1
AYES: John Reidelbach, Bill McKenzie, Paul Poole, Bob Blackburn
ABSENT: Al Smith

AFFIDAVIT

Motion To: **Execute Affidavit and Resolution for Executive**

The Board voted to execute an Affidavit and Resolution for Executive Session.

RESULT: **EXECUTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER: Paul Poole, District 1
SECONDER: Bob Blackburn, District 3
AYES: John Reidelbach, Bill McKenzie, Paul Poole, Bob Blackburn
ABSENT: Al Smith

ADJOURNMENT

Motion To: **Adjourn**

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: **APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER: Bill McKenzie, District 2 - Vice Chairman
SECONDER: Bob Blackburn, District 3
AYES: John Reidelbach, Bill McKenzie, Paul Poole, Bob Blackburn
ABSENT: Al Smith