

WHITE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES FROM CALLED MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 13, 2007

AT 5:00 P.M.

The White County Board of Commissioners met in a called session at 5:00 P.M. in the Grand Jury Room of the White County Courthouse, Cleveland, Georgia. Present were: Chairman Chris R. Nonnemaker, Post 1 Commissioner Joe R. Campbell, Post 2 Commissioner Craig Bryant, County Manager Alton E. Brown, Chief Financial Officer Vickie Neikirk, and County Clerk Jean Welborn.

Chairman Nonnemaker called the meeting to order.

The Board of Commissioners discussed the proposed Resolution authorizing the General Assembly to amend the Local Act regarding the five-member Board of Commissioners. Chairman Nonnemaker gave some background information on this. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that last year the Board of Commissioners drafted legislation to go before the voters on the question of going to a five-person Board of Commissioners; that with the draft was a map that would have to be approved by the State of Georgia; that after months and months of wrangling, the map was finally approved; that the map was done based on population; that the local representative did not carry that; that it was back up on the agenda; that Commissioner Bryant had asked that this item be tabled from the last meeting.

Alton Brown gave a synopsis of the resolution. Alton Brown stated that he thought they had a good chance of getting this submitted to the general assembly this year with some modifications. Mr. Brown gave the Board of Commissioners copies of the proposed resolution. Mr. Brown stated that there were two things that needed to be done: 1) Schedule the election with the general election in November of 2008, which would push some other dates back; and 2) Set up a compensation plan that you would like to see go on that ballot, which plan would have to be on the ballot itself in addition to the "yes" or "no" on the five-person board. Mr. Brown stated that they would need to work with the school board to see if they would be willing to change their districts from the old militia districts to conform with what has been approved by the Secretary of State's Office; that also, the district commissioners would be elected by the voters in that district; that they were thinking that that was a change, however, when he went back and looked at it, that was the way that it was submitted the last time. Commissioner Bryant stated that he thought they had decided to go with the Commissioners being voted on at large. Alton Brown stated that they could decide tonight.

Alton Brown stated that the question before them was whether or not they wanted to proceed on with this; that if they wanted to approve and adopt the Act so that it could be submitted to the legislators for approval of the General Assembly in order for a referendum to be conducted at the general election in November of 2008. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the Board of Commissioners redid this again in January of this year, with the three Board of Commissioners voting unanimously to do so.

Alton Brown stated that, if the Board of Commissioners approved, it would have to be resubmitted with the changes as above set out. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the way the dates were set, the changes would not affect any of the terms of the present Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Campbell stated that if this resolution passed, it would only give the people the right to vote "yes" or "no" for a five-person commission. Alton Brown stated that it would also give the people the right to vote on the salary increase. Commissioner Bryant asked if there would be a question on the ballot about the district commissioners being voted on at large or by district. Alton Brown stated that that question would not be on the ballot. Mr. Brown stated that the preference of the legislative delegation was that the vote be by district.

Commissioner Campbell asked what would happen if the Board of Education did not agree to a change in their districts. Alton Brown stated that the strong preference of the legislative delegation was that the districts be the same; that it would be a nightmare for Garrison Baker, the

Election Superintendent, to conduct the elections with so many different districts. Alton Brown stated that he had talked with Dr. Shaw about the Board of Education changing its districts and that Dr. Shaw was waiting to see what the Board of Commissioners did tonight before he went further. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that from talking to them last year, they were in favor of changing their districts to coincide with the County's if the five-person board passed.

Commissioner Bryant made a motion to adopt the Resolution requesting that the local legislative delegation introduce legislation to provide for a referendum to vote on a proposed five-person board of commissioners and to vote on increased compensation to the Board of Commissioners. Chairman Nonnemaker seconded the motion for discussion.

Commissioner Bryant stated that he did not have a problem asking for a referendum on the question of a five-person Board of Commissioners; that he had told people when he ran for election that he would be in favor of the people voting on it; that it seemed to be a big deal then and not much so at this time; that the three-member commissioners was working good; that he did not know how five would work. Commissioner Bryant stated that the problem he had was putting the salary question on the ballot; that he did not see where a Representative had the authority to have the citizens vote on what compensation the Board of Commissioners would receive; that he did not remember getting to vote on the compensation of the representatives.

Alton Brown stated that the Board of Commissioners could take the compensation question off the ballot if they wanted to; that they could send the resolution and insist that the compensation question be included or not included. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that he did not have a problem with putting the pay increase question on the ballot because it was such a substantial change. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the present salaries for the Board of Commissioners were \$350.00 per month for the Chairman and \$250.00 per month for the other commissioners; that this was last voted on by the people in 1988; that those dollars today were nothing when you considered inflation over the last twenty years; that the proposed compensation would have built into it a cost of living increase because it would be tied to the Sheriff's compensation.

Commissioner Bryant stated that he felt that they were wasting their time in sending the resolution; that he did not feel that they would put this on the ballot.

Commissioner Campbell stated that he did not have a problem with letting the people vote on this issue; that he felt that the people would vote to keep the three-person board; that he heard very little about this in the community; that as he goes into other communities, that he had noticed in other counties who had increased the size of the board, there seemed to be more chaos than before; that sometimes in the past it had been difficult to get three people to run for commissioner; that he had no problem with the people voting for it.

Lola Shelnut stated that she had been circulating a petition asking that the question of a five-person board not be placed on a ballot; that, as of 4:20 P.M. this afternoon, the poll that the newspaper did resulted in 804 votes, with 73.6 % against it, 23.9 % for it, and 5% did not care. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the resolution would just get it on the ballot for the people to vote on; that the Board of Commissioners was not endorsing it. Ms. Shelnut asked why they should waste the money. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the money had already been spent last year when they had legal counsel review it and the maps sent back and forth; that it was all water under the bridge.

Sandy Haines asked if they would place the amount of the Sheriff's salary on the ballot, rather than just saying the Chairman would receive 25% of the Sheriff's salary and each other Commissioner would receive 20% of the Sheriff's salary. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the Sheriff's salary changed and was set by the State; that they might put "about." Sandy Haines stated that she felt that the people ought to know what dollars they were looking at.

John Jordan expressed his support for a five-person board and stated that it had also been on prior Grand Jury recommendations.

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Chairman Nonnemaker called for a vote, stating that they had a motion to consider adopting a resolution to authorize the general assembly to amend the local acts regarding a proposed five-person board of commissioners and an increase in salaries. Chairman Nonnemaker and Commissioner Campbell voted in favor of the resolution and Commissioner Bryant voted against.

The Board of Commissioners discussed a proposed Resolution that would authorize the General Assembly to amend the local act regarding Homestead Exemptions. The Board of Commissioners explained that they wanted to give taxpayers 65 and over who have only fixed incomes a break. It was stated that there had been a mistake in the last few years wherein the social security and retirement incomes were excluded in the total income for these deductions, when in fact the social security and retirement incomes were supposed to have been included in the total income associated with these exemptions. The 2007 tax bills were correct, making an increase in taxes for several taxpayers who were 65 years or older.

The Board of Commissioners agreed that they needed to continue working on this and get it done soon.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Campbell, the bills for the repairs to the Mauney Building expended on an emergency basis in order to correct a moisture problem were unanimously approved to be paid and to be charged to contingency.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Campbell, the meeting was adjourned to a work session.

Chris R. Nonnemaker, Chairman

Joe R. Campbell, Post 1

Craig Bryant, Post 2

Jean Welborn, County Clerk