

A Work Session Meeting of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Thursday, November 20, 2008, at 5:30 p.m. in the Grand Jury Room at the Oconee County Courthouse.

Members Present: Chairman Melvin Davis
Commissioner Jim Luke
Commissioner Donald H. Norris
Commissioner Margaret Hale
Commissioner Chuck Horton

Staff Present: Administrative Officer Alan Theriault
County Attorney Daniel Haygood
County Clerk Gina M. Lindsey
Finance Director Jeff Benko

Rusty Haygood, Econ Development Director
Wayne Provost, Strategic Planning Director
Don Oliver, Asst. Parks & Recreation Director
Emil Beshara, Public Works Director
Capt. Jimmy Williams, Sheriff's Department
Bruce Thaxton, Fire Chief
Quinton Still, EMA Director
Chris Thomas, Utility Director

Media Present: Vinnie Williams, The Oconee Enterprise

Wastewater Treatment Capacity: Utility Director Chris Thomas reported the downturn in the economy has resulted in lower than anticipated new customers for the Utility Department, and the extended drought has brought about a reduction in water consumption by existing customers. He noted that despite the fact the Utility Department has not experienced any major problems within its budget; these issues have contributed to reductions in revenue to the department.

Mr. Thomas recalled the Board of Commissioners approved contracting with HSF Engineering for the design of the Rocky Branch Wastewater Plant upgrade project on March 4, 2008, and approved negotiations with Southern Champion to be the Construction Manager at Risk for the project on August 5, 2008. The preliminary figures indicate the project will cost in excess of \$10.9 million. To fund this cost, the Utility Department would be required to borrow \$6 million to complete the project. Mr. Thomas stated the Utility Department is fiscally sound and able to meet current long-term obligations, but recommended they not incur additional major debt at this time.

Mr. Thomas proposed a combination of initiatives that would be less costly and improve infrastructure at Calls Creek and related trunk lines to treat from the current 667,000 gallons per day, to the 1,000,000 gallons per day approved by the EPD. These included:

- 1) Continue engineering on the Rocky Branch upgrade until completion by HSF Engineering.
- 2) Immediately upgrade Calls Creek and the associated trunk lines necessary to treat the EPD approved 1 mgd, using \$1.5 million from capacity fees and \$1.5 million from SPLOST funds.
- 3) Cease construction consideration and pricing for a GMP for the Rocky Branch upgrade until further notice.

Mr. Thomas estimated the upgrades to Calls Creek would cost approximately \$3 million and the funds are currently available through previously collected capacity fees and SPLOST. If Calls Creek is upgraded, 90,000 – 100,000 gallons per day could be moved to Calls Creek from Rocky Branch.

The Board discussed amending the current sewer policies dealing with sewer availability, the allocation of capacity and the payment of capacity fees. It was noted sewer availability is currently granted to an applicant based on total plant capacity, not on actual flows reaching the plant. Mr. Thomas recommended amending the guidelines to expand a wastewater treatment plant at the time when a plant's actual flows reach 75% - 80% of total capacity. He also recommended that any additional flow capacity gained be restricted to "commercial" uses and that payment of capacity fees be changed from one year from the date of rezone to ninety (90) days from rezone.

2009 SPLOST Allocations: The Board discussed the proposed 2009 SPLOST projects submitted by Department Directors and made their personal recommendations for allocating the estimated \$34.3 million projected for county projects over a six-year period. Administrative Officer Alan Theriault prepared a flow chart with each Commissioner's recommendations that will be made available for input and prioritization of the 2009 SPLOST allocations at the November 25, 2008 Board meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

County Clerk

Chairman

Date