

**MINUTES OF
JOINT MEETING**

**City of Griffin Board of Commissioners
Spalding County Board of Commissioners**

Thursday, April 7, 2011
One Griffin Center, W. Elmer George Municipal Hall
100 South Hill Street
Griffin, Georgia
6:00 P. M.

City Commissioners present: Chairperson Joanne Todd, Shaheer Beyah, Will Evans, Douglas Hollberg, Ryan McLemore, Dick Morrow and Cynthia Reid-Ward. City Manager Kenny Smith and City Attorney Drew Whalen were also present.

County Commissioners present: Chairman Eddie Freeman, Gwen Flowers-Taylor, Chipper Gardner, Bob Gilreath, and Raymond Ray. County Manager William P. Wilson, Jr., Deputy County Manager Virginia Beams and Attorney Stephanie Windham were also present.

Chairperson Todd called the joint meeting to order and introduced the following agenda.

1. Presentation by LPA Group regarding G-S Airport Relocation
2. Consider approval to direct staff to move forward preparing design agreements with the LPA Group Incorporated for Land Acquisition – Phases I and 2, Environmental Permitting and Mitigation Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and Site Clearing and Stormwater Management Phase I, for the new Griffin-Spalding County Airport
3. Consider reaffirmation by the City of Griffin and approved by the Spalding County Board of Commissioners the request of GDOT for an executed Notice of Intent and Local State Route Acceptance Resolution for Proposed State Highway System Revisions in the City of Griffin and Spalding County relating to State Route 155 (CSSTP-0008-00(682), PD #0008682, Notice of Intent #3483).

She welcomed the citizens in attendance and said that comments would be allowed, with a time limit of three minutes. She noted one of the many wonderful things about living in this country is the freedom to express our opinions.

Peter Snider of 119 Banks Road, an aircraft mechanic for sixteen years, said he recently returned from a tour in Afghanistan. He described himself as too old to start over again

and inquired whether property acquisition would be through eminent domain or by paying fair market value. He said the property values in his neighborhood are relatively low and had concerns that families could relocate and maintain a comparable quality of life.

Kathy Noble of 876 Musgrove Road spoke in favor of the relocation of the airport. She said her property would not be purchased but her family would be directly affected because of the close proximity. Ms. Noble stated the airport would be favorable for new industry as well as increasing the tax base in the county. It could put Griffin back on the map and greatly raise the economy. She expressed appreciation for the great deal of work that has gone into the process up to this point on the airport.

L.V. Skipper of 1105 Musgrove Road addressed the Boards, advising he supports the relocation of the airport whole heartedly.

Gerald Collier of 121 Valley Road said he had been a visitor at the current airport since he was a little boy. He stated we have seen one business after another leave to move to larger airports.

Donnie Norton of 216 Banks Road expressed concern about the value of his property. He said his fear was that he would not be paid everything he had invested.

Chairperson Todd assured Mr. Norton that he, as well as everyone, would be paid fair market value for their property.

Bobby Peurifoy of 917 South McDonough Road said he was adamantly opposed to the relocation of Highway 155 to North McDonough Road. He asked the Commissioners not to turn the road over to the state, advising the citizens who live along that route would have their homes and lives destroyed. Regarding the airport, Mr. Peurifoy said it has been a political football for years. He stated the majority of Spalding County citizens have never used the airport and expressed strong opposition to relocation in the East Griffin area.

Bert Newsome of 230 Sapelo Road disagreed with Site selection 6 for the airport relocation, advising Site 7 would be a better choice for future expansion. As a retired air traffic controller, Mr. Newsome said he felt a new airport at the proposed site would be crowded in again within ten to fifteen years after completion. He suggested a joint airport with Butts and Lamar counties, and said probably fifty to sixty percent of our citizens don't want the airport here anyway. Mr. Newsome said he would like to know if any of the Commission Board members would benefit from the sale of land at the proposed site. He encouraged them to listen to what the people want in this matter.

Brenda Ballard of 155 N. McDonough Road said she has lived at her current address for forty-four years and is strongly opposed to the relocation of Highway 155.

Mark Rowland of 726 North McDonough Road advised his neighbor is the owner of a trucking company and informed him that big trucks on that road would be extremely dangerous for the homeowners.

Arthur Thompson of Musgrove Road said he and most of his neighbors are dead set against the airport and they do not believe the citizens will benefit from it. He stated he personally has never flown in and out of Griffin. He pointed out the nice big airport in Thomaston has many big empty buildings sitting around it. Mr. Thompson reiterated he does not want the airport in his backyard.

Lynette Holt of 685 North McDonough Road said she is the neighbor Mr. Rowland mentioned. She advised she owns a trucking company and would never bring trucks down McDonough Road because of the hills. The cost of removing the hills would be exorbitant. In addition, there are many blind spots and over two hundred driveways.

Bobby Peurifoy of 917 South McDonough Road asked if there would be public hearings before the final decision on rerouting Highway 155. Chairperson Todd advised there would be public hearings for citizen input.

Mike Ryder of the LPA Group gave a brief synopsis of the work to date on the Replacement Airport Initiative with a power point presentation.

Commissioner Morrow commented a larger, improved airport would generate huge revenues, ultimately benefitting the taxpayer.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor asked why Site 7 was not chosen for the airport location. Mr. Ryder said there was approximately a \$20 million price difference, primarily involving grading and land acquisition.

On motion by City Commissioner Dick Morrow, seconded by Commissioner Doug Hollberg and passed on vote of 6 – 1, approval to move forward preparing design agreements with the LPA Group Incorporated for Land Acquisition- Phases 1 and 2, Environmental Permitting and Mitigation Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and Site Clearing and Stormwater Management Phase I, for the new Griffin-Spalding County Airport. Commissioner Will Evans voted “no”.

County Commissioner Raymond Ray made a motion, seconded by Chairman Eddie Freeman to move forward preparing design agreements with the LPA Group Incorporated for Land Acquisition- Phases 1 and 2, Environmental Permitting and Mitigation Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and Site Clearing and Stormwater Management Phase I, for the new Griffin-Spalding County Airport. Commissioner Gwen Flowers-Taylor said she had concerns and would like discussion.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor said she thought a new airport was a wonderful idea but would probably feel differently if it was in her backyard. She recalled working for

Cooper Standard when the company had to ship tractor trailers full of supplies out of the Griffin Airport. It took days because of the small size of the planes. She acknowledged being elected to plan for the future and expressed hopes that her two children would choose to stay in Griffin. However, she stated she could not move forward until she was comfortable with how the displaced citizens would live. Would fair market value actually provide them with comparable housing? Commissioner Flowers-Taylor advised she would have no problem annexing the property into the city, but reiterated her main concern was that the citizens have a decent place to be relocated. She said the area of relocation should be addressed more clearly.

Commissioner Morrow asked that Mr. Ryder respond to the concerns. Mr. Ryder advised there is a formal process called the Uniform Relocation Act that must be followed in order for the federal funding to be allowed for this purpose. There is a title opinion, environmental site assessment, boundary survey, appraisal, review appraisal, comparable housing determination and relocation assistance. The time table after approval by state and local government would be approximately six to eight months. Mr. Ryder advised there is also an opportunity for a counter offer if the property owner feels the price is unfair. And if the offer has merit, there is room for negotiation.

Commissioner Morrow said his personal experience has been that relocation assistance is quite fair.

Chairman Freeman said he has been through all of the presentations and feels satisfied that it's time to move forward.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor asked Mr. Ryder to clarify 95 %. He replied that reimbursement of 95% is paid by federal funding to the property owner and the local funding pays the other 5%. He reassured that the property owner would receive the total amount.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor asked for clarification of relocation assistance. Mr. Ryder said it is the actual moving costs incurred and the setting up at the new location. These costs become part of the total package. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor asked for clarification of the term "merit". Mr. Ryder advised a counter offer that has merit would be substantiated by documentation, proof of upgrades or comparable sales. He added the initial step in the process is to meet with the property owner.

Mr. Whalen reassured we have to follow federal law and the property owner would know up front what to expect. In the first phase, you meet with the land owner and make them aware of their rights. Condemnation would only be considered if negotiation fails.

Mr. Smith stated that a project of this magnitude would be handled by a consultant.

Ms. Windom added the best assurances we can give is to look at areas where a similar process has taken place. The relocation program was used for the fifth runway at Hartsfield-Jackson Airport.

Mr. Smith encouraged the two Boards to make a decision about moving forward. The City and County have already invested over \$600,000.00 and the next bill would be significant as well. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor advised that Mr. Smith could not tell them to move forward, and stated she was not willing to make a decision without assurances that the property owners would receive adequate compensation for their life-long investments. Mr. Smith reiterated we're in a holding pattern and staff needs direction where to go from here.

Mr. Ryder clarified that if the price for properties settled upon was more than fair market value, the difference would become a local burden.

County Commissioner Raymond Ray made a motion, seconded by Chairman Eddie Freeman to move forward preparing design agreements with the LPA Group Incorporated for Land Acquisition- Phases 1 and 2, Environmental Permitting and Mitigation Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and Site Clearing and Stormwater Management Phase I, for the new Griffin-Spalding County Airport. Motion passed on vote of 3 – 2. Commissioners Bob Gilreath and Gwen Flowers-Taylor voted “no”.

Chairperson Todd recognized the members of the Airport Advisory Board and Airport Manager Robert Mohl.

Bert Newsome, who addressed the Boards earlier, came forward to ask what the property owners should do now. Should they continue with property improvements or sit and wait? Chairperson Todd advised agreements would be prepared and presented to individual property owners within about a six to eight month period. She confirmed that Site 6 is the preferred location.

Peter Snider, who also had spoken earlier, said he believed Site 6 was chosen because it is one of the crudest parts of town and the people there have no means to fight. He said most of the citizens live in a double wides. He was told that the federal law would be followed but no one presented a copy of the federal law to the citizens tonight. He said he didn't even get a notice in his mail box.

Robert Mohl, Griffin-Spalding Airport Manager, advised in 2009 after completion of Phase 2 of the study, initially eight sites were chosen, with four of them being eliminated fairly quickly due to proximity to the landfill. The criteria was based on constructability, environmental factors, access to current infrastructure, cost of land acquisition and numerous other factors. Site 6 graded higher than site 7, however, federal law requires that you have two preferred sites available in the event something should go wrong with one of them. Mr. Mohl said the information has been posted on the Griffin-Spalding Airport website. He thanked Mr. Snider for his service in the military.

Linda Gilbert of 111 North Walkers Mill Road spoke in favor of the airport. She said we turned down Gordon College as well as Interstate 75. She said Griffin and the citizens

are starving for jobs and industry and the taxpayers desperately need relief. A new airport would bring that relief.

Bobby Peurifoy said he would like to know how much money was spent studying the site on Moreland Road. He said the political powers that be are focused on east Griffin as the dumping ground for our County.

City Manager Kenny Smith addressed the proposed State Route revisions to Highway 155. In 2007 we started talking with the Georgia Department of Transportation about the rerouting away from the downtown area, and they were receptive and agreed to fund it. Both the LCI study and the Spalding County Comprehensive Transportation Plan identify the need to reroute Highway 155 to the McDonough Road corridor. The DOT presented a resolution to the City and the County to assume the roadway the state would abandon. The City approved but Spalding County tabled at that time. The project has been put on the State Transportation Improvement Act project list for funding through T SPLOST next year.

County Manager William P. Wilson, Jr. advised the Transportation Committee has been working toward this project for many years. The Spalding County Board previously tabled the notice of intent but has been notified by the DOT that it is still a valid document. The project has credibility and they are still very much interested. He asked for direction whether to move forward.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor asked for a time line on the project. Mr. Smith advised trying to predict the time line for the DOT was difficult. But we are on their list for funding and this is the first step. Mr. Wilson said it is most definitely a long term project.

On motion by Commissioner Morrow, seconded by Commissioner Hollberg and unanimously passed to reaffirm the request of GDOT for an executed Notice of Intent and Local State Route Acceptance Resolution for Proposed State Highway System Revisions in the City of Griffin and Spalding County relating to State Route 155 (CSSTP-0008-00(682), PD #0008682, Notice of Intent #3483).

Commissioner Beyah asked if the number of driveways on McDonough Road had been reviewed. Commissioner Morrow said the DOT has done some preliminary work and has a layout with the driveways on it.

Brenda Ballard of North McDonough Road said she works in her yard daily and wanted to know how she would be affected.

David Floyd of 35 North McDonough Road said he travels to Stockbridge to work and the bottleneck on Highway 155 is very dangerous. He asked the Commission to strongly consider before making the decision to move forward. He stated there are no commercial venues in that area, it is all residential.

Commissioner Raymond Ray said he had some unanswered questions and proposed the County board table the notice of intent for thirty days. He advised he needed more taxpayer/citizen time before making a decision.

Commissioner Hollberg asked if the project would be moved off the DOT list if we continue to delay. Mr. Smith advised we should move fairly quickly, however, he felt thirty days would be okay.

Commissioner Raymond Ray made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bob Gilreath to table for no more than 30 days, the request of GDOT for an executed Notice of Intent and Local State Route Acceptance Resolution for Proposed State Highway System Revisions in the City of Griffin and Spalding County relating to State Route 155 (CSSTP-0008-00(682), PD #0008682, Notice of Intent #3483). Vote was unanimous.

Chairman Freeman expressed appreciation for the invitation to meet with the City of Griffin.

On motion by Commissioner Hollberg, seconded by Commissioner Morrow and unanimously passed, approval to adjourn the joint City of Griffin – Spalding County Meeting at 7:39 P.M.

Motion/second by Flowers-Taylor/Gardner to adjourn at 7:42 p.m. and carried by all.

Chairman

County Clerk