

**Board of Commissioners  
Strategic Planning Session  
Courthouse Commission Chambers  
October 27, 2022  
Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Chairman John Daniell  
Commissioner Mark Thomas  
Commissioner Chuck Horton  
Commissioner Amrey Harden  
Commissioner Mark Saxon

**Staff Present:**

Daniel Haygood, County Attorney  
Justin Kirouac, County Administrator  
Tracye Bailey, Deputy Clerk  
Diane Baggett, Communications Manager  
Alex Newell, Internal Services Director  
Guy Herring, Planning & Code Enforcement Director  
Michael Weathers, Road Department Supervisor  
Adam Layfield, Acting Water Resources Director  
Lisa Davol, Director, Parks and Recreation  
Shawn Wheeler, Director, Civic Center  
Melissa Bracewell, Director, Finance  
Bobby Reno, Director, Operations and Facilities

**Call to Order:**

9:35 AM

Chairman John Daniell called the meeting to order.

Justin Kirouac opened the meeting by stating that all of the documents submitted in today's meeting will be on the county website later today or tomorrow. He has asked different directors of the county to come and present to the Board of Commissioners and discussion will follow as the director presents.

Lisa Davol presented to the Board of Commissioners several charts and maps when discussing the five-year plan for the Parks and Recreation Facilities. Three of the top wants/needs for the Oconee Veterans Park are: additional tennis courts with added parking, addition of a large pavilion, and additional exit for the facilities.

Herman C. Michael Park. The only plan for updating this facility is to convert courts into Pickleball Courts and to improve the parking lot.

Bogart Sports Complex. No additional large plans are planned for facility. Ms. Davol stated that the parking lot is gravel, and in the future would like to see a paved parking lot with parking improvements.

Heritage Park. The most heavily used part of the park is the trail system. There are no additional plans aside from general repairs.

Middle Oconee River Park. This is a passive park but would likely be a potential for kayak and canoe launch pad area along with picnic area.

LAS park. Future park with 220 acres. Parks and Recreation has had a lot of community feed back on this area. There is a great need for soccer fields, multi-use fields, picnic areas, dog park and trails along with indoor gymnasium space.

Commissioner Horton asked on average how many courts do we use with the school. Ms. Davol stated usually six days a week and on average seven courts.

Ms. Davol stated that we are in year three of a three-year contract with the school system. We are charged sixty percent of the fee noted on website. We pay for sound fees, custodial fees, field time just to name a few fees.

The build-out would be done in phases. The next Recreational Advisory Meeting is scheduled for November 15, 2022.

Commissioner Thomas asked about the Heritage Park and were there any upgrades for Horse Park. Ms. Davol has met with some people about the that and has another meeting scheduled for December 2022. There is a foundation named Oconee Park Foundation, which is a 501-3C, that is helping to raise funds to make the park more horse friendly.

Chairman Daniell asked the commissioners to field questions, comments from the public and to forward those to the Recreational Advisory Committee.

Mr. Kirouac then called on Adam Layfield of Water Resource to discuss Water Master Plans.

Mr. Layfield also welcomed Jimmy Parker from Precision Planning to help answer any questions that the Board may have.

According to Mr. Layfield, he does not see any plans of furthering the water service going any further south than it is currently. He also stated that there are two top projects they have for future and it is the Bear Creek Project and Construction of the Water Treatment Service of Hard Labor Creek.

He also gave updates of other future projects such as; Phase II of State Route 15, Phase III of State Route 15 toward the Administrative Building, Water Extension of Flat Rock Road.

Some discussion occurred concerning the size of pipes being used for projected projects and Jimmy Parker was able to clarify the issues discussed and the ability to use discretion when dealing with supply chain issues.

The Waste Water goals were then presented with the decommissioning the LAS site, pump stations and a reuse system options for Park irrigation and any kind of future development being the top three goals.

The Epps Bridge Lift Station upgrade is a major need for the department and county. This fields the growth out to Highway 78 and is a top priority. The easements for this project are already being acquired.

The second priority is the McNutt Creek Connector Phase III on the Orkin Tract. This will eliminate the 316 Lift Station.

The McNutt Creek Connector Phase IV would decommission Cobblestone lift station.

Chairman Daniell stated that Upper Oconee Water Basin had applied for ARPA money and should be hearing back by the end of the year and the projects would be finalized once the county hears back from the ARP money.

Mr. Kirouac then discussed some of the strategies for the facilities in the county. The county does not want to hold onto any buildings that are not needed. The Ward building and the Board of Elections building have been sold with a lease option until the new administration building is complete. The administration building is still scheduled for July 7, 2023 opening. The building will essentially empty the Annex building. The plan is to sell the Annex building. The facility shop and Water Resources building are also located on the Annex building property. The strategy at this time is to sell some version of the Annex property but maintain the facility shop and the water resources building until the county has a permanent location for those two buildings. The Field Services, Fleet, and Road Department will be located at the LAS site under one roof. After those buildings have been moved the Road, Water and Fleet buildings would then be disposed of. Plantation Road would have to be rebuilt to accommodate the vehicles entering and exiting property.

The Watkinsville library will be sold when the new library moves to Wire Park.

One of the priority points is the gymnasium at the LAS site.

No finalization has been made about the staging area of gravel and other materials on whether it will stay at Industrial Park or move to the LAS area.

Chairman Daniell recommended to start getting some plans together for the buildings on the LAS property to be ready if grants or federal funds become available. The county would already have those plans available and also would give better numbers on the cost of buildings.

Public Works Department was then presented by both Mr. Kirouac and Mr. Weathers. If the Tsplost passes in November of 2022, approximately one-half the roads in Oconee County would be able to be paved.

Two plans were presented. Our current 2.5million dollar plan and Tsplost 8.5 million-dollar plan.

The Road crew would still continue to do annual internal assessments.

Micro surfacing overlay was brought to the attention of the Board as an alternative option on the surfacing of the Oconee County roads.

Some of the updates for the Public Works Department is the speed zone ordinance will be on the November agenda. The study has been done and supports and recommends roundabouts on the five intersections that roundabouts had been proposed. Right of way easements are being examined for the Hog Mountain Multiuse paths. Experiment Station Phase 2 is currently on hold until backordered pipes arrive. This project should resume in December. The intersection of Highway 53 and Union Church Road has had materials ordered from Georgia Department of Transportation. Oconee County will start solicitation for installation of traffic light.

Guy Herring, from Planning Department, came before the Board to present three goals for his department.

The first one was the Timber Harvesting amendment, in the UDC, that had a landscaping recompense ordinance. This would mean taking a tree out and replacing it. This would remove those restrictions because Oconee has a landscaping ordinance.

House Bill 1405. Mr. Herring is working with council about amendments for zoning procedures. The amendments are due by July of 2023.

Another amendment the Planning Department is looking into is the major subdivision and the requirement of having to run water to the lots. It may become more cost effective for the person to have smaller lots and be able to recoup money having to spend for the water lines.

All amendments will be brought before the Board of Commissioners later in the fiscal year.

Mr. Herring also discussed the possibility of a department re-structure. This would include a Planning Manager and Development Manager and support staff. These options are being looked at for efficiency in the two major services that the county serves. The vacancies are being advertised.

The last point discussed by Mr. Herring was House Bill 493 that was adopted in 2020 that would allow builders to hire private qualified firms to review and inspect state and county code compliance as opposed to the traditional process. Mr. Herring and staff is thinking of privatized it across the board. Builders would then hire a third-party reviewer to submit paperwork. The county was still issue permits and review of requirements. The county would also do a final inspection and issue Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Completion.

Chairman Daniell, at 12:03pm. recommended a lunch break and return back at 1:00pm to finish the meeting.

Melissa Braswell presented the Final Summary, Fund Balance Review, Quarterly Update, ARPA Fund Usage and the Capital Funding Strategies. Ms. Braswell did make a note that the numbers in the Summary and Fund Balance were unaudited amounts. The auditors should be finished and ready to present their findings in December of this year.

Chairman Daniell, along with assistance from Oconee Tax Commissioner Jennifer Riddle, presented proposed Homestead Exemptions for the property owners in Oconee County. The biggest concern was the tax burden on the elderly in the county. The current homestead exemption for residences is two-thousand dollars off of the assessed value of home and up to five acres. There are three additional exemptions for seniors. One of the exemptions is to freeze your assessment and the other two are income based.

The current administration would like to have automatic exemptions for seniors 65 years of age and older. This would be the frozen assessment and would not be income based. Also, the current, two-thousand-dollar exemption be upgraded to five-thousand-dollar exemption and a possible greater exemption at the age of seventy-five.

These changes would have to go before the State General Assembly and be put to a vote by the citizens of Oconee County. By having these exemptions, it would eliminate citizens from having

to come into the Tax Commissioners office by April 1<sup>st</sup> of the year with income tax returns and having the Commissioners office going through personal income records to determine eligibility.

Being no further business, Commissioner Mark Saxon moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Thomas seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Daniell", written over a horizontal line.

Chairman John Daniell

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tracye Y. Bailey", written over a horizontal line.

Deputy Clerk Tracye Y. Bailey