

White County Development Authority
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, October 26th, 2021

PLACE: BOC Board Room
1235 Helen Highway
Cleveland, GA, 30528

TIME: 4:30 PM

Those present were Michael Meuse, John Ziemer, Don Allison, Michael Yarbrough, Ridley Kinsey, and Joseph Whelchel. Guests present were Carl Free, John Sell, County Manager Joey Cason, Mercedes Dodd, and Dean Dyer, WRWH Radio.

Acting Chairman Michael Meuse called the meeting to order. Chairman Meuse introduced the board's new member, Joseph Whelchel. Mr. Whelchel introduced himself and gave a brief professional background of analytics, adding that he and his wife love White County and want to be able to give back to the community.

Motion to approve the minutes from August 17th, 2021 and September 14th, 2021 was made by Mr. Ziemer and was seconded by Mr. Yarbrough. Chairman Meuse stated the minutes are approved.

Ms. Jodi Ligon, Financial Director, presented the financial report. Motion made to approve the financials, check for Carl Free, Attorney at Law, for legal fees, and the check for administrative payroll was made by Chairman Meuse and was seconded by Mr. Ziemer. Chairman Meuse stated the motion was approved.

Chairman Meuse stated his feelings of the importance of the strategic plan to the county and his biggest concern of the plan not being utilized. He explained that he believes the board will need all of the support they can get from the county commissioners and the county manager, so he wants to be sure that everyone is comfortable with the consultant that is chosen.

Mr. Sell introduced Mr. Joey Cason, County Manager. Mr. Cason agreed with Chairman Meuse on the importance of the strategic plan, adding that he thinks it is probably one of the biggest steps that this community can take to start planning for this and future projects. Mr. Cason explained that he is concerned with the level of professionalism in plans between the outside consultants and the regional commission, but stated the county will do everything they can to support the board with whoever the Development Authority chooses to use. Mr. Sell stated that the regional commission is very good at plans such as comprehensive and bike/pedestrian plans, but he believes the third-party professional group would provide a higher-level plan that will stand out. He added that the grant money from the ARC is designated solely for this plan, so any money saved cannot be utilized elsewhere.

Mr. Yarbrough stated that although GMRC and RSI were his initial top choices, his legal concerns about Thomas and Hutton were mitigated after discussions with the board and he now feels that Thomas and Hutton are the best choice.

Mr. Kinsey stated that the pricing portion of the scoresheets is a moot point and he believes Thomas and Hutton have a broader scope, more education, and more experience that includes the local counties of Banks and Dawson. He added that GMRC completed the Comprehensive Plan and he would prefer not to use the same organization for all plans.

White County Development Authority
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Allison stated that Thomas and Hutton were his initial first choice and if pricing is not a factor, they still are his first choice.

Mr. Whelchel stated that he has an outside perspective as a new member that was not involved in previous discussions. He noted that GMRC appeared to request “blind faith” in terms of engineering experience and horsepower, whereas Thomas and Hutton’s were clear and extensive in their civil engineering credentials.

Mr. Ziemer stated the importance of having a plan that is utilized, as seen in previous projects, and that it is okay to have board members disagree, but prefers to see a consensus in a plan this large and changed his vote to Thomas and Hutton.

Chairman Meuse said the sense appears to be that the board does not have a problem making a change and called for a motion to reopen the consideration of the proposals. Mr. Ziemer made the motion to reopen the consideration of the proposals and the motion was seconded by Mr. Allison. Motion was unanimous.

Chairman Meuse called for a motion to adopt the proposal of Thomas and Hutton. Mr. Ziemer made the motion to adopt the proposal of Thomas and Hutton and the motion was seconded by Mr. Yarbrough. Motion was unanimous.

Mr. Sell said he had no further updates.

Ms. Truelove stated that labor is still a concern. She said the Chamber is still working with the school systems to reopen the labor pool, adding that there is capacity for childcare and the school systems have good COVID-19 numbers. Ms. Truelove detailed the upcoming forums for city council positions in the cities and stated that the Chamber is supporting both Cleveland and Helen Downtown Development Authorities. She also stated that the Chamber welcomed a new staff member, Collin Cash.

Mr. Ziemer stated the Water Authority did not have their regular meeting, but did have a called meeting executive session that discussed employee retention and the ability to hire new employees that resulted in giving the chairman power to assess salaries, merit raises, and entry level for recruitment. Mr. Ziemer said the update on the status of repairing the water plant and maintenance issues is that they are still awaiting dates and materials.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ziemer and was seconded by Mr. Allison. The meeting was adjourned.