

**Candler County Board of Commissioners**

**May 26, 2020**

**8:30 a.m.**

The following is a summary of the subjects acted on during the May 26, 2020 meeting (Summary of an open meeting in compliance with O.C.G.A. §50-14-1 (2)).

Chairman Glyn Thrift presided with Vice-Chairman Brad Jones and Commissioners Wayne Culbertson, David Robinson and Blake Hendrix in attendance. County Administrator Bryan Aasheim also attended the meeting. Deputy Clerk Clara Frink took notes until 8:44 am when Clerk Kellie Lank arrived. County Attorney Kendall Gross was not present for this meeting.

The Metter Advertiser was represented by Jerri Goodman who attended the meeting via teleconference.

Guests attending this meeting included: This meeting was offered via teleconference to the public

**Call to Order**

Chairman Thrift called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**Invocation and *Pledge of Allegiance***

Chairman Thrift delivered and led the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

**To Discuss Responding to a Campaign Ad Containing False Information Directed at the Board of Commissioners**

Mr. Aasheim made the recommendation to the Board to not politicize the response by responding directly to the candidate's campaign ad. He further recommends the Board to simply respond to facts and factual data that are subject to open meetings. The Board agreed to respond as recommended by Mr. Aasheim. After an hour of discussing the factual data for ten responses, the Board agreed to advertise the response. (Exhibit A)

Commissioner Hendrix made a motion to approve the response from the Candler County Board of Commissioners to a campaign ad containing false information directed at the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Robinson provided a second to the motion. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0.

Vice-Chairman Jones made a motion publish the response in a one-half page ad in the Metter Advertiser paid for equally among the Commissioners personally. Further, Vice-Chairman Jones emphasized that no Candler County tax payer dollars went towards the purchase of this advertisement concluding the ad should end with a disclaimer stating as such. Commissioner Culbertson provided a second. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0.

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Culbertson moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:29 a.m. Vice-Chairman Jones provided a second to the motion. The motion carried 5-0.



Kellie Lank, County Clerk

**AGENDA  
CALLED MEETING  
May 26, 2020  
8:30 A.M.**

---

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
3. To Discuss Responding to a Campaign Ad Containing False Information  
Directed at the Board of Commissioners
4. Adjourn

## COMMISSIONERS RESPOND TO POLITICAL AD

Your Candler County Board of Commissioners make every effort to function as transparently as possible concerning all matters of the citizens of Candler County. Recently, a paid ad by a candidate for public office was published in the Metter Advertiser which was full of misinformation about the operations of the Candler County Board of Commissioners on your behalf. We would like to set the facts straight. The following facts are documented and recorded in public record which can be accessed at the Candler County Board of Commissioners Office.

• **Fact #1:** Candler County has not sued the City of Metter during this administration.

• **Fact #2:** No lawyer or group of lawyers were ever paid \$275,000 by the County during the Shared Services Agreement to balance the funding sources between City and County. Lawyers representing the County were paid \$117,000, a significant difference from \$275,000. (The law requires the City and the County to hire out of town lawyers to represent them for issues of this nature.) The total money under consideration in this agreement between City and County greatly exceeded \$140,000.

• **Fact #3:** Tax Reassessment is the legal responsibility of the Board of Tax Assessors, and the County Commissioners have no control whatsoever over that. County Commissioners did roll back Candler County taxes last year to take some of the sting out of reassessment.

• **Fact #4:** The US Census Bureau lists Candler County's poverty rate as 24.6%. This rate places Candler County as 119th out of 159 counties. This data is derived from the US Census Bureau 2018 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimate (SAIPE) Data. Just for your information, the poverty belt in Georgia runs from Burke and Screven Counties across the state to Southwest Georgia and is otherwise known as the AgricultureBelt. Candler County falls in this area.

• **Fact #5:** During this term of office, the Commissioners voted unanimously to begin meeting twice a month, the first and third Mondays, and receive no additional compensation. Meetings last from two to four hours. Agendas are published and posted ahead of time as required by law. We have never told any citizen not to attend a meeting. As a matter of fact, all County Commission meetings are open to the public. Covid-19 has forced us to maintain the CDC guidelines concerning social distancing. We have continued to make our meetings available to the public through teleconference or internet.

• **Fact #6:** The only problems we have had involving public participation in our meetings have occurred when an audience member saw fit to interject personal feelings almost to the point of taking over the meeting. The person was allowed to remain in the meeting. We have held monthly Commissioners' meetings and public hearings to which everyone in Candler County was invited. No one has ever been removed from or asked to leave any meeting.

• **Fact #7:** The Commissioners do not and will not hold secret meetings. An Executive Session is held after almost every meeting and is not open to the public. A vote is never taken in Executive Session, but the Commission may come out of an Executive Session to a meeting open to the public to vote. Topics under discussion in an Executive Session include personnel and other matters such as contract negotiations, litigation, and land acquisition. These restrictions on topics are set by the Georgia Sunshine Laws and are consistent for all local governments. Confidentiality—not secretness—is a concern of Executive Session.

• **Fact #8:** County expenses are necessary, and sometimes they are high. If the County were required to have a public vote for every high expense, that would mean waiting for an election every two or four years. (The cost of holding an election is approximately \$12,500 per election.) Nothing would ever get done. That may sound good, but it is totally impractical.

Most large, capital expenses are purchased using Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and grants, not property taxes. The referendum for SPLOST, which includes the proposed purchases, is voted on by the citizens every 5-6 years.

• **Fact #9:** No office or department of Candler County has ever been told it will receive any amount of funding requested. The Constitutionally mandated offices include Clerk of Court, Probate Court Judge, Tax Commissioner, and Sheriff. The Board of Commissioners holds budgetary controls over those offices within reasonable limits but does not oversee their operations. Constitutional Officers are empowered by the highest level of state law, the Georgia Constitution.

• **Fact #10:** The salary of the County Administrator is public record and was published in the Metter Advertiser on June 25, 2019. Mr. Aasheim serves as our County Administrator, which is required by local legislation. In the past we have had two positions that performed the duties of a County Administrator and Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Aasheim currently receives a salary of \$115,000 for covering two (2) administration positions, Administrator and CFO, which is a cost savings to the county.

Hopefully, this information answers any questions you may have. We felt the need to clear up the misinformation distributed in last week's paper concerning the work of the Commissioners. If you still have questions or concerns, please contact 912-685-2835 or any of your commissioners. You are welcome to visit the Commissioner's Office (1075 East Hiawatha Street) and read the minutes for yourselves.

Glyn Thrift, County Commission Chairman  
Brad Jones, County Commission Vice-Chairman  
David Robinson, County Commissioner  
Wayne Culbertson, County Commissioner  
Blake Hendrix, County Commissioner

\*No County Funds were expended for the purchase of this ad\*  
\*This is not a campaign ad\*