

**CAMDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY APRIL 22, 2003, 5:30 P.M.
CALLED MEETING
WOODBINE, GEORGIA**

A called meeting of the Camden County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, April 22nd, 2003 at 5:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room at the Courthouse in Woodbine, Georgia.

All Commissioners signed Waiver of Notice of the Called Meeting

Present: Commissioner Stephen L. Berry, Commissioner Sanford S. Feller, Commissioner E.B. Herrin Jr., Commissioner David L. Rainer, Commissioner Preston Rhodes, County Attorney O. Brent Green and Interim County Administrator Penny Woodard.

Commissioner Rainer called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
Reverend Leon Washington delivered the invocation
Commissioner Rainer led the Pledge of Allegiance
The roll call indicated all Commissioners were present

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

a. Discussion of Personnel

1. Resignation of the Interim County Administrator

Commissioner Rainer stated the meeting was called for the purpose of dealing with the resignation of the Interim County Administrator and appointing someone if the board accepts the resignation and to discuss the interview for a new County Administrator. Mr. Rainer stated that before the board took any action he wanted to give a summary statement of the letter of resignation. Mr. Rainer stated that on Friday April 18th, 2003 he received a letter from Mrs. Penny Woodard who is the interim County Administrator.

Mr. Rainer said he would read some excerpts from the letter and then he would outline a procedure that the board would follow in response to the letter. Mrs. Woodard in her letter stated that she has been employed with the Camden County Board of Commissioners for ten years and that during her ten years of service she has never been put in a situation where her sex and race was an issue, and that unfortunately that situation has changed. On February 23rd, 2003 Mrs. Woodard received a disturbing telephone call from Commissioner Sanford S. Feller, during the call Commissioner Feller proceeded to inquire about Ms. Del Ria Tate, Camden Medical Center Administrator. Mr. Feller then said he did not realize Ms. Tate was such an articulate black woman, he then asked if there was a black woman's association around here because Mr. Feller felt that

Ms. Tate and Mrs. Woodard should get together to join because he liked to see articulate black women. He also stated that his constituents have advised him of the difference between dark skin black women and light skin black women. On Friday April 11th, 2003 Commissioner Feller called Mrs. Woodard's office just before 5:00 p.m. and asked Mrs. Woodard if she wrote the organization recommendations herself, Mrs. Woodard's reply was yes, then, Commissioner Feller declared he may have to teach Mrs. Woodard something. Are you going to be at home, Mrs. Woodard's reply was probably not because she had a hair appointment and would not be home until around 9:30 or 10:00 p.m., Commissioner Feller then proceeded to say that he knew black hair was different but that he did not know it was that different, at that time Mrs. Woodard knew she needed to end the conversation.

In her letter Mrs. Woodard stated she did not understand how one Commissioner could view her not as a woman but as an articulate dark or light skin black woman, Mrs. Woodard went on to say as her capacity as Interim County Manager she would have to deal with Commissioner Feller on a daily basis, Mrs. Woodard stated that Commissioner Feller apparently believes that he can call her home and speak to her any time he feels necessary whether if it is after hours or on weekends. Mrs. Woodard stated that Commissioner Feller's calls have been numerous and some of Commissioner Feller's remarks have been outside the realm of what is necessary to accomplish his task as Commissioner, because of the offensive comments by Commissioner Feller, Mrs. Woodard felt it best that she no longer serve as Interim County Manager. Mrs. Woodard said she is relinquishing the duties of Interim County Manager to the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners effective immediately. Mr. Rainer then stated the letter was dated April 17th, 2003.

Mr. Rainer then stated because the concerns were such in nature the procedures would be as follows. Mr. Feller would have the opportunity to respond to Mrs. Woodard's letter, then Mrs. Woodard could respond to Mr. Feller's comments, then the Board of Commissioners could respond and then anyone in the audience could approach the Board with any public comments concerning the issue of the letter.

Mr. Feller quoted the release he gave to the press on April 20th, 2003. The quote was as follows, Does the person described in Mrs. Penny Woodard's letter of April 17th, 2003 to David L. Rainer sound like the Sandy Feller you know. I find it rather strange that rather than complain to me about alleged faux pas on his part, immediately she waits until April 17th, 2003 two days after her participation with the majority of Commissioners in the Denise and Frank Etheridge matter, could it be pay back, I leave it to you to judge. That was the end of Commissioner Feller's statement.

Commissioner Rainer then asked Commissioner Feller if he had any other comments or explanation and Commissioner Feller responded by saying no that was the end of his statement.

Commissioner Rainer then asked Mrs. Woodard if she would like to make a statement, Mrs. Woodard responded by saying she felt that her letter stated how things transpired between Commissioner Feller and herself and that she would not present anything to the

Board of Commissioners that was false. Commissioner Rainer then asked Mr. Feller if he would like to say whether the comments he made to Mrs. Woodard were true or false in nature. Commissioner Feller said you have my statement.

Commissioner Rainer asked the board if they had any comments on the issue. Commissioner Berry asked Commissioner Feller if he was going to answer any questions, Mr. Feller responded by saying you have my statement. Commissioner Berry then made a statement by saying that he was in the same meeting everybody else was in last Tuesday on the 15th of 2003 and as he recalls from the questions he asked and what was developed during that meeting, Mrs. Woodard's position supported the position of Commissioner Feller and himself of partaking regarding the Etheridge's and was opposed to the position of the majority of the rest of the commissioners. Commissioner Berry stated that he did not remember anything in that meeting that Mrs. Woodard said that was not supportive of the position that Mr. Feller and himself were taking to win the minority. Commissioner Berry said he was fascinated by the question by Commissioner Feller of the pay back, Commissioner Berry could not imagine what Commissioner Feller thought he was being paid back for. Commissioner Berry asked Commissioner Feller to explain what he thought he was being paid back for. Commissioner Feller responded by saying you heard my statement that is it. Commissioner Berry then ask Mr. Feller you are not going to answer any questions or doing anything regarding what is being said. Commissioner Feller answered by saying, asked and answered. Commissioner Rainer also asked Commissioner Feller if he would not like to explain the payback, Mrs. Woodard's letter stated that Commissioner Feller had called Mrs. Woodard back in February way before the meeting that was held on April 15th, 2003. Commissioner Feller again said asked and answered.

Commissioner Preston Rhodes said he was puzzled and disappointed that Commissioner Feller would not explain himself as to the allegations that are very serious in the letter Mrs. Woodard sent to the board. Commissioner Rhodes said that he did not think a professional person would write a series of comments to all of the Commissioners and make allegations that are unsupportive. Commissioner Rhodes asked for an explanation from Commissioner Feller due to the fact that Mrs. Woodard was resigning her position due to comments directed to her both during and after working hours. Commissioner Rhodes said that is beyond the scope of any persons' professionalism.

Commissioner Herrin said that on behalf of Mrs. Woodard he has known her since she was hired by Camden County and he has not known a better employee for Camden County. He applauded Mrs. Woodard for her dedication as a Camden County employee. Commissioner Herrin said he was speechless as to the comments Commissioner Feller made toward Mrs. Woodard.

Commissioner Rainer told Commissioner Feller that if the comments he made to Mrs. Woodard were true, then he needed to explain his comments to the board, especially to Mrs. Woodard and certainly to the public. Commissioner Feller responded by saying would you like me to read the my statement again, Commissioner Rainer said no but I am pleading with you to explain the statements you made to Mrs. Woodard, the board and

the public since the allegations have been directed toward you. Commissioner Feller responded by saying he refused. Commissioner Rainer then asked Commissioner Feller you neither admit nor deny it. Commissioner Feller said he read his statement and the commission would have to go by that.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Reverend James Hamilton of St. Marys, Georgia approached the board and stated he was at the meeting on behalf of the letter that Chairman Rainer read to the audience and he hoped the board would take action on behalf of the comments Commissioner Feller made toward Mrs. Penny Woodard.
- Reverend Michael Johnson approached the board and stated that he had the opportunity to attend April 15th, 2003 commission meeting and as a citizen of the community he was very appalled in which the manner the meeting was handled, but, on behalf of Mrs. Woodard and the letter she wrote to the commission about Commissioner Fellers comments, Reverend Johnson felt that some answers from Commissioner Feller needed to be addressed, he felt the letter to be a liability to Camden County. Reverend Johnson stated that Camden County needed to move forward not backward referring to the color of ones skin, or the hair texture of an individual, or whether someone is articulate or not. Reverend Johnson said not one time was Mrs. Woodard's professionalism in question and her time off from work was invaded. Reverend Johnson understood that Commissioner Feller is a new board member, but, also understood and made clear to Commissioner Feller that Mr. Feller was old enough to know better about the comments he made toward Mrs. Woodard.
- Mr. Matt Tamisin of St. Marys, Georgia approached the board and asked the commission to investigate the matter at hand before taking any action.
- Reverend Leon Washington of Kingsland, Georgia approached the board he was very concerned about the comments Commissioner Feller made toward Mrs. Penny Woodard. He addressed Commissioner Feller and stated you are a public servant and elected by the constituents of Camden County and Reverend Washington said it was Commissioner Fellers' public duty to respond to the accusations, and by not responding Reverend Washington said he felt as if Commissioner Feller was guilty as charged.
- Reverend E.L. Hart of Kingsland, Georgia approached the board and said how very disappointed he was in Commissioners Fellers comments.
- Mayor Kenneth Smith of Kingsland, Georgia approached the board to say how disappointed to say the least of the comments Commissioner Feller made toward Mrs. Woodard, an employee of Camden County, Mayor Smith said in this day and time, we should all be trying to bridge gaps instead of widening gaps.

Mayor Smith said ones skin color and ones hair texture has no place in society, it is what in ones head and heart that should matter, all people have the same rights as should anyone else. Mayor Smith stated he had received many phone calls from both the black and white community about the comments made by Commissioner Feller to Mrs. Woodard. The community was very disturbed about the remarks Commissioner Feller made to Mrs. Woodard. Mayor Smith said he was a black man but that he serves all people.

- Ms. Diane McCoy of St. Marys, Georgia approached the board and stated she was very disappointed that the Board of Commissioners would address such a sensitive matter in public. Ms. McCoy felt the issue should be a private matter and not brought before the public.
- Ms. Hampton approached the board and stated this is a time where our military is at war and the community was very disappointed in the comments Commissioner Feller made toward Mrs. Woodard. Ms. Hampton felt that Commissioner Feller should be held accountable for his remarks toward Mrs. Woodard.
- Dan Williams of Kingsland, Georgia approached the board and responded by saying he was a former Camden County Commissioner. Mr. Williams praised how far Camden County has come and how much has been accomplished through out the years and to hear the remarks made by Commissioner Feller to Mrs. Woodard was very discouraging. Mr. Williams said that a solution should be arrived at by the board, dealing with the issue of Commissioner Fellers remarks. Mr. Williams said he hoped that Commissioner Feller would at the very minimum at least apologize to Mrs. Woodard. Mr. Williams stated that he knew Mrs. Woodard to be a very intelligent lady with great hopes for the future of Camden County.
- James Keating of St. Marys , Georgia approached the board and stated the issues at hand, one being race the other being liability , the board of Commissioners needed to conduct an investigation into the matter of the comments Commissioner Feller made toward Mrs. Woodard. Mr. Keating said if the statements were made by Commissioner Feller then those statements could be checked by second and third parties.
- Marcelle Myers of St. Marys , Georgia approached the board and said he has listened very carefully as to what is being said at the meeting and the comments made by Commissioner Feller to Mrs. Woodard was very personal to him because Mrs. Woodard is his niece. Penny is not a liar and Commissioner Feller has not refuted his statements made toward Penny.
- Artie Jones Jr. of St. Marys , Georgia , also a former Camden County Commissioner, approached the board and asked the board not to accept the resignation of Mrs. Woodard, Mr. Jones stated he has known both Mrs. Woodard

and Commissioner Feller and has never know either party to be a liar. Mr. Jones said when you are a public servant like Commissioner Feller is matters such as the comments made by Commissioner Feller to Mrs. Woodard is a public matter not a private matter. It is what a public servant has to go through. Mr. Jones said he did not look at Mr. Feller as a racist and that sometimes comments said in jest, should not have been said at all, Mr. Jones hoped that Commissioner Feller would apologize to Mrs. Woodard so that Camden County could move forward.

- Mary Jane Stevens of St. Marys, Georgia approached the board and said she was very concerned. Ms. Stevens had been in the same situation as Mrs. Woodard. Ms. Stevens asked the board to reconsider Mrs. Woodard's resignation. Ms. Stevens said Mrs. Woodard has great things for Camden County. Ms. Stevens said she taught Penny Woodard in school and knew that Penny would never make allegations against anyone if the allegations were false. Ms. Stevens hoped that Commissioner Feller would make an apology or some sort of statement to settle the minds of all the people attending the meeting.
- Kevin Woodard of St. Marys, Georgia approached the board and stated he was the husband of Mrs. Penny Woodard and he knew his wife well enough to know that she would never make a false statement toward anyone, and that he had been home on several occasions when Commissioner Feller would call their home to talk to Mrs. Woodard. Mr. Woodard said he does not disrespect his wife and nor would he allow anyone else to disrespect his wife. He addressed Commissioner Feller and told him that if he did not feel he could make any comments on the issue at hand at least he could apologize if Commissioner Feller felt he was a man and could do so.
- Stephan Myers of St. Marys, Georgia approached the board, and said he was the brother of Mrs. Penny Woodard. Mr. Myers asked Commissioner Feller to put himself in Penny's shoes and asked him how he would feel if someone made the kind of remarks he made to Penny, to his family or his daughter in a racial manner. He questioned Mr. Feller as to why he never denied the allegations that were being brought forth. Mr. Myers said the least you could do Mr. Feller is apologize to Penny. Mr. Myers said Commissioner Feller was being very disrespectful not to answer any questions that were asked of him.
- Penny Woodard of St Marys, Georgia, approached the board and said when she took the position of Interim County Administrator she had a board of Commissioners that supported her in the capacity in which she was serving. She addressed Commissioner Feller by saying no one knows except her, Commissioner Feller, and God what Commissioner Feller said to her that it was his word against her word. Mrs. Woodard said the audience was not only at the meeting because of what Commissioner Feller said, they were there because the people care about Camden County and moving forward. Mrs. Woodard said as a member of the community and as an employee of Camden County Board of Commissioners she appreciates everything everyone has done for her on behalf

of her at the meeting. She asked Commissioner Feller to apologize for his comments but that if he felt he could not do that, Mrs. Woodard said life would go on and she would hold her head high and she will continue to be a happy individual to serve Camden County.

Commissioner Rainer then asked if there was anyone else that would like to approach the board and Commissioner Feller said yes and addressed his statement to Mrs. Woodard. If you feel in your heart of hearts that I have somehow offended you then I am sorry, I am truly sorry.

Commissioner Berry addressed the board and was concerned that Mr. Feller still did not admit nor deny the allegations being brought against him. Commissioner Berry also addressed the audience concerns about handling the matter in open meeting, he said unfortunately it is a public matter, if the commission went to the back and closed the door the audience would be the first to condemn the commission for handling something that is public in private. Commissioner Berry said that the matter had to be a public matter or not handled at all and not handling it at all would be the worst thing the commission could have done. Commissioner Berry said the press inquired about the letter Mrs. Woodard wrote and Mr. Berry provided a copy of the letter to the press because the letter is a public document, that was typed on a public computer and printed with public paper and public ink on public time and it belonged to the public.

Commissioner Berry addressed the issue about an investigation into the allegations against Commissioner Feller. He stated he has investigated and asked Mrs. Woodard question after question and he came to the meeting hoping to hear what Commissioner Feller had to say, and what his response was and ask him some questions and find out what transpired and I still do not know what Commissioner Fellers position is, he is basically not giving a position. Mr. Berry stated he was very concerned about the matter. Commissioner Berry said the board does not have the authority to fire a Commissioner, the people of District 4 would have to make that decision due to the fact Commissioner Feller was elected to office by the people of district 4.

Commissioner Berry stated that Commissioner Fellers silence on the matter speaks in volume on the situation. Commissioner Berry made a motion that the Commission pass a resolution denouncing the statements made by Commissioner Feller, specifically noting that the Commission does not agree with the statements in any form or fashion, and that the Commission does not support Commissioner Feller regarding his statements, or regarding his silence, and that the Commission does not and will not condone the matter in any way whatsoever. Commissioner Berry offered the motion to the Commissioners as a formal censure to Commissioner Feller, Commissioner Herrin seconded the motion to censure.

Commissioner Rainer said that the allegations toward Mr. Feller could not be discussed in closed session, that the Commission was a public governmental body. Public officials do have to stand up to the scrutiny of the people who elected them. Commissioner Rainer

was very concerned that Commissioner Feller did not offer Mrs. Woodard or the public any explanation of the comments he made toward Mrs. Woodard.

Commissioner Feller responded that his apology to Mrs. Woodard should suffice and he did not think the issue should unravel in front of the public. Commissioner Feller thought the issue should have remained a private matter between Penny and himself.

Commissioner Rhodes addressed Commissioner Feller by saying he did not think Commissioner Feller fully understood the implications of his election, as an elected official there are certain things that we as whole do or do not do and this forum was called as an opportunity for you to respond in some manner to Mrs. Penny Woodard and you failed to do that, in terms of that, you have created some problems for yourself as well as the board as commissioners and Commissioner Rhodes felt that the board should vote on the Censure.

Commissioner Berry responded to a statement made by Commissioner Feller earlier that Commissioner Feller felt he was on trial and Penny was his jury, Commissioner Berry stated that the commission and the public was his jury and because Mr. Feller offered no explanation to anyone in the room , he believed what Mrs. Woodard wrote in her letter to be the truth . Mr. Berry stated that is why he made his motion the way he did.

Commissioner Herrin stated he also felt Mrs. Woodard's letter to be truthful and that is why he seconded the motion. Commissioner Rainer stated he also believes the letter to be truthful and he also would vote for the motion.

The motion to censure Commissioner Feller carried with Commissioner Feller abstaining.

2. Discussion of Interviewing for a new County Administrator

Commissioner Rhodes made the motion to accept Mrs. Woodard's resignation and to let Chairman Rainer handle the day to day operations in lieu of a County Administrator, Commissioner Berry seconded the motion and Commissioner Herrin said he would also vote on the motion but would first allow Mrs. Woodard to reconsider her resignation.

Mrs. Woodard addressed the board and said she has thought about her resignation long and hard and that she would assist Mr. Rainer in any way she could and that she would continue serving as Human Resource Director but she would now like for Chairman Rainer to take over the day to day operations.

Mrs. Woodard addressed Commissioner Feller with two questions and asked Commissioner Feller why he thought there was a difference between dark skin black women and light skin black women and which constituents of his advised him there was a difference. Commissioner Feller refused to answer the questions.

Commissioner Rainer addressed the board and asked what they as a board would like to do about hiring a new administrator. Commissioner Rhodes said he was not in the

position at the time to discuss hiring a new manager. The county is in the process of reorganization and dealing with county budget process. Commissioner Rhodes stated he would like to get those matters out of the way before hiring a new manager.

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes to table the hiring of a new manager and seconded by Commissioner Herrin. Commissioner Berry made the motion to discuss the hiring of a new manager at the next commission meeting. The motion died.

The motion carried 3 – 2 to wait until after June to discuss the hiring of a new County Administrator, with Commissioner Berry and Commissioner Feller opposing.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Feller, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

David L. Rainer
Chairman

Clerk