

**CAMDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUESDAY JUNE 3RD, 2003, 6:00 P.M.
WOODBINE, GEORGIA**

A regular meeting of the Camden County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday June 3rd, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Meeting Room at the Courthouse in Woodbine, Georgia.

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

Chairman David L. Rainer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Reverend Tommy Sikes delivered the Invocation
Chairman Rainer led the Pledge of Allegiance
The roll call indicated all Commissioners were present

AGENDA AMENDMENTS

Chairman Rainer proposed four agenda amendments

1. Add a budget work session
2. Item k. Add a tax release application
3. Item L. Change the 1st Commission Meeting in July from July 1st, 03 to July 8th, 03
4. Move adjournment to item m.

Motion to Amend Agenda

Motion made by Commissioner Feller, seconded by Commissioner Rhodes and voted unanimously to amend the agenda

The motion carried 5 - 0

Motion to adopt the Agenda with the Amendments

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Feller and voted unanimously to adopt the agenda to include the amendments.

The motion carried 5 - 0

1st Public Hearing on the proposed budget

No one addressed the board on the proposed budget

BUDGET WORK SESSION:

Commissioner Berry asked Commissioner Feller how he (Commissioner Feller) arrived at an 18 million dollar budget figure. Commissioner Feller said the 2002 budget was 18 million dollars and then in the year 2003, Finance Director Mike Fender asked the Commission for an extra 4 million dollars. 3 million for higher medical cost due to self insured employees and 1 million for capital cases such as death penalty cases. Mr. Fender said in 2002 the actual budget was 18 million dollars but the adopted budget was 20 million dollars.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Steve Chapen of Kingsland Georgia, manager and owner of Camden Way Apartments addressed the Commission on what he believes is unfair property assessments. Mr. Chapen wanted to make a comparison to the board about one big property owner in the county and himself. Soncel Properties who owns 150 different parcels in the county all the parcels have been under assessed. If the parcels were assessed properly the County would have an extra \$167,500.00 in its pocket. Soncel Properties represent 260 duplex units all of Soncel's duplexes compete with a multifamily apartment community and mobile home parks in the County only 3 of Soncel's parcels out of 260 duplexes have been increased in assessment for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003. In comparison all of the following multifamily apartment communities have been reassessed every three years from a 40% to 100 % increase. Mr.Chapen asked how can Camden Way, and other apartment complex owners trust the county's property assessments. Mr. Chapen stated to the board if the county continues unfair property assessments, the County will bankrupt the apartment communities and eventually the county will be bankrupt. Mr. Chapen offered a suggestion to the board, do a cost study of how much 260 duplexes cost Camden County verses how much 260 apartment units cost the county. You will find that the duplexes cost much more than the apartments but you are not increasing the assessment value and you are increasing the value on the apartment community properties. The apartment communities make money for the county. Mr. Chapen said he was told by former Planning Director Frank Etheridge that Camden County loses money on every single family duplex, triplex or quadruple home that is built under a cost of \$214,000.00.
- Diane McCoy of St. Marys Georgia addressed the Commission and said that she agrees that the assessments are out of line in Camden County and she encouraged the County Commissioners to make sure all citizens in Camden County pay fair property taxes.
- Bill Craig of St. Marys Georgia addressed the Commission about the unfair tax assessments among other things he wanted the board to be aware of.
- Samuel Chancey of St. Marys Georgia addressed the Commission about the assessment notices and said his taxes have doubled from \$3,000.00 to \$9,000.00.
- Craig Watson owner of Kings Bay Mini Storage addressed the Commission about the assessment notices. Mr. Watson said the assessors have appraised his property 36% more than what is was last year. Mr. Watson said he would be giving his property back to the bank because he could not afford another 4 to 5 thousand dollar increase on his property taxes.
- Dan Delavie of St. Marys Georgia, a member of the Board of Assessors asked the Commission to support the Board of Assessors more than what they have. Mr. Delavie said the property value is higher now because the properties in Camden County have been under assessed for so long. Mr. Delavie said the assessors are trying to get the assessed property value back where it should be.
- Joyce Flannigan of St. Marys Georgia, addressed the Commission and stated that when the Commissioners said that is was not their fault that the property assessed

value was being raised, Ms. Flannigan said that the Commission could have control over it because the Commission appoints the Assessors. Ms. Flannigan said that she noticed three Board Appointments that were up for reappointment and Ms. Flannigan said if the Commission appoints the right people to fill board vacancies the citizens of Camden County could avoid this type of situation in the future.

- Edward Gushen of Kingsland Georgia, addressed the Commission and said that Camden County is the fourth county he has lived in, not just in Georgia but the fourth county and he wanted to ask the Commission why property owners who are in arrears on their taxes are not printed in the news paper. Commissioner Berry said that the county does have an employee that aggressively collects back taxes owed to the county. Commissioner Berry said that Camden County has a 97% collection rate which is a 3% default rate and that at any given time there is always that 2 to 3% that is uncollected.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES MAY 20th, and the CALLED MEETING
MAY 22ND, 2003**

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Feller and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of both Commission Meetings

The motion carried 5 - 0

BOARD APPOINTMENTS:

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES

Motion to reappoint Ms. Jennie Rhodes

Motion made by Commissioner Herrin, seconded by Commissioner Rhodes and voted unanimously to reappoint Ms. Jennie Rhodes

The motion carried 5 - 0

ST. MARYS RIVER MANAGEMENT

Motion to reappoint Mr. Robert Merck

Motion made by Commissioner Feller, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and voted unanimously to reappoint Mr. Robert Merck

The motion carried 5 - 0

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

Motion to reappoint Ms. Margaret Jordan

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Feller and voted unanimously to reappoint Ms. Margaret Jordan

The motion carried 5 - 0

LEASE PURCHASE AGREEMENT (SOCCER CENTER)

The lease agreement states that the Board of Commissioners would lease from the First National Bank of St. Marys 13.2 acres of property on Kings Bay Road for a period of 12 months, the lease payment would be \$70,000.00. The soccer center would be used by the PSA and at the end of the lease period the Camden County Board of Commissioners would own 13.2 acres which would be given to the PSA to be used as a soccer field. Commissioner Rhodes who serves on the PSA Board said

this is a great opportunity for Camden County to have a Soccer Center. County Attorney Brent Green stated that the value of the property is worth 1 million dollars
Motion to enter into the lease purchase agreement

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and **voted 3-2** to enter into the lease agreement

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Herrin - Yea

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Feller – Nay

Commissioner Berry – Abstain

ROAD DEPARTMENT BUSINESS

1. Acceptance of a right-of-way deed to Joe Miller Road from Joe Miller
(.30 acres)

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and **voted 4 to 1** to accept the right -of- way deed

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Herrin – Yea

Commissioner Rhodes – Yea

Commissioner Berry – Yea

Commissioner Feller – Nay

2. Acceptance of a right-of-way deed to Joe Miller Road from Sam Miller Jr.
(.70 acres)

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and **voted 4 to 1** to accept the right-of-way-deed

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Herrin – Yea

Commissioner Rhodes – Yea

Commissioner Berry – Yea

Commissioner Feller – Nay

3. Acceptance of a right-of-way deed to Joe Miller Road from Sam Miller Jr.
(.10 acres)

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and **voted 4 to 1** to accept the right-of-way deed

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Herrin – Yea

Commissioner Rhodes – Yea

Commissioner Berry – Yea

Commissioner Feller – Nay

ACCEPTANCE OF THE DEED FLEA HILL WATER SYSTEM

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Feller and voted unanimously to accept the deed for the Flea Hill Water System

The motion carried 5 – 0

APPROVAL TO HIRE HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR (LANDFILL)

Mrs. Woodard the Human Resource Director addressed the Commission on Mr. Lannie Brant's behalf and due to the fact that the C and D Site off of Hwy.110 near Folkston Georgia would soon be open to the public, this position was needed in order to keep the Old Still Site in Kingsland Georgia open at least one day a week to accommodate the citizens of Camden County and the employee who gets hired would be paid from the Enterprise fund.

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and **voted 4 to 1** to hire a heavy equipment operator for the Landfill

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Herrin – Yea

Commissioner Rhodes – Yea

Commissioner Berry – Yea

Commissioner Feller – Nay

SELECTION OF COUNTY MANAGER

Commissioner Berry said he would like the Commission to have some discussion on the selection to hire a County Manager

Commissioner Berry said he had several concerns, Commissioner Berry said the Commissioners was going to hire an employee to oversee three different offices the Administrative office, the Finance office, and the Planning and Zoning Office. Commissioner Berry said this is a big responsibility for one employee, to manage the county's day to day office procedures and also manage the planning and zoning business. Commissioner Berry also stated that all other City Managers in Camden County with the exception of the Woodbine City Manager would be making more money per year than the County Manager. Commissioner Berry also stated that two of those cities have Planning and Zoning Directors. Commissioner Berry also stated that by hiring Mr. Akridge and paying him only \$60,000.00 a year to manage all three departments and taking all personnel power away from Mr. Akridge such as hiring and firing will create a problem for the county in the future. Commissioner Berry said that 90% of the department heads make more money than the County Manager will be making. Commissioner Berry also stated that Camden County needs a Zoning Director to relieve the county manager of that duty. Commissioner Berry said the County Manager needs to manage the county and not have to be responsible for planning and zoning decisions. Commissioner Berry said the Commission needs to hire a Zoning Director now and pay him or her \$50,000.00 because next year the county would be reassessing houses, lots of houses and it will be a difficult situation for the county next year and the year after.

Commissioner Rainer stated that after working in education for 42 years, it was his concept and a lot of other peoples concept that when a person accepts a job for whatever he or she is offered, he or she is pleased to do the job and you did not go around comparing salaries with other people. Commissioner Rainer said he did not think the issue was about salary, Mr. Akridge knew what the salary range would be and he knew what his commitments were and when you are talking about supervising a number of people you are actually only referring to 15 employees. Commissioner Rainer said he did not feel that was asking too much of one individual for supervision

of 15 employees. Commissioner Rainer said Mr. Akridge has had experience in planning, county management and city management. Commissioner Rainer said there are provisions in the manager's contract for salary increase as far as personnel power to hire and fire by the county manager the Commissioners would not be screening and interviewing a person for a job those duties would be done by personnel, but a recommendation to the Commission should be made before any decision is made to hire or fire and, that it would be very rare for the Commission to reject a recommendation from personnel.

Commissioner Feller said he agrees with Commissioner Rainer 100%. Commissioner Feller said that he feels that Mr. Akridge is up for the task and as far as the salary is concerned, Commissioner Feller said you show me and I will show you. Commissioner Feller said he looks forward to working with Mr. Akridge

Commissioner Rhodes said the county is in a reorganization phase and that he remembers Commissioner Berry saying that the county needed to hire a County Manager and now Commissioner Berry is saying we don't. Commissioner Rhodes said you may not be able to have it both ways.

Commissioner Herrin said that during the interviewing phase with Mr. Akridge that none of the Commissioners had anything negative to say about Mr. Akridge. As far as the salary Commissioner Herrin said that Mr. Akridge would be reviewed again in 6 months and as far as some employees making more money than Mr. Akridge will make those employees have been with the county for years they are not newly hired employees.

Mr. Akridge said he is honored and elated to be chosen the County Manager. Mr. Akridge said he looks forward to working with everyone in Camden County. Mr. Akridge said he was glad to see citizen participation and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting to show participation and involvement in the community

Motion to hire Mr. Charles D. Akridge

Motion made by Commissioner Herrin, seconded by Commissioner Feller and **voted 4 to 1** to hire Mr. Charles D. Akridge

Commissioner Rainer – Yea

Commissioner Herrin – Yea

Commissioner Rhodes – Yea

Commissioner Feller – Yea

Commissioner Berry – Nay

BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS

Motion to approve the budget adjustments

Motion made by Commissioner Feller, seconded by Commissioner Rhodes and voted unanimously to approve the adjustments to the budget

The motion carried 5 – 0

TAX RELEASE APPLICATIONS

Motion to accept tax release applications to include the proper form
Motion made by Commissioner Feller, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and voted
unanimously to approve the tax release applications

The motion carried 5 – 0

CHANGE THE 1ST MEETING IN JULY FROM JULY 1ST TO JULY 8TH

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and
voted unanimously to change the 1st meeting in July to July 8th instead of July 1st 03

The motion carried 5 – 0

ADJOURN

Motion made by Commissioner Rhodes, seconded by Commissioner Herrin and
voted unanimously to adjourn

The motion carried 5 – 0

Respectfully Submitted

David Rainer
Chairman

Constance E. Smith
Clerk

