

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of January 16, 2025

Called Meeting/Public Hearing

10:00 A.M.

Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

Eddie Rowland, District 2-Not present

Al Turner, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Davis gave the Invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Gibbs led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval with the addition of executive session for litigation and personnel.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 4-0.

MATS MPO

Michael Greenwald, Planning Director/MPO and Technical Coordinator of the Macon-Bibb Office of Planning & Zoning addressed the Board regarding the extension of the boundaries of the MATS MPO in Monroe County. This relates to a grant application from the Georgia Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program which has a deadline of February 28, 2025.

Mr. Greenwald stated MATS is the official local venue for soliciting public input on Federally supported transportation projects.

- Staff are responsible for coordinating with the State on all transportation projects funded under 23 USC (i.e., Federal Highway Funding) and/or 49 USC Chapter 53 (Public Transportation; Pedestrian Improvements)
- MATS staff maintain the MTP and TIP (i.e., the official lists of Federally sponsored projects in the MATS area). Adding/removing/significantly altering project budgets in those documents requires a vote of the MATS Policy Committee
- Monroe County already has a seat on the MATS MPO Policy Committee.

Mr. Greenwald stated the boundary of the MATS MPO areas shall include the entire existing urbanized area (as defined by the U.S. Census), plus all the contiguous area expected to become urbanized in the 20-year forecast period. After every U.S. Census, the boundary for the MATS MPO area must be adjusted and this requires GDOT coordination with the MATS Policy Committee. Mr. Greenwald stated that GDOT is asking for an expansion in the MATS boundary in the part of Monroe-Bibb and the Wesleyan Dr. North/Plantation Dr./New Forsyth Road area.

Mr. Greenwald stated additional potential areas include:

- Bolingbroke (extend current boundary up to Pea Ridge Rod, between Estes Road and US Hwy 41 on west and Ga Power Transmission Corridor on East.
- The area bounded by Pate Road, I-75 and Riverside Drive/US Hwy 23

- Town of Bolingbroke/US Hwy 41 up to Rumble Road, Pea Ridge Road and Ocmulgee River.

Mr. Greenwald stated the boundary update must take place by the time of the next MTP update after 2023 (currently scheduled for 5/4/2027) and the GDOT needs boundary updates finalized before performing transportation modeling. Mr. Greenwald stated the next MATS MPO Policy meeting where this could realistically be brought up is 5/7/2025.

Mr. Greenwald stated this was an informational presentation today and no action was needed by the Board.

He stated the next meeting would be on February 5th at the Macon Planning and Zoning Office and that Chairman Gibbs is a member of this board if he would like to attend.

HB 581 Public Hearing

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter a public hearing to opt out of HB 581 at 10:21 a.m.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the HB 581 Timeline is as follows:

- November 5, 2024: Statewide question on Constitutional Amendment.
- January 1, 2025: HB 581 takes effect, if approved.
- March 1, 2025: Deadline for local governments to opt out of homestead exemption.

The Statewide question is as follows:

“Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended so as to authorize the General Assembly to provide by general law for a state-wide homestead exemption that serves to limit increase in assessed value of homesteads, but which any county, consolidated government municipality, or school system may opt out of upon completion of certain procedures?” Mr. Hedges stated this question was silent about adding a 1 cent additional sales tax.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated HB 581 passed with 62.9% of the voters in favor and 37.1% opposed. HB 581 became effective January 1, 2025, and all county, municipalities, and school board systems are automatically “opted-in”. Each governmental agency has until March 1, 2025, to “opt-out”! HB 581 allows the Board of Assessors to appeal the sales ratio study directly instead of requiring a local government to appeal on their behalf. Every parcel in the county must be appraised at least every three years.

HB 581 implements a statewide floating homestead exemption for all local governments. A floating homestead is a special type of homestead exemption designed to offset or reduce increases in taxable value to the property.

The effect of HB 581 homestead exemption is that the taxable value of a home may only increase at a rate of inflation each year, essentially controlling this will control how much the value of a home can increase annually. Non-homesteaded property will continue to be valued at fair market value.

Any governing authority may elect to opt out of the floating homestead exemption created by HB 581 provided they follow the procedures.

A FLOST (Floating Local Option Sales Tax) is created by HB 581 which requires approval of a referendum of voters. The funds must be used exclusively for property tax relief.

The following people spoke in opposition to opting out of HB 581:

- Russ Edge, resident of Edge Road, stated that the statement that the one cent sales tax is a requirement is false. Mr. Edge stated he had met with Commissioner Rowland regarding his concerns, and he is opposed to opting out. The citizens voted for this, and the Board should listen.
- Ed Stallworth stated he represents the Georgia Farm Bureau, and they advocated for this to protect Georgia's farmland. He stated he is opposed to opting out.
- Roland Keller, resident of 107 Cross Creek Circle, stated he also owns property on Lakeshore Drive and moved here from Pooler, Georgia. Mr. Keller asked the board what properties would be used for appraisals because in Pooler they didn't use sales from their neighborhoods and used property in similar locations to inflate values.
- Carol Edge, resident of 5044 Stokes Store Road, asked if it was automatic if either the city or the county opts out both have to.
- Mike Harold, resident of 332 Oxford Road, asked about the percentages being used.

The Board along with Chief Appraiser Bobby Gerhardt discussed HB 581 in length with the citizens that were present.

Commissioner Davis motioned to come out of the public hearing at 11:18 a.m.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Executive Session-Litigation and Personnel

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session for litigation and personnel at 11:18 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 11:53 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Action from Executive Session-Litigation

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the Board discussed a litigation and personnel item and no action was taken.

Public Comments

There were no additional public comments.

Commissioners' Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated he had no additional comments.

District 3 John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to look at impact fees again at the next meeting.

District 4 Al Turner

Commissioner Turner stated he had no additional comments.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

Chairman Gibbs stated he had no additional comments.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 11:55 a.m.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 4-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk