

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA, HELD ON DECEMBER 17,1999, IN THE COMMISSION MEETING ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE CHATHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE, LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING, 124 BULL STREET, SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Billy Hair called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., Friday, December 17,1999.

=====

**II. INVOCATION**

Commissioner Rivers gave the invocation.

=====

**III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

=====

**IV. ROLL CALL**

The Clerk called the roll.

PRESENT:	Dr. Billy B. Hair, Chairman Dr. Priscilla D. Thomas, Vice Chairman, District Eight Frank G. Murray, Chairman Pro Tem, District Four David L. Saussy, District One Joe Murray Rivers, District Two Martin S. Jackel, District Three Harris Odell, Jr., District Five (arrived approximately 9:20 a.m.) Ben Price, District Six Eddie W. DeLoach, District Seven
----------	--

IN ATTENDANCE:	Russ Abolt, County Manager R. Jonathan Hart, County Attorney Sybil E. Tillman, County Clerk
----------------	---

=====

**YOUTH COMMISSIONERS**

Chairman Hair said, I need to introduce the Youth Commissioners. Our first Youth Commissioner today is Moya Bullock. Moya is a Senior at Johnson High School. We also have with us Kelie Connor, who's a Sophomore at St. Vincent's, and we have Stephen Crawford, who's a Senior at Benedictine. We appreciate you folks being with us today and as we go through deliberations if you want to make any comment or question, raise your hand and I'll recognize you.

=====

**V. PROCLAMATIONS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

None.

=====

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Chairman Hair said, to begin this morning I need a motion to amend the Commissioners' Items agenda to add one for Commissioner Rivers. Commissioner Saussy said, so moved. Commissioner Price said, second. Chairman Hair said, second. All those in favor vote yes, opposed vote no. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Commissioner Odell was not present.] Chairman Hair said, the motion passes. Thank you.

=====

**VI. CHAIRMAN'S ITEMS**

**1. VACANCIES IN THE OFFICE OF CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT - SUSAN PROUSE.**

Chairman Hair recognized Ms. Susan Prouse.

Ms. Susan Prouse said, good morning. I have three vacancies in my office at this time. Two of these are Court Clerks. The positions have been vacant for over 45 days and I'm required by Georgia law to furnish trained court personnel for each of the Superior Court —, six Superior Court judges. This next week we have eight judges presiding in Superior Court. I have ten clerks. At least three to four have to be in the office at all times to process paperwork filed by attorneys. I have a drastic need to fill one of these positions. I am only asking for one out of the three. After advertising, interviewing, the person would not start work until after the first of January. It takes ten months to a year to train a person for court. The old saying "The show must go on" is also true in Superior Court. If I don't have people for the six Superior Court judges, judges from out of town that come in and sit for our judges, then court cannot be opened. That means there will be a backlog in every aspect of our legal system. Commissioner Price said, move for approval. Ms. Prouse said, I need your immediate support and attention to help me alleviate this —.

Chairman Hair said, we have a motion to approve. Do I have a second? Commissioner Jackel said, I'll second it. Chairman Hair asked, any discussion? All those in favor vote yes, opposed vote no. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Commissioner Odell was not present.] Commissioner Price said, merry Christmas. Chairman Hair said, thank you, Ms. Prouse. Ms. Prouse said, thank you and merry Christmas. Chairman Hair said, we appreciate you coming. Ms. Prouse said, thank you.

Commissioner Jackel said, let me just take one second if I may, Mr. Chairman. Susan [Prouse], we really appreciate the job you're doing for us. I'm up there often and your people are courteous and efficient. We appreciate what you do for us. Ms. Prouse said, thank you. I have a great group. Thank you very much.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve a waiver of the hiring freeze for the Office of Clerk of Superior Court to fill one vacancy for a Court Clerk. Commissioner Jackel seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Commissioner Odell was not present.]

=====

**2. S.T.O.P. - CHRISTINA TAYLOR**

Chairman Hair said, our next presentation is from Stop Taxing Our People - Christina Taylor. Chairman Hair recognized Ms. Taylor.

Ms. Christina Taylor said, I love all these tall people in the world. Thank you very much for hearing us this morning. Six weeks ago to this day we came to you to ask you some specific questions on uniformity on the Tax Assessors, and we asked you to instruct your appointees, the members of the Board of Assessors to immediately correct the inadequate, inequitable situation by having the Tax Assessor properly and impartially assess all pieces of property in Chatham County in accordance with the laws of Georgia. If the Board of Assessors did not act immediately to resolve the lack of uniformity, we requested that you take whatever steps necessary to remove all members of the Board of Assessors and the Chief Assessor and replace them with individuals who will implement and operate tax —, the tax system that treats all taxpayers in a fair, consistent and uniform manner. We asked you to ask Jerry Jackson, State Commissioner of Revenue, to refuse to accept the County's digest pending resolution of the uniformity. We presented two pages of very specific questions for you to ask the Board of Assessors. The answers to these questions would clearly demonstrate the problems with uniformity, fairness and equity in property taxation in Chatham County. We asked that you request an independent audit of the Tax Assessor's office, this audit to be performed and the results acted on before year end to establish operating policies and procedures to ensure uniformity in taxation in compliance with Georgia laws going forward. We asked you to present our —, represent our interest in ensuring uniformity in our property tax system and fairness in the distribution of the tax burden. We are here today to follow up on those requests. Has the Commission asked the Board of Assessors to correct the lack of uniformity in property taxation in Chatham County? [Pause.] Have you asked?

Chairman Hair asked, has anyone —? Commissioner Jackel said, yes, we have. Chairman Hair said, we have submitted a request for that, I believe. Ms. Taylor asked, has the Board of Assessors —. County Attorney Hart said, that question assumes there is a lack of uniformity. Chairman Hair said, right. Yes, that is an assumption. Commissioner DeLoach said, if there is. Chairman Hair said, that's a good point.

Ms. Taylor asked, has the Board of Assessors indicated a willingness to immediately address this issue and remedy the lack of uniformity? Commissioner Jackel said, yes, we have. Commissioner DeLoach said, yes. Ms. Taylor said, failing that, what is the Commission prepared to do to represent the interests of the taxpayers of Chatham County in resolving the lack of uniformity? Commissioner Price said, the answer was yes to the question previous so that was a moot question just asked. Ms. Taylor said, I'm sorry, sir. Commissioner Price said, the answer was yes to the previous question so the question you just asked was a moot question. Ms. Taylor asked, has the Commission asked the State Revenue Commissioner, Jerry Jackson, to refuse to accept the County's digest pending the resolution of the uniformity matter? Chairman Hair said, not to my knowledge. Commissioner Price said, no. Ms. Taylor said, all right. Has the Commission received a response to the two-page questions we drafted for the Commission to ask the Board of Assessors?

Chairman Hair said, we have not received that to this point I do not believe, and I think we should receive that, and —, you were given a package of information that I received a copy of, and I think all the Commissioners received a copy of, but that was not the answers to your two-page questions. Ms. Taylor said, right. No, we received several pages of answers from other questions we directed directly to the Board of Assessors, but not the two pages that we presented to you. Chairman Hair said, that is correct. Chairman Hair recognized County Attorney Hart.

County Attorney Hart said, it's my understanding that the County Attorney's responded to the information S.T.O.P. has put forth. It's also my understanding Mr. Udinsky has also responded to the original booklet that was submitted. He's got the questions at this time. He has met with the Board of Assessors and I believe Mr. Felser is here to address part of that issue. Chairman Hair asked, do we know when that's going to be done? Commissioner DeLoach said, Paul [Felser] is going to speak to that. Chairman Hair asked, is he going to tell us when that —? Commissioner DeLoach said, yes, he'll talk to us about it.

Ms. Taylor said, all right. Has the Commission considered an independent audit of the Tax Assessor's office? Commissioner Jackel said, excuse me, if I may. Can I ask a question here? Ms. Taylor said, certainly.

Commissioner Jackel said, okay. I first would like to read this into the record. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October of 1999 I wrote you a letter and I said: Thank you for the facts and information. Aside from the cost, I am curious who would conduct the type of specialized audit. I'm not sure local CPA's firm could. Do you have any particular firm in mind? Ms. Taylor said, no, we do not. Commissioner Jackel said, okay. And then I said: What would be the parameters of the audit and how many years should the audit go back, and then I said —, let me read the whole thing into record. Ms. Taylor said, right. Commissioner Jackel said, should it review each parcel and how long would that take? You've charged the Chief Assessor and Board of Assessors of malfeasance. This is a very serious charge. Perhaps you mean misfeasance. If you mean malfeasance, I would like particular information and I will forward your charges of malfeasance to the District Attorney's office. If you mean misfeasance, I would still like to see the particular information in order that I can take steps to get this corrected. And then I said, appreciate hearing from you. I've had no response. Ms. Taylor said, correct. Commissioner Jackel asked, now do we —, do we examine each piece of property and how many years do we go back, and what would be the cost? We know what the cost it takes to run our Tax Assessor's office each year and they examine all the properties. So if someone comes in and runs an audit of all the properties, it's going to be somewhat a similar cost.

Ms. Taylor said, well, I wanted to let Lynda Harrell, who is a CPA —. Ms. Harrell said, retired. Ms. Taylor said, retired. She always reminds me of that —, answer those questions because those are out of my bailiwick.

Chairman Hair recognized Ms. Harrell.

Ms. Lynda Harrell said, we do not have a specific cost estimate. What you would need to do is to engage any public accounting firm that has a consulting side that is prepared to do performance or operational audit. That's what this is. As far as setting the scope of the audit, I think that would be fairly easy. The starting point would be the 1999 sales ratio analysis which showed that over a third of the tax neighborhoods were not properly valued under the laws of Georgia. That's where I would start if I were doing the job. I would look at the State Auditor's Report that he does every year for the tax digest. That's another document that shows that there's a —, and out of that report there were 37% of the parcels that did not have a sales ratio within the range tolerated by the laws of Georgia. So there still are documents where you can go and set your scope, make a normal random selection of items to be —, parcels to be reviewed. You do not have to review all the parcels, you just have to have a representative sample.

Commissioner Jackel said, excuse me. What would you be satisfied with? One out of 10, one out of 20? I mean, we go to spend this money and you say, well, we didn't look at enough properties. Ms. Harrell said, no, what you're going to find is —, you really don't need to look at any —, if you look at the sales ratio, the sales ratio and the two pages of questions we asked y'all to answer, have the Tax Assessor's office answer, will point you in the direction of understanding that there's a lack of uniformity, and as I told you before, there are parcels in this County that have not have a visit from the Tax Assessor's office since 1987. That is the date of the last appraisal when you go into the system. You see 1987, you see 1990, you see 1991. You look at my house you see 1999, okay. That's all I'm saying, is we're all not given the same opportunity to be reviewed. That is something that can be fixed very easily. I mean, this audit could almost be done —, I mean, I imagine the scope of this audit would be set very quickly and the work will be done and the real time would be spent devising procedures to make sure that every parcel is looked at with [inaudible] and given the same opportunity to be reviewed, that every parcel is on the computer system, that there are not parcels sitting out there on override, but all the parcels are at least treated fairly. Now how the evaluation ends up, your house how it's valued versus my house is a whole different story. All I'm talking about is that we ought to be looked at with the same frequency and we ought to be —, one tax neighborhood should not have a sales ratio that is significantly lower than another, or higher even. We all ought to be within a very close range of each other, especially when you consider, and this is the part people forget. When they sit down to do the valuation as of January 1<sup>st</sup> '99, they're not doing evaluations to guess what the property will sell for in '99. They are taking the 1998 sales price and establishing a '99 value based on a transaction that has already occurred in the past. So in my mind it's a 20/20 hindsight valuation as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, and it seems to me you ought to be able to get closer than—. The State Auditor's Report I have there, I have a parcel in there that has a 15% sales ratio, I have one in there that has a 58% sales ratio, I've got another one 16, 52. I've got —, and I do have some at 40, exactly 40, but you should not have such wide swings in the variation because if you're being valued at 15% of your fair market value and I'm being valued at 40% of my fair market value, I'm very upset. You're very happy and I'm very upset.

Commissioner Jackel said, I understand that, but my question was the scope of the audit, and I think you've answered that. Ms. Harrell said, okay. Now as far as malfeasance or misfeasance, I'm not a lawyer so I can't address nuances there, but what I can tell you is that the law requires that all our properties be valued at fair market value and that we all individual taxpayers be treated the same. There's the issue of proportionality, uniformity, equity, whatever you want to call it. It's in the law, and when you have a sales ratio that's 15% and I have one that's 40%, it's not being done. And the law talks about it at the individual level, not at the tax neighborhood level and not at the digest level. It talks about between you and me as individual taxpayers we should only pay our share, and that's what we're talking about.

Commissioner Jackel said, I wasn't disagreeing with that, but the facts I received from Ms. Taylor and when she was up here last time specifically addressed malfeasance. Now my understanding is —. Ms. Harrell said, well, she's not a lawyer either. Commissioner Jackel said, well, that's all right. You know, you come up here and request very specific information and complain about not getting all the answers you want. I write over a month ago and get no response and something I think when you assassinate someone's character determines a response, and when you accuse our Assessors of malfeasance, now my understanding is —. Ms. Harrell said, we didn't do that. All we said was —. Commissioner Jackel said, well, I've got it right here in her letter. Ms. Harrell said, all we said was the facts show that a huge percentage of parcels are not valued properly, and in our mind that makes us think someone is not doing their job. Whoever that they is is up to y'all to find out. All we're telling you is that the facts show that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Commissioner Jackel said, we're not saying that there may not be a problem, and I agree there may be some problems and things to be addressed, but what bothered me was coming up here, and I understand you're not lawyers, but when you accuse someone of malfeasance, you're committing —, of a crime. You're not saying that maybe they didn't get around to do this or they made an error or whatever. Malfeasance is you set out to do something wrong, so that's why I —. Ms. Harrell said, well, we don't —. Commissioner Jackel said, that's why I specifically asked in the letter was it malfeasance or was it misfeasance.

Ms. Taylor said, excuse me, sir. We were not accusing anyone. We were quoting what the law says in the Code that —, of the possibility of malfeasance. We were asking you to determine whether there was in fact any malfeasance in it. Commissioner Jackel said, I thought you had said that had already happened, that there had been malfeasance. Ms. Taylor said, no, no. Commissioner Jackel said, I thought that's what your letter said. Ms. Taylor said, no, no. It is in the law and in the Code book that that's what needs to be proved. We were not accusing anyone of it, but we were asking you to prove it, and we asked for this audit and to find out whether there is any malfeasance. We didn't accuse anybody of any malfeasance. Commissioner Jackel said, that's not what I heard. Ms. Taylor said, you obviously misread our letter and all we were doing was quoting the law and not accusing anyone of anything. We do have a handout —.

Commissioner Rivers asked, could I ask Ms. Harrell a question? Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Rivers. Ms. Taylor said, yes sir. Commissioner Rivers asked, Ms. Harrell, is an audit necessary? You went through and seemed to have found a lot of inequities and discrepancies. Did you call that to the attention of the Tax Assessor's office. Ms. Harrell said, they know. Commissioner Rivers asked, what was their response to that? Commissioner DeLoach said, we've got them up here, okay. Chairman Hair said, I mean, let her answer the question. I mean, I think she can answer. Ms. Harrell said, we have not been to them again after our initial two visits to them. They were very unreceptive to us. They didn't want to hear us, but I will tell you a funny story in regards to —, they did listen to us on one point. And we talked about this tax neighborhood the last time we were here. It was Tax Neighborhood 1022 Abercorn Heights had not had a change. Most of the properties in that neighborhood had not had a change in value in three years, okay. No change in value. We went to that meeting on August 19<sup>th</sup> and raised that issue because one of the members of the Board of Assessors happens to live in that neighborhood. All right? So we raised the issue, how come this tax neighborhood hasn't been revalued? Why is it still on override? All right? Well, lo and behold, starting September 1<sup>st</sup> the Tax Assessor's office started a reassessment of that tax neighborhood. Now this —, and it's ongoing right now, it's not finished. This piece of property was valued for three years at \$131,650, all right. For three years, unchanged. I went into the Tax Assessor's system in the middle of October to see what changes had been made. That property was valued at \$135,000. I went in there the end of October. That value was now \$145,000 and I went in there two days ago and that same property that's been valued at \$131,650 for three years is now valued at \$165,500. A 28% increase in one year. Now do you think the real estate in that neighborhood went up 28% in one year? I don't think so. Do you think maybe the properties in that neighborhood have been undervalued for a long period of time? Yes, I do think that, and that is just one of 160-something neighborhoods that we discovered that were improperly valued when we looked at the 1999 sales ratio study, and that is just one example and we have hundreds and hundreds and thousands of examples of the same thing. Where I'm in a neighborhood that's on the computer system, so I get looked at automatically every year whether anybody comes to see me or not, but where the computer is cranking out the numbers. Okay? If you're in a neighborhood that's on override, you do not automatically get an increase, and that's what was happening here. So if I live in a neighborhood that's being reassessed every year, then I'm paying a portion of that tax for the property that is not being changed each year as it should because I doubt that a 28% increase in that neighborhood for one year is reasonable, especially given the fact that over the past eight tax years that parcel had only gone up 16%. So all I'm telling you is that we're not all being looked at the same, with the same frequency.

Commissioner Rivers said, well, maybe not and I realize we had this problem some years ago, and I was under the impression that it was all being corrected out and evidently it isn't so I'll just wait to hear from the Tax Assessor.

Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Saussy.

Commissioner Saussy said, Ms. Harrell, it seems to me, and it's not just S.T.O.P., but I think it's a number of people, that come to me and asked about this situation and showed me some figures. It seems to me that what you're talking about basically is the uniformity of assessments, and I think you're right. I think we do need to look at this seriously and get the answers that you're talking about, and I think we are trying to do that. I know that things have been sent to the Assessor's office and we've asked questions about that. Time is somewhat of the essence, but it does take some time to get these things. It's not that we are not working on it. We definitely are, and the things that you have come up with are really astounding.

Chairman Hair said, and if I could add to that, Commissioner Saussy, I think that what you're requesting is reasonable. I've read the two pages of questions. I don't think there's anything on there that's not —, while it may take a long time to collect some of the data, I think they're reasonable requests and I personally don't have a problem with making sure that we get that —, that they get that data. Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Jackel.

Commissioner Jackel said, I have concerns about your request that we get rid of all the Tax Assessors and start over and —. Ms. Harrell said, the Board of Assessors, the ones you appoint. Commissioner Jackel said, the Board of Assessors. Ms. Harrell said, and get some new people. Commissioner Jackel said, well, I have some concerns about that. One is once we —, this group and any subsequent group we would appoint has to go to the school in Athens and be trained and they're going to receive the same training this group does and they're going to come back and they're going to do it the same way because that's the way they've been trained, and also this group that we have in place has been passed by the State Auditors. Every time that they've come down here, the State Auditors have said you guys are within the parameters of what's right. Ms. Harrell said, and any —. Commissioner Jackel said, so if we send another group up to Athens and they come back, they're going to do it the same way and they're going to be told that they were doing it right by the State Auditors. So I think we would just be spinning our wheels if we did that. Ms. Harrell said, well, let me tell you, we're talking to you about this, but y'all aren't the only people that we're speaking with. We are talking with Eric Johnson and Burke Day right now about a legislative solution to this because I feel that after looking at the new manual from the Department of Revenue, the new appraisal manual that goes into effect the first of the year, and looking at some of the rules and regulations, and I've had this conversation with Larry Griggers a couple of times. I finally got him to budge a little. I don't necessarily think that all the procedures and policies that are in place by the Department of Revenue, which are the ones we have to follow locally, I don't think they have everything in place to meet the requirements of the law, and we talked to them about 48-5-306, which is the one that talks about we're supposed to be taxed the same at the individual level and, you know, that's where it really gets into the —, where the rubber meets the road for us taxpayers and the ones that have to write the check. I don't really think that out of their 13 statistical tests that they do, I don't —, they have the —, their [inaudible] sort of addresses a little bit, but it really doesn't get down to the taxpayer level, which is what the law says, and I think I'm going to work with Eric —, because that was a question I've raised with Eric [Johnson]. I said, what do you do

when y'all pass laws and a state agency or department implements rules and regulations and they don't exactly meet the spirit or the intent of the law, so we're working on that. The other thing we've done is we've asked —, through Eric Johnson, asked Thurbert Baker, our Attorney General, to issue an opinion and to define for us the word proportionate. The word fair market value is defined in the law; the word proportionate is not defined in the law. So we have asked him, and there's been no court case to define it, so we have asked him to please go in and define that for us.

Commissioner Jackel said, okay, so if these people are performing as they've been taught to by the State, which the State requires them to go to that school, and they're performing their jobs and been passed by the State Auditors, who said they're within the parameters, I don't see how we could properly —. Ms. Harrell said, we're not within the parameters because I've got the State Auditor's report there from —, for the 1998 sales ratio where he took 3,942 samples of sales transactions in this County in 1997 and they audited them. They looked up the sale, they made sure it was a good sale, you know. They checked the whole thing out, and they did 3,942 of these things, but we had almost 1,500 of those end up with a sales ratio of less than 36.0 or more than 44.0%, so I talked to Jim Harmon up in the State Auditor's office and I said, you know, if you've got 37% of the parcels in this that are outliers, as far as I'm concerned, how did you approve this? He said, I am —, under law, I am only required to make sure that the tax digest as a whole falls within those parameters. He said, the scope of how I work does not go down to the taxpayer level. I said, but the law does, and he said, well, it's not my job. So when you go to the Department of Revenue and you have the same conversation with them and they said, well, it might be my job, but I can't get anybody to —, and that's why I'm going back to Eric [Johnson] to say, okay, this is what, you know, Sections 1 and 6 says, then, by God, let's have some rules and regulations that make sure we enforce that particular section of the law. And you're right, I don't think we necessarily have that, but what's happened, I think, is that they get so hung up in their statistics and they get so hung up in the nitty-gritty details of the 86 ways you can depreciate something that they haven't stood back from the whole thing and looked and said, yes, we've got all these statistics, we've got all these rules and regulations, but how do I have 37% of my parcels with a sales ratio that doesn't fall within the range? Nobody has asked themselves that question, and that was the thing that hit me in the head so hard was how can they say this is right if I've got 37% of them that are outliers. And that's really what brought up here was, you know, this can't be right if some of these are out —, you know, just because it adds up, tax digest level, there's something going on down here at the individual taxpayer level that isn't working out. And that's really —, that's why I came to y'all.

Chairman Hair said, Commissioner Odell and then Commissioner DeLoach.

Commissioner Odell said, I've just got one or two questions. Jon [Hart], you looked at the two-page list of S.T.O.P. The information requested, is that information mandated under the Freedom of Information Act? Mr. Hart said, no sir, it is not. The information requested in there is information that will have to be either calculated or created by the Assessor's office. At least based on my conversations with Mr. Felser and Mr. Udinsky. In other words, there's not anywhere you can go in and say here's this document. They're going to have to go in there and use their database and create that information.

Chairman Hair asked, is that —, I'm not sure you answered his question though. Commissioner Jackel said, yes, he did. Chairman Hair said, you were answering a process question, how it would take to get it, but his question was is it covered under the Freedom of Information? County Attorney Hart said, well, the general information in the Assessor's office is open to the general public, as it always has been. Yes, but what the difference in the law is it says that if you have a public body and you have the information, say I have this public record here and I'm asked for that, I have to disclose it, but if I don't have that public record, I don't have to go out and create a public record in order to give it to you. That's the distinction. It's, you know, it's up to the Commission, whatever the Commission chooses to do.

Chairman Hair said, Commissioner Odell has some questions and then Commissioner DeLoach.

Commissioner Odell said, my concern is if it's not mandated by the Freedom of Information Act, do we have a policy in place regarding requests that fall outside of the bounds of the Freedom of Information Act which would cause a department substantial amount of work and effort. I think that the information should be made available to those who would seek it, but one way to hold taxes down is to hold down the costs, and I'm not certain if we address this request if we could —, we received ten others that want the data massaged in ten other different ways that we are then bound to massage that data ten other different ways. My concern as stated here is that if there is a claim of malfeasance, then hopefully that would be discovered by the annual audit. If that has not been discovered by the annual audit and if it's just a conjecture as to it might be a possibility, I'm really —, I agree in part with what Mr. Jackel has said. I'd like to see us provide information that is within the system, but I'm wondering just as S.T.O.P. sees the need to have —. Ms. Harrell said, this information isn't for me. This is information for y'all to look at. It's totally —, I mean, it's totally separate from what I presented to you. These are questions that I think you should ask to get to the root of the problem. This has —, I don't want y'all —, y'all don't have to ever tell me what the answers are to this if you don't want because I think after the work that I have done coming at it the hard way ten minutes at a time on line, okay, if y'all could sit down and have someone give you written reports for these facts, you would see what the problem is immediately. If someone told you how many properties have not had a change of value notice since 1996, if they could tell you by year how many properties haven't had an appraisal in '87, '88, '89, '90, '91, all of a sudden you would start seeing that there is a discontinuity in the way taxation, property taxation is handled in this County. This is not for me, this is for you. Chairman Hair said, no, no, I understand the gist of your question. The gist of your question is that the properties are taxed in the County basically aren't fair. There's some property taxes that are taxed very often and there are other properties that go a span of three or more years and not being even [inaudible]. I

understand that. Ms. Harrell said, I've got some that go back eight years with the value unchanged in the Tax Assessor's system on the history screen for eight years. Commissioner Odell said, thank you.

Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner DeLoach.

Commissioner DeLoach said, if I could, I'd like to get Paul [Felser] up there and ask Paul [Felser] a few questions concerning [inaudible] —. Chairman Hair said, all right, let's make sure we've called all the —. Do I have any more questions of this group? Okay. Commissioner Murray said, I've got some, but I'm going to wait on mine. Commissioner DeLoach said, can I make one comment while Paul [Felser] gets up there. Chairman Hair said, okay. Commissioner DeLoach said, the issue that —.

Chairman Hair asked, are you folks finished? Ms. Taylor said, we just have a —. Ms. Harrell said, I didn't know if you need another copy of the questions or not. Chairman Hair said, we've got those. Ms. Taylor said, we just have a copy of our questions this morning. This use is not for us individually. This is for the entire Chatham County. I know that the current Tax Assessor has been in, what, six years, and we're not —. Excuse me, we would prefer not to change the Board of Assessors, but all we're asking is that they do their job correctly and what we got from them was, well, we might know what our job is until this new —, rules and regulations came out January 1<sup>st</sup>. They told us they had a retreat last March to figure out what they were supposed to do. Now all we're asking is let's do it and do it fairly across the board uniformly and get it right because you come back to us and say you're short of money. If these tax assessments were done properly and especially I would suggest that you look at the commercial properties in this County that have not been reassessed in many, many years, you'd have enough money. You'd have excess money, and stop going to the taxpayer, the little homeowner. We have had members of our group who are actually pulling up stakes and moving from Chatham County because they can't afford your taxes, and all we want is fairness. Thank you very much for your time.

Chairman Hair said, thank you, Ms. Harrell. We appreciate it. Thank you very much.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Received as information. [NOTE: See Item VII-1.]

=====

## **VII. COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS**

### **1. TAX ASSESSOR ISSUES - PAUL FELSER (COMMISSIONER DELOACH)**

Chairman Hair said, I'd like to recognize Commissioner DeLoach to introduce Mr. Felser.

Commissioner DeLoach said, Paul [Felser], come on up. Let me make a point that I think sums up this whole issue right —.

[NOTE: At this point, Chairman Hair interrupted to introduce the Youth Commissioners in attendance.]

Commissioner DeLoach said, the main issue and the importance of this thing going forward today and speaking on this and making sure everything is done right is that the bill that we developed here at the County Commission and that was passed by the Stephens-Day Bill goes into effect this coming year. From that point on, nobody will have their taxes increased. So if the property is either overvalued or undervalued, when we pass this law it will be set that way from now on. So it is imperative that all these properties and all of us on the Commission realize this and we know the importance, and it has to be done before this thing takes a uniform step and we don't tax anybody anymore, that we make sure that all taxes, whether they're too high or too low or just right, that these taxes are set by the rate to where I feel like you're paying your fair share, you feel like I'm paying my fair share, regardless of where we live or what we do on what we have. Now that's the key issue here and it's the most important thing that needs to take place before this bill passes is that every property, and if it has to be tied to the Stephens-Day Bill the way it say, we won't pass the Stephens-Day, but all properties must be assessed at a current level before they take effect. Whatever we've got to do to make sure that all properties are within 10% either way equal, then that's what we need to do before this takes effect or otherwise somebody is going to carrying a load, another person won't be, and it needs to be an issue where it's uniform. So that's the issue here. That's the main issue. [Applause.] Now once we get past that, and whatever it takes, and this is the issue, we set the funding for this group here. They'll have —, only have the dollars that we feel like that is necessary. A lot of times we hold back the dollars from them because we don't want them running around assessing properties. You know, we figure if we don't pay them or don't get as many people out there, we're going to be able to not have taxes raised every year. Well, when you do that, you end up with, like they say, it's not uniform because you've got George trying to cover half the County and Sally covering the other half and they're running around and look at a property and they throw a value on it and they move on.

Well, we will have —, whatever we've got to do about the bill to make the thing uniform before this thing goes into effect I think we need to do, and then we need to give it to the Assessors so that they can do their job, which I don't think they've necessarily been able to because I haven't wanted to fund the thing. I mean, I don't know about everybody else, but I'm not thrilled about the Assessor. I mean, I just don't get excited about him coming around. So I haven't been real good about funding the old boy, so I apologize for that, but whatever we need to do to make this thing uniform going into the Stephens-Day Bill, we've got to do so that everybody is equal going into it because it'll never change from that point on. The only time it'll change is if that property sells, so it's important to each taxpayer to realize this issue, and everybody on the Commission understands that and they want that to happen. I want the S.T.O.P. people to know that.

Mr. Paul Felser asked, is there's a specific question, Eddie [DeLoach], that you wanted me to address first, or —? Commissioner DeLoach said, pull the mikes up, Paul [Felser], and just have at what you're going to say. Mr. Felser said, okay. Let me begin by addressing some of the general points that were raised and some of my personal feelings as the current Chairman of the Board of Assessors. I am your appointee, I have been your appointee for approximately a couple of years. This is the —, this year I am serving as Chairman of the Board. I began this year before I knew Ms. Taylor, before I knew Ms. Harrell. I began this year, my term, with a goal of bringing about an inside review of what we do and how we do it because I felt that was important. When I came to the Board, I understood these issues had been issues in the public concern for quite some time and I wanted to be a part of looking at what we do and seeing what things we can do to improve it. I support the general purposes and goals of S.T.O.P. and groups like them. I think that we should have open information, freedom of information. I think that we should know how our properties are being taxed. I support that goal. In the position that you've appointed me, I have a position of administering, as Eddie [DeLoach] said, the funds that you've given us to do the job that we do. I also have the responsibility of performing that work in accordance with state law as we understand it, and what did we do at the beginning of the year? We began a policy review, a item-by-item policy review which I requested that Mr. Udinsky initiate, top down, of what we do and how we go about doing it. We have just completed that. We have made changes in what we do. We have made improvements in what we do. We will begin to see some of the results of that in this coming year. I was not a part of what came before me. I can act on what I am attempting to accomplish right now. We cannot produce the information that was requested by S.T.O.P. by simply pushing one or two buttons and printing out a report. My understanding of the Open Records Act request is that in consultation with counsel that we are not obligated, as you would not be obligated, to go in and produce documents that don't exist. That's not a sufficient answer. I asked Mr. Udinsky to tell us what it would take to produce this information, what it would cost and what would the man hours be. I have a memo. I don't know if that memo has been circulated to this Board. That memo Mr. Udinsky can address more specifically and certainly make copies for the Board. Suffice it to say that it will take a sufficient number of man hours and personnel to do that. It is not a simple task. These questions are quite involved, quite detailed. They are the subject matter of what one would conduct in the form of an audit. My thought was to request Mr. Udinsky to place that item to produce this type of information, to place that item as an item in our budget for the next six months and the next cycle of our budget and ask that that be approved so that we can fund it, approve it and provide that information. That goes back to the point that we can only do what we have funds to do with. Right now, I know I've circulated a letter to the Board, we are unfunded at present for the State mandates for the Governor's legislation, the taxpayer bill-of-rights, and we are trying to work with staff to work that into our budget. To accommodate this additional requirement would tax us beyond our limit. We cannot act irresponsible, we cannot begin to produce information, albeit it for a very important public purpose, beyond what the Open Records Act request requires because how do we treat the request that comes from the next group and the next one and the next one after that? I want to be responsible how we provide the information. I think the only sensible way to do that is to put it in the budget, fund it and let's get the information out.

Mr. Felser said, I would like to point out that with regard to an audit being conducted, I was under the impression that the Governor had sent personnel down to conduct an audit. I'm not a professional appraiser, I'm an attorney. I don't think anyone on this panel is a professional appraiser. That was not your goal when you appointed lay persons to this board. You did not expect that you appointed professional appraisers. We are like the rest of this community, we are attempting to perform a service to this community, to this board, to the public, and do it within the best of our abilities. When we receive information from staff, just like when you receive information from staff, there has to be some level of confidence in that. You all have to have some level of confidence in the staff information that you receive. One of the hopes that I was looking for when we had the Governor's audit, which I welcomed, was to find out from professionals if there were problem areas which we did need to address. Unless we fund an independent audit, which my understanding is that's what the Governor's audit was and why would we need to duplicate that, then if you were to fund an independent audit, that would be the only other way of allowing assessors who are appointed lay persons, like yourself as elected officials, to have the knowledge and information to question more particularly and to make improvements if improvements are necessary. So I welcomed the Governor's audit. If you all feel that we need to duplicate that, so be it. I'm happy to have the information with which to do the job, but I have to have the information to do the job. That's why I think it's a good idea if we put it in the budget so that I can have that information to see where a problem area is. Otherwise, just like yourself, unless you come upon a particular problem or come upon an anomaly because a taxpayer provides you with a specific piece of information, you don't have a way of questioning your staff effectively. I'm sure you all have run into that on occasion yourselves.

Chairman Hair asked, could I ask a question, Mr. Felser? Mr. Felser said, sure. Chairman Hair asked, are you saying that all of the answers to these questions require extra budget or just one or two of these require extra budget? I —, it seems —, I mean, as I look at this list —, I mean, are there some questions on here and some percent of these questions could be answered without any extra budget? Are you saying that it takes an extra budget to answer any of these questions? Mr. Felser said, my information from the board that I received, Mr. Chairman, was that collectively there was a great deal of time and expense that would be required in order to answer the questions. Is there one or two questions

that could be answered reasonably without a drastic additional expenditure of budget, I'll let Mr. Udinsky try to address that. I cannot address it that specifically. There may be, and we —. Chairman Hair said, it just seems to me that there's some —, you know, we should take these questions and the ones that don't require extra funds or budget, we should go ahead and answer them, and those that do, you know, maybe put that in there as a budget request, but I can't imagine that all of these would require a budget item. Mr. Felser said, I have no objection to that and I would be happy to work with Mr. Udinsky to try and accomplish that. Let me give one example that relates to what Commissioner DeLoach had pointed out. We have been converting to a computer based system. We cannot convert every property in Chatham County in one year to a computer based system. Some properties are under the old system, some properties are under the computer based system. If we were funded to do it all in one year, I would hazard to guess that would be an enormous sum of money. What is reasonable in terms of getting that accomplished with the manpower that we have? I know that there's been a study that you had commissioned of our department, how we're operated, how we're funded, how we are manned and staffed, and you all have the results of that, and I believe that may be something that, as Commissioner DeLoach said, if we have to bite the bullet to serve the public, then that's something that you as our representatives will have to consider. But be that as it may, we have a staff that can go out and only convert so many parcels of property a year to a new system. That may very well create some anomalies.

Commissioner Rivers said, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Hair said, Commissioner Odell has a question for you. Commissioner Rivers said, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioner Odell said, my only concern is, following up on the Chairman's question, we have a data system, we have some system —, some properties on the old system, some on the new system. I cannot believe that we cannot merge in some way those two systems to at least answer some of the questions, and I think what the Chairman's question is, Paul [Felser], is that while it may take additional funds to answer all of the questions, some of the questions can be answered with our existing system, and if that's the case, then we need to cut to the chase and say we can answer your number six, seven and eight with the existing system and provide that answer. To —, for the additional eight to ten, we can't —, here's what it's going to involve, this is what the cost is going to be, but I cannot believe and I again read through this, but some of the system, Paul [Felser] —, some of the questions we cannot provide an instant answer to. Mr. Felser said, forgive me if I didn't answer the Chairman's question more directly. I thought I said I support that, that I would —. Commissioner DeLoach said, you did, but my own question is, having said you support it, when then can we provide it? Mr. Felser said, the answer to that would be —. Commissioner Odell asked, soon? Mr. Felser said, the answer to that would be that I would have to defer to Mr. Udinsky. Commissioner Odell asked, can we get Mr. Udinsky to answer?

Chairman Hair said, and also, Mr. Felser, if that's true, then why haven't those answers been provided prior to now? [Applause.] Chairman Hair said, I mean, I —, it seems to me the ones that could have been answered very easily, we would have gone ahead and answered those and said, okay, I can answer questions for the first, three, seven and nine, but the others are going to require budget, why —. Mr. Felser said, Mr. Chairman, none of these can be answered easily. None of these can be answered without the expenditure of time. It's a judgment call in terms of what additional time do we consider that we can absorb, and I'm happy to make that commitment in terms of viewing these questions as Open Records Act requests, and why they have not been answered up until this point, none of them in my opinion, after consulting with counsel, none of them are Open Records Act requests. Chairman Hair said, all right, I think it's [inaudible] on that. Commissioner Rivers has a question and then Commissioner Murray.

Commissioner Odell asked, can we have Mr. Udinsky answer the question that was deferred? And the question, to restate here, was we have two systems, i.e., we can merge those systems. We may not be able to answer all of the questions, understandably, but there are some of the questions if we are unable to answer them, then I'm concerned about whether or not we have this really great system because some of these questions ought to be able to be answered quickly, simply, and we ought to provide them the information. Chairman Hair said, absolutely.

Mr. Udinsky said, let me answer three things. First of all, on the October 22nd presentation, the only thing that I was given, and I actually got it from Mr. Hart, was a packet eight or ten pages long that I assumed was the entire packet. I responded to that in about a seven page memo. This list of questions didn't come to light as far as I'm concerned until I got a call from you, Mr. Chairman, asking me about those questions. I didn't know anything about them and frankly I called the County Attorney's office. They didn't know anything about them. I didn't actually receive the questions until I got them from the Clerk of Commission and I think that might have been Tuesday of this week, so the fact that we haven't responded yet, really I thought that we had responded. But, at any rate, there really aren't two computer systems, or two systems. Every property is on the new system. We have more data about some properties on the new system that we have about other properties, but all the properties are there. So, so it's not a question of merging two systems. The question is writing computer programs or queries into the current system to answer the question. The level of expertise that that would take to do that and the time that it would take to do it. All the questions answerable from the existing computer system, the answer is yes. How much time will it take to do that? Now we —, there's a very limited number of people in this County who can do it on their own. Very limited. If we hire our consultants, our computer —, the people that supply the system to do it, they're going to charge us frankly \$165 an hour. That's their billing rate. It's going to be much cheaper for us to use the resource that we have here in the County to do it ourselves. But that takes time away from the other responsibilities, and that's what my memo addressed. Some of the questions can be answered in as little as six or eight hours. That may seem an awful lot of time, but if any of you are familiar with writing computer programs or queries, that's a very short period of time. Other questions take significantly more than that, and I've got a memo that I've addressed each question and I've addressed it in terms of an estimate of time and I think the questions need some clarification, but assuming they can be clarified, the

least I think was like four or five hours. Some questions took more than 40 hours, and that's what my memo to the Board of Assessors addressed.

Chairman Hair said, okay. I've got a question there, Gary [Udinsky], because I don't understand what you just said. The very first question is: How many parcels in how many tax neighborhoods are there in Chatham County and what is the 1/1/99 tax value? I can't believe that's going to take four hours. Mr. Udinsky said, it's going to take five hours to write —, five to seven hours to write the query, verify that the results are correct, and then run it. That's, and that is a —, not a long period of time. As I said, you can —. Chairman Hair asked, so you don't know how many tax neighborhoods there are in Chatham County right now? Mr. Udinsky said, certainly I do. Chairman Hair said, well, that's the question: How many parcels in how many tax neighborhoods are there in Chatham County? Mr. Udinsky said, but that's not the question. The question is how many neighborhoods are there, how many residential properties are there in each one of those neighborhoods, and then what's the total value of each one of those properties in each one of those neighborhoods. Chairman Hair said, right. Mr. Udinsky said, that takes it —, I don't know that number off the top of my head and I don't know it for each individual neighborhood. I would have to write a computer query to do that, which is very doable.

Commissioner Saussy asked, would that not be a valuable tool for you in the future? Mr. Udinsky said, we don't look at it in that light. Commissioner Saussy asked, why not? Chairman Hair said, that's my point. Mr. Udinsky said, because the value of a neighborhood —. Commissioner Price said, listen to what he's saying, guys. Mr. Udinsky said, isn't important. The value of the properties are. The total value in a neighborhood, the fact is they're going to vary. Of course, a neighborhood in downtown Savannah might be as a lump sum total very much more valuable than a neighborhood in East Chatham. Commissioner Saussy asked, but those values in that neighborhood are what you go buy to set an assessment, right? Mr. Udinsky said, and we do run a ratio to set —. Commissioner Saussy said, so we do have to know about the whole neighborhood. Mr. Udinsky said, okay, now you're asking a different question. Commissioner Saussy said, so that would be a valuable tool. Mr. Udinsky said, and you're asking a different question, and that report is available. It's a thousand pages. They can come in and have it today. It's a sales ratio study, it gives you every sale in every neighborhood, broken down by neighborhood, and it analyzes those sales and those properties. That's available today. Okay, and that's done for every neighborhood and that is a very valuable tool, and that is something we use on a regular basis so we run it very frequently.

Chairman Hair said, let's go in order. Commissioner Rivers and then Commissioner Murray.

Commissioner Rivers said, Mr. Chairman, seemingly the order of the day is uniformity. Chairman Hair said, that's correct. Commissioner Rivers said, all of these questions that we're asking to me they could be answered and given to them, but what is it going to cost and how long is it going to take to bring uniformity to this County prior to the year 2001? Do we have —, is it feasible? Do you have enough time? Do we have to bring in a consultant? How much is it going to cost? Does this Board have the will to authorize them to go forward with that? These are the things that I would need to know in order to make some kind of a decision there as to whether we provide them with the people to get this done, but uniformity is the question. [Applause.] I mean, and if we don't do it and if we don't get it done then, hey, there's still going to be people out there crying that my property is here and my property is there, so I would like to request that we get from the Board of Assessors as soon as possible what would it take to bring this County into conformity and how long —. Chairman Hair said, okay.

Mr. Felser said, Mr. Chairman, if I could address Commissioner Rivers' question. Chairman Hair said, yes sir. Mr. Felser said, Joe [Rivers], the question presupposes that —, and I don't mean to say that we do or we don't, it presupposes that we don't have uniformity. Maybe we don't. It's possible we do, but the question presupposes that we don't. What I wanted to have is information from credible sources because I don't want to simply want to rely on my own staff under the circumstances because they are legitimate questions being raised in the public and amongst the Board members. What I was hoping to have is some outside information from the Governor's audit in order to hopefully answer the question: Is there a uniformity problem? If so, where is it and how do we need to address it? because otherwise the only thing we have to fall back on is when we submit the digest to the State and the standards are applied under the law for analyzing that. They tell us we don't have a uniformity problem.

Commissioner Rivers said, you know, Mr. Felser, it's good to look at the governmental audit, and that's fine, and I've had problems with governmental audits of various agencies because the time frame in which they do it in is not always an adequate time frame, but if Ms. Harrell could look and see the disparity within ratios of a community and the disparity within properties within communities, then there's got to be something wrong if it's widespread. Now, the question is how widespread is it, and I think Mr. Udinsky is enough of a professional and staff-wise that they could go in and look across the neighborhoods and see that disparity. I mean, she used a good example that, you know, I just don't think —, I think we're complicating some thing that we could probably look at and access and —, by neighborhood just look at one. Take one, as an example, look through it and say do we have uniformity here. I don't know what the barometer is that you're measuring it by, but certainly there's got to be some disparity out there.

Mr. Felser said, Joe [Rivers], I'm like you. In each instance I don't know what the standard is that we're going to measure all of these things by and I'm happy to ask the question. I don't want to presuppose —, I don't want you to understand me as saying that I disagree with what you're asking. I'm happy to do that and we have been asking those questions at our board meetings, and we are making progress with these questions. We are moving forward with this stuff, but when Ms. Harrell comes to the microphone and gives you an example, just because she says it's so doesn't make it so, and that's

one of the things that I —, just because someone says there are hundreds and thousands and then that's repeated by everyone thereafter that there are hundreds and thousands, I don't know that that's so and I haven't received information that's so. The information that's been faxed to me by Ms. Harrell on various occasions, I've had Mr. Udinsky analyze that and look at that and I've read the responses to that. Those particular examples in each instance had legitimate explanations so I can't speak to the hundreds and thousands, I haven't seen that. In terms of us being receptive, by the way, to the S.T.O.P. group, we've been very receptive to the S.T.O.P. group. Normally, I get a fax from Ms. Taylor and I turn it over to Mr. Udinsky and I get onto his back and we respond. In this instance I did not get faxed the questions that we're here today to talk about and Mr. Udinsky's explanation is a very accurate one as far as when we received that information. There was a meeting that we had with S.T.O.P. We gave them an enormous amount of time and I don't know where Ms. Harrell says that we were not receptive because I don't believe she was at that meeting.

Commissioner Rivers asked, Mr. Udinsky, can I ask you a question? Let's assume that we do have an ordinance if that's required. How long would that audit take in your estimation [inaudible] be done previously based on your experience? Mr. Udinsky said, Mr. Audit the office based on the substandards that are set through state statute and the rules that support those statutes. Then it will take a relatively short period of time and, in fact, the department of revenue does that on a very regular basis. They statistically review us every year and then every third year they do a more in-depth audit, but I've got to be honest with you, that's not what I'm hearing being asked from the public. They're asking for a more in-depth detailed parcel-level audit, and that could take a relatively long period of time. So I don't know how to answer your question. The question probably —, probably it would take way longer than we think it might take —, might should take, depending on the level that I know the research takes to respond to the questions I've been asked and responded to. Commissioner Rivers said, okay. Let me ask you this. Under the guidelines that you have now, how long would it take for you to bring uniformity to the whole County? Mr. Udinsky said, Joe [Rivers], I've got to tell you, based on the statutes and rules now, there is uniformity. Uniformity exists today, okay, and has existed for a number of years, a very long number of years. I can't tell you when —, when the numbers that the Department of Revenue uses to measure uniformity, when they have ever been out. Commissioner Rivers said, let me ask you this. There was some information given here this morning that there were some properties that were not viewed since 1987, there were properties that weren't reviewed since 1990. There has been no changes in those neighborhoods. That's what I want to see. There has been no change, no sale or anything that transpired in those neighborhoods. There has been no —, nobody has fixed their houses or anything like that. Everything has remained the same. Is that possible? Mr. Udinsky said, that's not exactly what I heard, but it —, it is possible. Just because a property is reviewed, it doesn't mean its value changes. Okay, that's the first thing we've got to get straight here. Values don't change just because you do a review. So we could review properties and have no value change. That's number one. Number two is the property valuation system that we currently have is sales driven. If you don't have sales in a neighborhood, it's extremely difficult to come up with a value. Now we're moving towards a cost driven system. So we're moving away from a sales driven system to a cost driven system because you always have cost data. Now, if you don't have sales and you don't have current cost data, it's very difficult to make a value change. You can review those neighborhoods, and we do. We review them every single year, but if there are no sales, you can't make a decision. Or if you've got, let's say, a neighborhood that has a hundred properties in it and you have two sales, that's not a statistically significant sample to make a decision about all hundred properties. So, I hope I've kind of answered your question.

Chairman Hair said, Commissioner Murray and then Commissioner Jackel.

Commissioner Murray said, yes, first of all I'd like to know why back in October when they first addressed us and you never received a copy of this, why the questions on here were answered by the County Attorney and they were directed to you as the Tax Office? Mr. Udinsky said, when I was here they didn't give me any of these handouts, and after the meeting was over, well after, not the meeting, but when their presentation was over, I left and Jon [Hart] handed me what he had, what he was given from S.T.O.P., and I think both he and I assumed that that package was everything, so I addressed —. Commissioner Murray said, had this been handled properly back in October we wouldn't be here with this meeting today. Ms. Harrell said, thank you. Mr. Udinsky said, oh, I don't know. [Applause.] Commissioner Murray said, I do. Mr. Udinsky said, I wasn't given any of the questions. Commissioner Murray said, but all we had to do was notify them on some of these questions that it was going to take much longer to get the answers, and we're asking now for you to give us a cost analysis on each one of them so we can make a determination from the Commission standpoint whether to go forward with it or not, and that's what we need to know. Mr. Udinsky said, I gave that memo to the Board of Assessors on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November. Commissioner Murray asked, of what it's going to cost to answer these questions? Mr. Udinsky said, yes, yes. Commissioner Murray asked, well, where is it? We don't have it. Chairman Hair said, no, we don't. Commissioner Murray said, see, that's the problem with this whole setup. It's been going on like this since October. I think they need to be commended for the research they've done and you sit here and say they don't know what they're talking about. That is not so. [Applause.] Commissioner Murray said, we've got one right here that was faxed to me yesterday and I got a copy of that was sent to the County Manager, copy to the Chairman, from Lynda Harrell. It's legal opinions, and evidently the County Attorney said he doesn't answer things on not —, hypothetical questions. These are hypothetical questions. Mr. Udinsky said, I haven't see that memo either. I mean, I don't know how —. Commissioner Murray said, I know you haven't seen this one because I just got it. It was just faxed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December to the County Manager. What I want to know is this going to be answered? Are we going to give them an answer on this? County Attorney Hart said, I haven't see the memo. Commissioner Murray asked, you haven't seen it either? County Attorney Hart said, no sir. Commissioner Murray said, I don't think we're getting anywhere. I don't understand why when something comes in and it's copied to us that staff can't act on it and other people can't act on it. We're going too far with this thing.

Chairman Hair said, Ms. Harrell, I'm going to give you an opportunity to speak, but let me finish with the Commissioners first please. Commissioner Murray said, I'm through. Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Jackel.

Commissioner Jackel said, I've looked over these set of questions and I do think they're over burdensome to answer all these questions. I mean, the concluding remark on these questions is "The answers to these questions will quickly convince you that there is a significant problem with the uniformity, fairness and equity in property taxation in Chatham County." And yet there's 15 to 18 questions here that require looking at every piece of property in about 10 different ways to achieve that. I think certainly if that's your point, it could be achieved much more easily than asking all these in-depth questions. Some of these things are very burdensome and I would hope that we could come up with some way, maybe put together some sort of blue ribbon panel to pare these down to a reasonable amount, request a reasonable amount of information and then have those questions answered, but to go back and answer all these questions, I mean, Harris [Odell] and I are use to this when people send us interrogatories and they want to see every check that's ever been written and want to know why your bank account was out of balance two cents back in 1947. I mean, I think that's a little overreaching, and some of these things are overreaching and would be a burden to put all that information together, and I don't think it would really prove anything once it was put together. Now some of them have some value, and I think if this thing was boiled down to what —, what would be essential, we'd be in a much better position to deal with it.

Mr. Felser said, simply put, we have done that work. I was under the impression that the Board had been circulated this memo. If it's not, we can take care of that instantaneously. I had hoped not to put the Board in this position, but I support producing information that's requested in here. I have no problem with producing the information that's requested in here. It's a funding issue at this point. If you'd like for us to submit it —. Chairman Hair said, well, we've already —, we've already made a decision that you guys are going to provide us with the questions by question, how much time it's going to take as a budget item. So we've already dealt with that one issue. Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Odell.

Commissioner Jackel asked, who decides what our answer —?

Commissioner Odell said, that was my —. I'd like to see the memo, but my question basically was for Paul Felser's benefit, and I'd like also to have S.T.O.P. to —, some of the questions, and I'm not certain if it's a group that intended to present a force [inaudible], I'd like to know what is the intent of —, what, if we provide this information, then it will show what? And if it's not provided for you, it's supposed to be provided for us, I've looked at some of the questions, and I have a serious question as to whether or not the question as framed would provide any information that would convince, one way or the other, me regarding this issue. So not right now, but at some point I'd like to have identification as this will show what. You know, anybody can ask questions. I can ask 3,000 questions. That proves nothing. It does not prove that there's not fairness, it does not prove that there's not uniformity. We should have uniformity and fairness throughout our taxing system. That's what I think our ultimate goal is. We should have a system that should provide information in a relatively —, and, Gary [Udinsky], you probably are better to answer this, you have a —, some of these probably can be answered from CAMA system. Obviously, we're not the only taxing district in America that's been confronted with micro-management of the tax office. I think there are a couple of ways that we can look at it. We can look at having programs written to answer these individual questions, which I really don't see the value in doing that. I do not see the value in having a program written to answer these specific questions. I think there are some questions that we should know and you should be able to provide to us in a short period of time, and my question is whether or not the CAMA program, while it may not answer all of these, it will answer the vast majority, and having done that in that we're not obligated to provide the information under the Freedom of Information, but we are in fact providing the information. Mr. Udinsky said, yes, if you'll look at the memo I think that's being circulated now, there are questions that can be answered in four to eight hours, but those are done by using a query method into the current system. Those primarily deal with questions that are only dealing with a single year worth of information. Remember the Assessor's systems, and this is not just here in Chatham County, this is wherever you go, are very [inaudible] in nature. They're one-year oriented. When you start asking questions across multiple years, you'll see by my responses the time to respond gets exponentially bigger because the systems aren't designed to respond to questions that span multiple years. So, yes, the answers to the single-year questions can be done in relatively short periods of time using queries into the existing system. Commissioner Odell said, yes, but we might need and probably will need a greater detail as to the gist of the questions, some of the questions at least, because in order for you to provide an answer you've got to understand the question. Mr. Udinsky said, right. Chairman Hair said, he's got notes on here. Mr. Udinsky said, every question has either that some clarification is necessary or the question is ambiguous. So, yes, I mean, I agree with you completely. If we were going to answer these, someone would have to sit down with the originator of the questions to get what they're really after because the questions can't be answered the way they're written. Commissioner Odell asked, Paul [Felser], can you all do that? Paul [Felser], can you and someone do that? Or Jon [Hart]?

County Attorney Hart said, Mr. Chairman, I under —, some of those questions the terms are in there as far as the meaning of some of the issues being asked need to be narrowed down. It would be my recommendation that if the S.T.O.P. people want this information, that somebody, one person in that group be designated to sit down with Mr. Udinsky and explain to him exactly what that question means so that we don't have any I'm asking this question and you're answering that question. Chairman Hair said, I think they'd be willing to do that. I think that would be not a problem. I think that's a good point.

Commissioner DeLoach asked, can I add to that though? Chairman Hair said, certainly. Commissioner DeLoach said, I would not want those two to sit down together, you know, any particular one group and another group. I think a third party

needs to sit in on this that hasn't got an axe to grind either way so that in fact we do get a —, we get the answer. We don't want, who said, who said. I want to have about three in there and usually can come up with an answer then.

Chairman Hair said, I think we pretty much know where we're going to go from here. I think we —, I'm going to allow Ms. Harrell to speak because she's been trying to speak for some time, but I think we need to sort of wrap this up. I think both sides —, I think all of us now have asked the questions that we need. I think we know where we're going to go. You guys are going to give us cost figures, we're going to have —, we're going to define the questions, we're going to make sure we understand the questions, and then you're going to prepare a budget item and come back to us, and then we will either vote it up or down to do that, and we'll do that —. Do you think that could be done no later than the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting as far as the cost figures? That's two weeks. We're just talking about just the cost. You've already got the hours identified. Mr. Udinsky said, you've got it. All I need —, you've got the hours. I'll supply a per hour number. Chairman Hair said, it should be fairly easy to just put numbers with these hours. Mr. Udinsky said, yes. Chairman Hair said, and that way we could —. Mr. Udinsky said, and hopefully before then we would have a chance to meet and clarify because at this time we built into those to figure out what the question really means, so we might be able to pare down the number of hours by then as well.

Commissioner Jackel said, I would hope we could pare down the questions to what are essential questions. Chairman Hair said, well, that —. Commissioner Jackel said, I think we've clearly been handed a laundry list of everything. Commissioner DeLoach said, well, those three are going to do that. Chairman Hair said, that's what, yes, that would be a part of that task.

Commissioner DeLoach asked who's the third person going to sit down with them? We'll have one person and a third person. Chairman Hair said, I'm trying to think who would be the best person to do that. It doesn't need to be one of us. Commissioner Saussy asked, how about our auditor? Chairman Hair said, Reese White possibly, Mr. Abolt. Would that be a —? That is a good —. County Manager Abolt said, whatever you —. Chairman Hair said, I think that would be a good suggestion, our Internal Auditor. I think that would be a good suggestion, so we will use our Internal Auditor, Reese White, would be sort of the third out —, you know, objective partner in this thing. Okay. So we appreciate —. Ms. Harrell, I'm going to allow you to speak and thank you, Mr. Felser, thank you, Mr. Udinsky. We appreciate you being here, and we'll allow her to make some parting comments here and then we'll move on.

Ms. Harrell said, yes, as I was sitting there listening to the Tax Assessor talk about the difficulty getting to the data to answer these questions I had a brainstorm. When the Department of Revenue auditors were here in August, they took the mapping system from the County and then married it with three years of data, sales data from the Tax Assessor's office in a very palatable database they have. If I were you, I'm thinking now, I would call up the Department of Revenue, I would call Larry Griggers and say that we've got some questions that need to be answered, the limitation of our system we'd have to sit down and write specific queries for reports, it looks like it's going to take a long time, could his database program accommodate this data? And you know it's much easier on the system like that to get to the answers. That may really be a viable solution. So I think I would call the Department of Revenue and ask them if they'd be willing to do that.

Chairman Hair said, I think that's a very good suggestion. Maybe after you guys meet, the three of you meet, you would know —, you'd have the questions better defined. I think it would be —, it might be premature to do that. We're still not sure about what the questions —, once the questions are defined —.

Ms. Harrell said, and let me talk about your point about that you didn't understand the crux of the questions. If you look at the questions, they're designed with two purposes. One is to show you the breadth of the problem, one is designed to show you the depth of the problem, and other questions are designed to show you how long this problem has been going on, and also to show you —. Commissioner Odell said, but you reach a conclusion. Ms. Harrell said, well, but you reach the conclusion the data —. Commissioner Odell said, you reach a conclusion before we have the data. Ms. Harrell said, well, I've seen it —, well. Commissioner Odell said, you know, and my only point is —. Ms. Harrell said, and that's another thing, if anybody wants to call the State Auditor and get a copy of this free, you can get it for any county in the State, this is our last sales ratio, equalized tax digest that he looked at, and I went through page by page and marked every single parcel that had a sales ratio that fell outside the range. That's how scientific this was. These are audited figures and all I did was go through and I just did a numerical count. The other thing I'd like to say is that when the auditors were here, they were sent here not to do a general performance audit of the Tax Assessor's office. They were sent here as a result of Governor Barnes receiving complaints that people down here thought that some of their assessments had gone up higher than normal due to the Stephens-Day Bill coming down the road. That's, that was the whole genesis of that audit. It was not a normal operations, performance, whatever kind of audit you want to call it. So I wanted to clear that. And one last thing I'd like to say is I didn't appreciate a couple of comments Mr. Felser made about me. That property that I was talking about belongs to Mr. Felser. Mr. Felser is Chairman of the Board of Assessors and he lives in a tax neighborhood that had been on override. The last appraisal date in the system for his house was June of 1992. It is now being reappraised. That was Mr. Felser's property we're talking about, and four out of the five members of the Board of Assessors lived —, well, we met with them in August, lived in a tax neighborhood that was on override, not on the CAMA system. So that's what's going on here, and we don't appreciate it, and I don't appreciate it that he lived in a tax neighborhood that has a 33% ratio and I may live in a neighborhood that's got a 40% ratio, and that's what —, that's why I used that neighborhood and that's why I used that parcel.

Chairman Hair said, I'm going to allow —, let me —. I'm going to allow Mr. Felser to respond and then we're going to end this, okay. This is not the forum for this. [Applause.] Mr. Felser, please respond and then we'll leave this.

Mr. Felser said, this is not a personal issue. I made no personal remarks. I will stand here and defend my integrity to this Board. Commissioner DeLoach said, absolutely. Mr. Felser said, I have only been on this board for approximately a two-year period. I've only lived in that neighborhood for approximately a two and a half year period. I bought what I bought. It's taxed what it's taxed for just like your property is. I don't have any direct contact or influence or say on my property's taxes. It's the same as if someone came up and said the same thing about you. I resent it. Prove it. Ms. Harrell said, I've got the data. Mr. Felser said, prove it that I've influenced anything. If not, retract your comment because it impugns someone's integrity unnecessarily, makes the matter personal that is a professional matter that I've tried to handle as a professional in an appointed capacity by this Board. I didn't undertake this for that and I don't think it's appropriate.

Chairman Hair said, thank you, Mr. Felser, we appreciate that. Commissioner DeLoach said, I want to make a comment on that. Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner DeLoach.

Commissioner DeLoach said, I regret that Ms. Harrell had to do that. I think that —, I regret that you had to do that. We shouldn't let the committee, the S.T.O.P. committee get caught up in a personal thing. We should keep it on a professional level. Don't attack people personally. We're asking these people to serve on these boards. They come and serve on these boards because we ask them to. Maybe we could come and ask you at a later date to do that, so —. Chairman Hair said, all right, we're going to move on. Commissioner DeLoach said, so the point —. No, let me finish. Chairman Hair said, let's wrap this up. Commissioner DeLoach said, okay. Well, let me finish. Don't do people that we have serve on these committees, don't direct —, don't walk up here and talk to me. I don't want to talk to you. We want to keep pit as S.T.O.P., we want to keep it on a professional level, we want to work towards making this thing work, but we won't when people attack people personally because these people serve at our request, not because they have any gain, and I regret that you had to —, you had the gall to stand up there and say that. Thank you.

Chairman Hair said, thank you, Commissioner DeLoach. Let's move on.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

The Board requested that the Tax Assessors office give a breakdown on a question by question basis of the time required to respond to the questions submitted by S.T.O.P.; that both parties sit down and go over the questions together, clarifying the questions and making sure the questions are understood; that Reese White, Internal Auditor, will be present as a third objective party; and that the Tax Assessor's office will prepare cost figures to be brought back to the Commission at its meeting on December 17, 1999.

=====

#### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Chairman Hair said, I'm going to ask for one more revision of the items because we have two people that have to leave. I'm going to ask that we revise and take Commissioner Rivers' item next and then Commissioner Jackel's item on Mr. Kaster next simply because of the time. Do I have any objection to that? Okay, without objection, I'll so order.

[NOTE: Items VII-7 and VII-5, respectively, were heard at this point on the agenda.]

Chairman Hair said, prior to me going to the next item, we need to make a decision here. We are only —, obviously, we're not going to complete this agenda prior to the ribbon cutting that I have to be at over at the Westin, and all of us were going to be over there, and I don't know how we —. Really there are only two ways to handle it. We could send one or two of us over there to represent the Commission and continue the meeting or we could recess the Commission and everyone go. If we do that, I can tell you we're looking at 3:00 or 3:30 to finish the meeting probably because they're not going to finish the activities. I would —, I personally think it's probably better for us to send one or two of us and continue the meeting. That would be my suggestion. I think otherwise we could be here all day, and I think for the benefit of the staff and the audience that's here, I don't think they want to sit here all day as well. So I would be open to suggestions from the Commission, but I just think maybe myself and someone else could —, if we want to send two, I mean, I could represent the Commission by myself, but I am on the program. Commissioner DeLoach said, I am going to be there. Chairman Hair said, okay. Commissioner DeLoach said, I don't know about anybody else, but I'm going to be there. Chairman Hair said, okay, Commissioner DeLoach wants to be there, so any —. Commissioner Saussy said, I'd like to be there myself. Chairman Hair asked, well, what do y'all want to do? If we do recess, it's going to —. Commissioner DeLoach said, I think the ones that voted in favor of that place over there need to be there.

Commissioner Rivers asked, Mr. Chairman, can we do the public hearing and see how far we can progress with that so we can relieve some people? Chairman Hair said, well, the problem with that is we have 23 minutes and we have to be at the boat ramp at 11:00, so we're going to have to leave here at least 10 till to get to the boat ramp at Abercorn. I do have a bus to take everybody to the ramp and then they can go over on the water taxi. That was the plan, and —. Commissioner Odell asked, we're going to do bussing, Billy [Hair]?

Chairman Hair said, yes, but if —, I mean, it's fine, if you want to recess and go. I'm just saying if we do that we're looking at 3:30 probably. Commissioner DeLoach said, I'm going to go. Chairman Hair said, or we can send a representative. What's the feeling of the group?

Commissioner Murray said, I would like to be there, but I don't think it's fair to the people in the audience for us to just leave and go. [Applause.] Chairman Hair said, okay. So, Dr. Thomas —, so it may be Eddie [DeLoach] and myself. Commissioner Murray said, as long as we keep five people here we can deal with what we need to. Commissioner Price said, that's fine. Chairman Hair said, I think that if that —, so that's the consensus. We'll continue to go now until about 10 till and then, Commissioner DeLoach, you and I can go ahead and.

Mrs. Hilda Whitaker said, point of clarification, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Hair said, yes. Mrs. Whitaker asked, does that mean you would reconvene at 3:30 in the afternoon? Chairman Hair said, no, no, but the problem with this program, Mrs. Whitaker, is the ribbon cutting is at 11:00, but then they have a number of other activities and they're actually scheduled to go until 2:00, the activities are, so my point is if we recess the whole Commission, we probably wouldn't be back over here until 2:00 or 2:15 and then it would take us another hour and a half to finish or so. That's how the 3:30 —. Mrs. Whitaker said, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Hair said, thank you.

=====

## **VII. COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS (Continued)**

### **2. TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS (COMMISSIONERS JACKEL, MURRAY AND ODELL).**

Chairman Hair said, I asked Commissioner Odell who should I recognize and he said I should recognize Commissioner Jackel because he's the oldest. So, so based on that recommendation, Commissioner Odell, I recognize Commissioner Jackel.

Commissioner Jackel said, well, we've had a couple of meetings now with the Tripartite Committee, which governs the paying of fees to attorneys who represent indigents. We have made —, we have made real progress in doing some things that we feel will reduce the cost to the County of future representations of people who are indigent and not in any way compromise the quality of their defense and protect their rights. At this time I don't have the exact figures that we're going to be able to save, but we have several things that we wanted to implement and there'll be a new billing procedure that we'll bill everybody in one-tenth of an hour. They'll be a change in the administration fee, they'll be an attempt to standardize motions and make them the standing order of the court so we will not have to pay everyone for filing the same exact standard motion, and other things. So this committee is making progress and I think by the budget hearing we'll have a figure that we can announce that we will be saving in this department.

Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Odell.

Commissioner Odell said, it's important to note that we met on several occasions with the Tripartite Committee, and this is the committee that makes a determination as to expenditures for those deemed eligible because of income to receive court-appointed counsel. This is not an optional service that we provide. It's a mandatory service that is imposed upon us by the U.S. Supreme Court. So it's not whether we provide it. The only question is the vehicle and the method that we provide it. Martin [Jackel] has summarized the major areas and I would add to that now we do a certification, Russ [Abolt], and that certification is done at the point of appointment. In talking to some attorneys who in fact take court-appointed cases, if a person when they were appointed was eligible and lose that eligibility, we need to have a standardized way of having that reported. It's not in the list, and my recommendation is that we do a recertification at least six weeks following. I think that recertification is going to have a greater impact number wise than we would believe. I've seen the impact of [inaudible] that it's had in Tidelands Community Mental Health recertification of our patients. Things change in a very short period of time, but I think we're making progress. The committee is appointed from we appoint three, the Commissioners, the judges appoint three and the Savannah Bar appoints three. So we have a good cross-section. We have good people on the committee, and we're going to eke out the cost savings.

Chairman Hair asked, did you guys address the issue that some of us expressed concern about in terms of limiting the number of hours that a particular attorney could provide indigent care? I mean, did y'all address that issue? Commissioner Odell said, we did. We had a fairly lengthy discussion and that was that and reviewed some attorneys' practice, if you look at 2,080 hours in a year appeared to be consumed solely by representing indigent care defendants, and we reviewed that. I think we have someone here from the Court Administrator's office. If you could come forward, but the end result is that we wanted to make certain that there were no unnecessary charges being paid by the County. If you had a capital case,

i.e. murder case, and an attorney goes to trial on that case, it is a substantial case that will cost a substantial amount of time. Every jurisdiction in this country has been confronted with it, we're going to be confronted with it, and we have to pay a reasonable cost for the services from that. We audit the system and so far we have saved in excess of \$300,000 this year, and when I say saved \$300,000, if you take the items billed, if you take a review by the nine attorneys, and you look at the ultimate resolution between I spent this amount of time on the case, this is in fact what we agreed to pay you, there's a savings to us in excess of \$300,000. So —.

Mr. Tim Sheppard said, if I could add one other thing too. Commissioner Odell said, if you could identify yourself just for the record. Mr. Sheppard said, thank you. My name's Tim Sheppard. I am the Deputy Court Administrator for Superior Court here in Chatham County and I primarily am the supervisor over pretrial services, which encompasses pretrial release and indigent defense. One of the things that the committee needs to understand is that many of the cases that attorneys complete were not necessarily appointed within the year that they are complete. Cases are appointed over several years and it could —, you come to a point every now and then where an attorney has several cases that are now coming to fruition in the court. So it may appear that one particular attorney is making an excessive amount of money this particular year, and that's not necessarily the case. Cases take time. There are a lot of things that go into it. As Mr. Odell and Mr. Jackel have said, we are trying our best to look at different avenues, different aspects that we can do to ensure that we save as much money as possible.

Commissioner Odell said, Tim [Sheppard], you made an excellent point which shouldn't go by as lightly, and that is that if you look at some, just the record of payment for 1999, some of the hours in fact worked that were paid for in 1999, were worked in 1998. Mr. Sheppard said, yes sir. Commissioner Odell said, so it's not like taking 2,080 and saying January 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>, many of those hours were incurred in prior years.

Mr. Sheppard said, that's correct. You know, we even go back as far as '97 and '96 in some instances, especially if you have a case that is a high level felony case or a case where the individual is out on bond. There are different workings between the defense attorneys and the DA's office that go on. Sometimes you're dealing with witnesses that you can't find, sometimes you're dealing with professional witnesses, such as doctors, experts in their, you know, respective fields, so there's a lot of things that go into the entire process. But, again, we are still working as best we can to keep the costs down. The recertification that Mr. Odell mentioned is an issue that we've talked about. We are aware that in Macon they're already doing a recertification, so we will be contacting them for some assistance and guidance as far as getting that together. So we're just asking you all to be patient with us. We will continue to work as best we can. We are —, you know, unfortunately we deal with a lot of uncontrollable [inaudible]. Everything we deal with is uncontrollable, but as much as possible we will —. Chairman Hair said, we understand that as Commissioners. Mr. Sheppard said, so as much as possible we will continue to do the best job that we can to make sure that our program continues to provide excellent service. We are, in fact, the fourth largest program in the State of Georgia, so —.

Commissioner Odell said, and I think y'all do a good job, Tim [Sheppard], and —. Chairman Hair said, yes. We appreciate —. Commissioner Odell said, we're going to continue the subcommittee.

Chairman Hair said, we appreciate the job you do and keep it up. Mr. Sheppard said, thank you. Chairman Hair said, thank you. Any other questions of Tim [Sheppard]? Thank you.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

### **3. RESOLUTION FROM COASTAL AREA DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (COMMISSIONER RIVERS).**

Chairman Hair said, Commissioner Rivers is our representative on that Authority, and they want to request to make the changes. Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Rivers.

Commissioner Rivers said, yes, let me start off by asking a question. Has everybody gone over this and does everybody understand what we're trying to do? I had one Commissioner that had some reservations about it and I'd like for him to be accorded —. Commissioner Saussy said, why don't you summarize it for us. Why don't you summarize it for us.

Commissioner Rivers said, okay. Basically, what we're doing, for the sake of the community, Coastal Area District Development Authority is the lending arm of the Coastal Regional Development Center. We make loans to businesses throughout the eight-county areas that we serve. Heretofore we have been under the RDC. At one point we sort of separated from the RDC and we went through some legal problems, and after resolving all of that we have come to the conclusion now that it would be —, the public would be best served if we separated the lending institution from the RDC or planning unit. There's no reason that we feel that this is necessary to be under the RDC. We have an appointment that complicates things because we send three people's names to the CADD board, then in turn send —, those three go to the RDC board and we approve one, so you have a number of hoops to jump through before nominating and getting your

person, and the only thing that really happens at the RDC, once we get the person, Frank [Murray] and I are there on the RDC, it's highly unlikely that they're going to disapprove of the person that we want or that we nominate. So it's just something of going through an act, and I really don't see any reason that we should keep the two organizations together. At one point I thought going into the RDC in 1989 that we had a conflict of some sort, and we had resolved all of that and brought all of that to a point. So if we can, I would like to see us separate that.

Vice Chairman Thomas recognized Commissioner Murray.

Commissioner Murray said, yes. I understand what Joe [Rivers] is saying and the main purpose that I can find that they want to do this is strictly the appointment process. This Commission will still be submitting three names any way we do it. I'm not in favor of splitting the two right now, and I think that we've only received a letter from Jimmy Burnsed, who's the Chairman of the CADDA Board requesting that we do a resolution on it. We have not heard anything from the RDC. This is the only RDC in the State of Georgia that's being asked to do this. It's a political thing and I think we need to hold off and table it until we get more information and have all —. I would like to have someone from the RDC and someone from CADDA Board to come speak to us and answer some questions before we do a resolution to go up to our State Legislators to try to change something that's already set in place by law, by legislation. I'm not in favor of it and I know Joe [Rivers] serves on both boards. He serves on the RDC and the CADDA Board. I only serve on the RDC, but I still do not —. We had a while back had quite an argument on what the process should be. That was resolved I thought, and then we had some misunderstandings with the RDC when we had a chairman of the nominating committee had nominated someone for chairman and someone that does not come on a regular basis called in all of his friends and announced that he was running at that meeting when we were doing the nominations and he had the vote to go in as chairman. He at the time was president of the CADDA Board, and he is now trying to push this through because that's one of the promises he made, and I don't think we need to be doing it yet. I think we need more information from all parties before we just up and do it because we've got a request from one side.

Commissioner Rivers said, I don't think that that's necessarily the reason. There really is no reason why it should be under the RDC. It really, it really serves no purpose. They're two different bodies. If anybody could show me a reason, and I serve on both boards, a reason why this thing would work more efficiently under the RDC, then I would be willing to leave it as is. Commissioner Murray asked, well, why would the other RDC's not be —, not try to do the same thing that we're trying to do? They're not requesting anything like this. Commissioner Rivers said, this will be a statewide bill.

Commissioner Murray said, well, not the way I understand it. It's listed as statewide, but from what I understand a lot of people weren't aware of it and familiar with it, and there's a lot going on right now behind the scene. I would move that we table this until we can get more information on it from both sides, not just the group that wants to do it.

Vice Chairman Thomas recognized Commissioner Saussy. Commissioner Rivers said, he had a motion to table. Commissioner Price said, you need a motion to second on that table. Vice Chairman Thomas said, there's a motion to table. Is there a second? Commissioner Jackel said, I'll second it. Commissioner Murray said, I would really, if Commissioner Saussy wanted to say something. Vice Chairman Thomas said, end of discussion. Commissioner Saussy said, the only thing I was going to say is I don't see any reason —. Vice Chairman Thomas said, please vote. Commissioner Saussy said, we can hear from both of them, say, next time. Vice Chairman Thomas said, no further discussion. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner DeLoach were not present.]

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved that the request from the Coastal Area District Development Authority (CADDA) for a resolution to support legislation allowing Regional Development Centers to divest themselves of control, authority or responsibility for their non-profit lending corporations be tabled to December 17, 1999, so we can get more information from both sides. Commissioner Jackel seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner DeLoach were not present.]

=====

#### **4. AFTER-ACTION REPORT ON HURRICANE FLOYD (COMMISSIONER JACKEL).**

Commissioner Jackel said, Chatham Emergency Management Agency has produced a draft report on their Hurricane Floyd After-Action Report. I have reviewed it and I just think from looking at their report there's a lot more work that needs to be done. I think it somewhat also indicates that we were not as prepared as we could have been when the hurricane came our way, that there are substantial changes that need to be made. I think this is a step in the right direction, but I also feel that there are a couple of places in this report where the attitude was kind of taken, well, we can't do this instead of looking at ways that we could do things, and I think we need to look back at the report and come at it with a more positive attitude on some of the things that need to be done. Now as, I know, looking back —, hindsight's 20/20 and when you're doing something at the time it's not that easy, and I also realize it was just not us involved, it was people all over the State. As I've said before, no matter what we would have done there are going to be problems and they're going to be traffic jams and things of that nature, but there are things that we could have done better. I think if we'd looked back and this and the scenario had played out the way I think it could have played out, the decision was made somewhere around on Monday,

somewhere around twelve or one o'clock that if everything held the way it was going to be at six o'clock there was going to be announcement of a mandatory evacuation. I think at about the twelve or one o'clock mark there should have been a call to a designated representative of our banks saying it looks like we're going to do this thing and we want to know if we can start putting out the word that you're going to be open until seven or eight o'clock at night so people can get money out if they need it. Not everyone has an ATM card, not everyone remembers their PIN number. It should be also —. I've got mine written down. Commissioner Murray said, you're not supposed to do that. Commissioner Jackel said, all right. The word should have gone out and not depended upon the six o'clock news because a lot of people could no longer reach their employees to tell them what they wanted to do, where they wanted to be, when they might be expected back, where the boss or the director or whoever it was could be reached. In addition, police officers needed to be dispatched to gas stations because that's where people were heading. There were dangerous situations at numerous gas stations where people were lined up out in the street with their vehicles waiting to get gas. I think we, between the City, all the municipalities and the County and the Sheriff's Department who would have some people that they could probably use, we have enough to make good coverage of our gas stations. Then the word could have gone out onto I-16, we could have brought in the National Guard, we could have had water trucks up and down I-16, we could have had the chemical toilets up and down I-16, we could have made it possible for some people who were on the eastbound lanes going west to get off and use facilities. The report goes on to say there's no way we could do anything with the railroad. I think we could take another look at that and I think there are things we could probably do with the railroad. There are numerous things in here and I don't want to go over each item and say this is what we need to do here, this is what we need to do here, because we would be a substantial amount of time, but, I mean, some of the things I'm very concerned about. On page nine of the report it told about the folding cots are inadequate for special need patients, and it goes on to describe how the folding cots were inadequate for them, but it seems to me this should have been known before. This should have been known before. There are numerous instances of things in here that I think —, the CWF shelters did not have designated managers that serve as shelter representatives or point of contact. I don't see some of these things —, I don't understand why some of them weren't done before, and I'm glad we're correcting them now. The coordination between our highway patrol and our CEMA office so people can get information if they call. I don't also think and I would hope that when we take another look at this report, I think it needs to be more forward looking than it is because I see the revolution of the cell phone coming in and more communication through the cell phone to people on the road, so if we have a way of coordinating that with our radio and TV stations. I also think we need better coordination with the power companies and stuff and designated persons would be there because if the storm did hit, somewhere along the line they're going to cut off power. We need to be knowing that, we need to be getting it out, so I think this is a step in the right direction. I would hope that we would go back over it and make sure we learn these things, and I would hope that we could take a more positive attitude with a couple of other things and see what we can do instead of saying I don't think this thing can be done, and one of those issues is one-way on Abercorn and another way may be on DeRenne. As I look at Chatham County, we are surrounded by I-95 on one side and I-16 and everybody's got to cross those boundaries to get out of the County, so we have to have —, there are —, you can go down Highway 21, Bay Street, and there's some [inaudible], but by and large those are the barriers that we have to cross. We need this coordination and it's just not here. When we had a meeting not too long ago with the Downtown Neighborhood Association there was a person with the State Department of Transportation, and I said I would hope that tomorrow the State would go up just South of Macon, where you take I-16 and just as you get to Macon, it narrows down to one lane. I said I would hope you would start tomorrow widening that from one lane to at least two and possibly three because when traffic gets heavy, that is an obvious bottleneck. And so things that are even outside our County can tremendously affect us when this happens. Now if, God forbid, we should have another big evacuation like that, I hope we are better prepared, and it looks like we will be. We have over 200,000 lives at stake. We have elderly people, we have disabled people, we have sick people. We have a responsibility to commit all our resources to make sure that we leave no stone unturned to do whatever possible to make sure that this thing goes as successfully as possible. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you, Commissioner Jackel. Everything that you've said I'm sure will be taken into account and staff will make sure that those are considered and things will be much better in the event we do have to evacuate another time.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Received as information.

=====

#### **5. CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION FOR JACK KASTER, FORMER LIBRARY BOARD CHAIRMAN (COMMISSIONER JACKEL).**

Chairman Hair said, I will now recognize Commissioner Jackel to make a presentation to Mr. Jack Kaster, former Library Board Chairman.

Commissioner Jackel asked, Jack [Kaster], will you come up please? Mr. Kaster said, sure. Commissioner Jackel said, we want to present this certificate award to Jack Kaster in recognition of his outstanding leadership and support while serving as Chairman of the Library Board. Mr. Kaster said, thank you, sir.

Commissioner Jackel said, those of you who have not been to our new library are really missing out. It is an outstanding structure. I think it is one of the nicest libraries that I've seen in my visits to other cities and everything. It is something that I think people throughout the State, but particularly people in Chatham County can really be proud of. And when Jack [Kaster] got on the board, he changed the board. I think it's fair to say that Jack [Kaster] woke the board up and moved it forward. We all know the saying about the squeaking wheel gets the grease and, Jack [Kaster], you have been the squeaking wheel in the best way forward, and I have a little present for you here. [NOTE: The present was a can of WD-40]. Chairman Hair said, I know your squeaking wheel deserves some grease. You know, the people that were here before with S.T.O.P., they're a squeaking wheel too. We need more people like them or more people like you and the people here today to come up and be involved. Tell us what's wrong, tell us what needs fixing. Push us, make us go that extra mile, and that's what you did and that's why I wanted you to be here and receive both of these awards.

Mr. Jack Kaster said, thank you. Metaphors are pretty effective, and the squeaking wheel gets the grease is one. One that occurred to me several times in this environment was the earliest Christians get the hungriest lions. I just would like to say that I do appreciate it. I've enjoyed working on the library. Still I'm involved as the President of the Library Foundation, and I think that during our discussions here we've all come to know better the sad state that the library system was in. I think that we all know now that we've made some significant program thanks to your stepping up to the plate in response to some of the squeaks. As Martin [Jackel] said, the new library is fantastic. Please get over there if you haven't had a chance and enjoy it. Also, that was always billed as the stepping stone to a renaissance of library service in the area. So remember that and remember that we had needs that far surpassed that, and I would just say as a parting comment, I think that it would be just wonderful if the Commission would switch from greasing the squeaking wheel to taking the leadership position and asking for a report by the end of the first quarter of 2000 on where and how we can start planning for the next library, either the southwest side or the southeast side, because we need it. Thank you very much.

Chairman Hair said, thank you, Mr. Kaster.

Commissioner Odell said, Jack [Kaster]. Chairman Hair said, Mr. Kaster, Commissioner Odell has a question or a comment. Commissioner Odell said, just a comment before you go. Yourself and David and I, we served on a committee and the history of this County we'd never put together a short and long-term plan for the library, and under your leadership you put together an excellent plan. While you and I have not always agreed, and we probably won't in the future agree on every issue, I think this community is indebted to your leadership. You created a revolution and that revolution really made all of us really take a closer look at the deficiencies of something that we all claim to hold fundamentally clear and dear, and that is education, library resources, what we spend in comparison to others. You brought that to light, and I am grateful. I do not change some of the things you and I disagree on, but I am grateful for having you to be the Chair. You did an outstanding job, and this community is indebted to you, and I want to talk to you about another board we need some action on.

Chairman Hair said, Jack [Kaster], you were a good early Christian. Mr. Kaster said, I was glad to serve that role.

Commissioner Saussy said, Jack [Kaster], I want to say a few words too. Mr. Kaster said, yes sir. Commissioner Saussy said, it has truly been a pleasure for me to work with you on this Library Board situation. I can pledge to you at least my vote will be to do what we want —, what we need to do with that library. It is imperative that we do it because of the children that will be coming [inaudible]. Mr. Kaster said, exactly. Commissioner Saussy said, that's the important thing. Children need to learn and learn to read. That is the opportunity for our community. Mr. Kaster said, amen.

Chairman Hair said, thank you. And those of you who have not been over there, a number of us were over there at the opening on Sunday, it is very impressive. If you have not, I encourage you and the public as well to attend it.

=====

## **6. IN-LINE HOCKEY (COMMISSIONER MURRAY).**

Commissioner Murray said, before we call anybody let me first of all explain what —, the reason that this is back on again. You know, we went through a process a while back and the County ended up taking over the in-line skating rink and the operation of it through a long process that we went through, and that was all done because of one group versus another group and that type thing that was going on with the in-line hockey. At the time that we discussed all this, we did discuss possibly having a, say, a board of governors that would make recommendations back to the Recreation Department with all aspects of Chatham County being represented on that governing authority and also a representative, if not Jim Golden, his appointee, to serve on that authority. We never went forward with that. There's a proposal that's been given to me and, you know, whether that's a proposal we need to do or not I don't know, but my concern is that we still have a squabbling among the different groups. The only thing that's been resolved is the County has taken it over and paid some money to take it over, and I understand there's a parent's group now that's organized that is working, trying to do some of the same things that this proposal would do, but I think we need some discussion on that today, and I think the people are here from several of the different groups that will discuss it. Jim Golden has some recommendations also. I talked with him about it this week and told him that it was going to be on the agenda and the purpose of it being on the agenda, but I think that we need to look at it. My concern —, as far as I'm concerned, if the parents don't want to support it, that's fine, but we've got an obligation to these youths throughout Chatham County and not just in one particular area. Vice Chairman Thomas

said, right. Commissioner Murray said, and we need to make sure that we're treating everyone fairly, that everyone has the right amount of time on the —. We only have one in-line skating rink right now. I don't think it's fair to be able to have people come in from outside of Chatham County and take up time away from those people within Chatham County to be on it. I think there are a lot of things there that need to be worked out, and that's the purpose of putting this on the agenda today. We had problems with the Soccer Complex when we first did it, with scheduling and some other things. We resolved most of that, and I think we need to look at this today to see what direction we go in. I do not want to see the Commission get back into another contract with anybody to operate our facilities because I think that's where the problems come in, but I do think that we can have committees and groups of people together representing all of Chatham County that can give recommendations and help the Recreation Department with what we're trying to do to approve the system that we have now, so —. Jim [Golden]?

Vice Chairman Thomas recognized Mr. Jim Golden.

Mr. Jim Golden said, Chairperson and the Board, the staff is handling the scheduling of the various events now for that facility. We had a problem in the past where we had one group dominating it. We can assure you this won't happen now. We have a meeting coming up Wednesday to schedule all of the requests for Y2K and to go over everything. We welcome volunteers. In fact, you know how well we value that, to assist the department in this. Whenever this group is organized and everything comes under our umbrella, Commissioner Murray, we'd be happy for them to assist as one body. Right now we have several groups that made a request to use it, but we handle it like any other facility now to make sure they use it. If we had problems from the public in the past, they were not assured that they could use the facility, so block timing it, we will be working in that to leave some time out for the public as well. We're well aware we have one facility and we've got quite a bit of interest now, but my personal concern is we've got some repairs got to take place, cracking of the foundation, we're working on that, painting it up, landscaping, we've got to put some wire on the east side around these dashboards to keep the pucks from going out, and bleachers and substantially parking, but we've talked to several groups and their interests have shown us to work with them. I have no qualms with a County wide board to set up. It'd be the same. We'd be happy to work with that. It makes our job much easier. If these groups go under one umbrella, and we have Mr. Danny Robertson [phonetic] here, who is one of the groups that plays, a lot of help and we welcome all the help we can get, volunteers, but our main concern is make sure it's run as a public facility and everybody uses it.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Do we have anyone from the audience? Please step up and give your name.

Mr. Robertson said, I'm Danny Robertson, and there's been a lot of frustration in this, as Frank [Murray] has kind of pointed out, and what I'm here today to talk about is forming a governing body that would help in coordinating all the efforts and the energies of the people who are interested in promoting this sport and the development of the new facilities, and that's it. We propose not as representatives from the organization that I belong to, but as parents that —, and participants that are concerned with the safety of our children as players, and to assume the development and the growth of the in-line hockey in Savannah and Chatham County. For your review, we provided each of you with the proposal for a united league to be overseen and administered by a board of governors comprised of geographic representatives of the private and public sector, all having a stake in the growth of this sport. The proposed board of governors answers to a general membership as outlined in the bylaws. The proposal you have does not have a copy of the bylaws. Frank [Murray] was given one that's complete and it's been forwarded to the legal department. We offer this proposal and specifics and any names for nomination to be proposed to the proposed board as a prototype, a place to begin, pending approval by general assembly. The latter implies that when assembling this proposal we solicited consultation from other successful nonprofit organizations outside of our region to assure neutrality. We injected some of the successes that we've made in the last year, such as the amendment of the capital improvement project to include additional facilities in the future. We listened to the concerns and the expectations of everyone who was willing to voice their opinion. With that we addressed most of the concerns and the offers, and we offer solutions. This proposal is, as offered, simply an answer to the groundswell of controversy surrounding operations at the Lake Mayer facilities. We have presented this proposal in various forms of completion to key pol—, political leaders, businessmen, public and private organizations, parents, parental steering committees, for their feedback. Overall we've received many positive and outstanding responses from this proposal. The most prevalent point is that we echo —, the proposal echos what everybody seems to want to happen. To put this proposal into prospective, you must set aside any notion that we're spearheading this proposal for our own gain or to gain a stake in the success of this board. Our sole motivation has been and will continue to be our children's hopes and dreams, assuring them a safe and accessible outlet for life's many curves. Gives us —, if this gives us a piece of mind and hope for the future, keeping our kids off the street and giving them the opportunities to play a sport that otherwise might not be available to them. The success and growth of any sport is contingent on the availability of facilities and the support of the prospective communities. In-line sports, like hockey, aggressive skating and competitive racing, are unique like the swimming complex that we have in that they require a unique environment for participation unlike field sports. It is understood that this presents a unique situation that in order to provide for these facilities, the cost must be justified and the community must feel that they are enriched by its existence in order to provide continued support. This can only be accomplished by such an assembly, which gives everybody a forum to come together with their concepts and their ideas to be developed in the things that are for the growth of the sport. With the goals established the organization can work towards the goals and accomplish them. Everyone who's played or has a child who has played in Chatham County has participated in the growth of this sport. By implementing and carrying out the proposal would put control of the development in the hands of those who stand to gain from it. By maintaining geographical balance in the governing body, that assures our entire region will reap its benefits and be assured a voice in its development. The interpretation of the bylaws can be accessed by a full informed panel and rules governing the game can be agreed upon and published in such a fashion as

to be undisputable. Repercussions for violation of these rules can be dealt with in a fair and timely manner. Working in cooperation with other nonprofit organizations and volunteer committees will allow such an association to establish reasonable league fees. The larger portion of these revenues will be earmarked and directed to the improvement and maintenance of existing facilities and to supplement the construction of new facilities as the demand comes up. In summary, we put forth this proposal as a model for the assembly of such an association and ask your consideration in making it a reality. If you find that it is in your jurisdiction and feel the urgency as we do in resolving this very trying and heated subject, then grant us the approval to assemble this board. You have our assurance that we can assemble this board and you have our assurance that we —, excuse me. You have our assurance that we can assemble this board to form the federation and have it operational by the beginning of January of 2000. Scheduling meetings will begin immediately and the Winter season could begin at least by the second week in January. In closing today, we need your support to form this board of governors to make this youth oriented organization a reality and assure all those affected will grow and prosper from their —, existence of this committee or foundation. I want to thank you for listening and I'll field any questions I can.

Commissioner Price said, I can tell you've spent —. I guess I'm being recognized. I'm sorry. You've spent a lot of time and effort in putting this together, and I commend you for that. I also am aware there still exists in various leagues right now, there still exists some inequities in fairness in allowing everybody who wants to play to play on a —, in a particular league. I understand that some leagues you have to only —, only by inviting teams into that league are you able to play in that league. Now I'm not going to name leagues or individuals or anything, so anything that is going to be in this fashion that's going to be fair, I applaud you for doing that and, Frank [Murray], for you getting involved in it. I do think we need time for the County Attorney to look at this and that the County Manager —, we need to understand all the ramifications here. We're —, if we're talking about another government agency, if we're talking about a board, we need to understand everything from what the full scope of that board is as well as what expenses that might be involved in that kind of operation as well. So I'm receptive of this. I think it's a great idea, but I do ask that we take our time and not —, you know, not let the red tape come in and this thing go on for months even, but that we do take a good look at this and understand it better. But I do like the concept.

Commissioner Murray said, I agree that the attorney does have to give us some recommendations on it too once he's looked over all of it.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, Commissioner Saussy and then Commissioner Odell.

Commissioner Saussy said, thank you, Dr. Thomas. I agree, Danny [Robertson], you've gone through a lot of going through and putting this thing together and it is good. I have some reservations about it though. I think you could put the thing together without our say-so. The only thing is, is we own the property, the County owns the property, and I think the County has to have the control over it. This gives the control to a body that the County has nothing to do with. Now, it doesn't say anything about how you were going to appoint. At least I read it real quickly, about how the people to the CCPR —, is it CERHF, is appointed. Now, you also have people on here from outside the County who pay no taxes in this area whatsoever, and I couldn't go along with that at all. Mr. Robertson said, that is put in there because the development of this sport is a regional development and there are existing organizations that could be tied together and there would be a larger number of children playing so you have less repetitive teams being played. That's the purpose —. Commissioner Saussy said, I could agree with that and I —. Mr. Robertson said, and again, David [Saussy], this is a —, this is a concept. Commissioner Saussy said, yes. Mr. Robertson said, that Frank [Murray] and I have talked briefly about how we would come up with representation geographically. You know, if it came down to each Commissioner appointing two people or three people to the board that live in their district in order to get the geographic situation addressed, and we're open for any suggestions. So I guess what I would ask the Commission to consider is to help us in developing something that takes steps forward from here. Commissioner Saussy said, well, I —, and I totally agree with that. I think we definitely should and can do that, but the other thing is as far as outlining —, I think maybe what you're talking about here would work as an advisory body to the County, but to put up a separate board to have total control over —. We'd have to do that for every sport we have, and I just don't think we can do that. Mr. Robertson said, well, it does suggest that we would work in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Committee on scheduling, so the County still has the bottom line on the scheduling, and whether it's an advisory committee or a government entity, I —, whatever works. We just are frustrated with the inability to get cooperation amongst the separate entities and come together for the good and the growth of the sport, and we've got in the capital improvement budget the proposal to develop three more facilities, and with a forum that would coordinate that it's going to happen quicker and the growth of the sport is going to go quicker, and we have uniformity in the league, regulations and things of that nature, so —. Commissioner Saussy said, well, I think prob—, possibly too that one of the things, this can be done as an advisory situation or body and, frankly, I think maybe it could be put as an advisory body to the Recreation Authority that we already have. Mr. Robertson said, I, in fact, talked with Paul Scott and Rich Jeffries about the Recreation Authority at the direction of Frank, Mr. Murray, and they felt like if they were directed to that they would, but it didn't fit in their mission statement and that they were more a housing authority and things of that nature, the primary mission of the organization. I also approached the Savannah Sports Council and they all —, everyone's in agreement that the proposal and the concept is good and it would be something that would help in the coordination of all the efforts and get it to work, but nobody seems to be able to take the initiative and say, okay, we've got it. We actually wanted the sports council to send out invitations and do an open forum, and for some reason that didn't happen, and I don't understand, so this is our last hope is to come to y'all and say, how can y'all help us to get some coordination and to get some things that are growing in sport instead of it deteriorating and getting worse and everything else. Commissioner Saussy said, well, I think we could go forward with something like that, and I would suggest if you want

to make this a —, we need a motion or something, but I think we need to study it a little bit further so that there's consent. Mr. Robertson said, I would be remiss if I did not bring up the fact that the other parent committee has put a substantial amount of hours into their discussions also, and we were —, I was vacant over the Fall so I was unaware of the parents committee until a week or so ago, and so —, but when a representative approached the parent committee —, the other parent committee with our proposal, which has already been put together, it appeared to me that they were in line with the same goals and objectives, and we even listed some —, the same people in our nominees or just interested parties that would have —, they were a part of that parent committee, and also the YMCA. We've met with the YMCA to solicit their support of the —, of a portion of the league, which would be the developmental, which seemed to fit more in their mission statement on the sports development, and as I mentioned to them, if you look at the soccer in Savannah now, you've got 90% of the kids above 14 or 15 that play soccer began in a Y developmental program, and all we would like to see happen is similar things happen in the hockey and get the facilities built so we can handle the demand. Commissioner Saussy said, well, I think we've got some other people that might want to say some things.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, yes, there are some others who wish to speak before we take a vote. Commissioner Odell, Commissioner Murray, and then Commissioner Rivers, and we do have some citizens out here who would like to speak as well.

Commissioner Odell said, I don't think —. Vice Chairman Thomas said, just one moment. Commissioner Odell said, the gentleman who was at the podium. Commissioner Price said, Danny [Robertson]. Chairman Hair said, I think this is an excellent document. I was just trying to skim through it as you presented it, but it creates some legal questions for me that there's no way that I can see there being a vote on this today. Commissioner Murray said, it won't be today. Commissioner Saussy said, no. Commissioner Odell said, it's just a [inaudible] that cannot come today. That's number one. And I have some concerns too as to the appointment of other boards. Also, you talked to everyone, I would assume you listed those people, but have you talked to Mr. Golden, our Director? Mr. Robertson said, oh yes, we met with Mr. Golden also, and as a matter of fact we'll be at the scheduled meeting on Wednesday, and Jim [Golden] and I —, Jim [Golden] and I worked very closely together to develop the amendment to the capital improvement budget to get new facilities slated to be built, and, you know, that's not a problem working with Mr. Golden at all. Commissioner Odell said, I didn't mean to imply that it is. My only concern was that when we get a staff recommendation regarding recreational services, then I'd like to see Mr. Golden's input on that. He knows better than I would know —. Mr. Robertson said, right. Commissioner Odell said, and I don't have that before me. What I would recommend is that staff take your proposal, review your proposal in conjunction —, especially with Mr. Golden and Jon Hart, and give us a staff report outlining recommendations, legal complications if any, and just off the top my legal concern would be to transfer governmental property that would be on a 501(3)(c) government authority that we would lose control. That's something that we can't solve here, but that creates some substantial legal issues.

Commissioner Murray said, that is not in my opinion what would be done. We won't be transferring any properties, we won't be giving up the responsibilities. What we would be doing if this body is put together, they would be working with the Recreation Department making recommendations. The Recreation Department, Jim Golden's Department, would have the final say-so on anything that takes place, but it would be recommendations from this body that goes. Now, I wasn't ready to speak and didn't mean to interrupt you, but I do know we've got some people from some of the other groups out here that want to speak and I think they might —.

Commissioner Odell said, but I want to finish up with my time. Mr. Abolt, you wanted to —. County Attorney Hart said, just to --, kind of what you're saying. I would suggest you refer it to staff. I think we can make this thing work, but you have not heard testimony from Mr. Golden contrary to this. Just give us a little more time to go through it than we have this morning. Commissioner Odell said, I yield my time.

Vice Chairman Thomas asked, did you want to speak further? Commissioner Murray said, I'd like to let them go ahead and speak first. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay, let me get Commissioner Rivers and then we'll go straight to the audience.

Commissioner Rivers said, I —, this is kind of premature for me to make any kind of decision, being handed something right before the meeting without having any chance to decipher what's in here. Just looking at it and coming off the top of my head with what I know about leagues and how leagues are put together, and taking it from under the auspices of the County, per se, and getting a board that consists of people from Richmond Hill and Tybee, and I think on the last page you've got Hilton Head, there are a number of things here that I think we really need to look at, and for my recommendation I recommend that it goes back to staff, that all other groups that are involved in this thing that have any kind of reservation about it, so that we get the full thought of the total community rather than just what you're proposing to us, so I'd recommend —, I'd move that we send this back to staff to let them get all the hoops that's concerned —. Commissioner Odell said, and I'll second that motion.

Commissioner Murray asked, before we vote on that, can we go ahead and let them —. Vice Chairman Thomas said, yes, call for the —, okay. Yes?

Mr. Carl Eastwood said, I've just got a brief statement. I authored the proposal itself and assembled it. My name's Carl Eastwood and I'm a coach for our association. It really —, this is a condensed version of it, and that's the way we've [inaudible] it to you, Frank [Murray] had the more complete version of it, but —. Commissioner Murray said, Jim Golden

has the complete —. Mr. Eastwood said, we really just basically set it up as a model, and anything that's in it that is not necessary set in concrete or set forth in —. There's a sense of urgency in that, as Jim Golden said, on December 8<sup>th</sup> there's going to be a scheduling meeting, and there's going to be seven different organizations vying for time on that rink. That's what I thought Jim [Golden] said, seven different entities. Now that is —, that's going to be controversial in itself. We submitted a schedule back in August when it was supposed to be —, when it was going to be bought out, and that was not as a league, but [inaudible] it was set in that and it was a priority matter for this was a first come, first serve type basis. They already had a scheduling meeting once prior with the YMCA and the group, the —, I don't know what they're called, the Savannah Skating Hockey Association, isn't that —, and they weren't able to come up with a compromise as far as how to divide up the rink time. It was sort of [inaudible] and who comes together so it gives a sense of urgency to this situation because December 8<sup>th</sup> is next Wednesday. Your next meeting is the 17<sup>th</sup>. Between now and then I can see all of these factions walking in at the same time trying to sit down at this meeting and trying to hash out one rink to divide between all of these entities. Now I'm not sure that that number was correct, but Jim [Golden] I'm sure can tell you that. Thank you. Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much.

Mr. Robertson said, there was not a problem with the way in which the time was allotted. We just kind of thought it was odd that you had to have two different leagues with the small amount of kids playing, the number that were playing, and why they couldn't come up with an agreement to play each other is beyond my understanding, and that's what's happening.

Commissioner Murray asked, could we let the other people speak? Vice Chairman Thomas said, yes. Yes, I'm going to allow them to speak. Please step up and give your name.

Ms. Ruth Goldsmith said, hi, my name is Ruth Goldsmith and I have children who've been playing hockey as long as there's been hockey in Savannah, from the Y on the parking lots five years ago. I am the silent majority. I am the person that's there every weekend at the rink all day long, and there are a lot of parents just like me. We're not the people that have been before you before because we are happy, we are grateful to have the rink and grateful to have the opportunity to use it and not be on parking lots and sidewalks. Hockey is alive and well in Chatham County. You can tell that because you've got people in here vying for control of the rink. I represent the Coastal Georgia Hockey Parents Association. We're not affiliated with anybody. All we want is for our children to have a place to play hockey, and we want the sport to develop further. Hockey right now is like soccer was five or six years ago. We've gotten to the point where we have talented kids, kids that have been playing long enough that they are capable of traveling and competing in tournaments. We've been working with Mr. Golden, and Mr. Golden's done a great job. His goal seems to be to divide up the rink time fairly based upon the number of kids that are playing. If I have a league with 50 children and you have a league with 200 children, common sense would tell you that the league with 50 does not get 50% of the time and the league with 200 get 50% of the time. You have to divide it up based on teams. If one league would have six teams and another league has two teams, obviously each league might get —, each team will get the same amount of time, but each different league won't. We've been trying to set up guidelines for the rink, and we've been working with Mr. Golden. We've been setting up guidelines for equipment. We've dealt with safety issues, the [inaudible] issues, insurance. But really what we're here about today is access. That's the beef. Everybody wants access to the rink because there's only one rink. The Y does a great job, but they really don't have any business running the Chatham County only hockey facility. I mean, if they want to submit teams to come and to play, that's great. If Mr. Robertson and Mr. Eastwood want to have, put their federation together that's fine, but please don't make me be a part of it to play hockey. Hockey —, there really is not much dispute or debate about hockey. I think you've been seeing it from two or three individuals, but everybody else is happy, and we have looked into forming a nonprofit Countywide board as well. We took a survey of all the parents and Ms. Hennessy [phonetic] will show the survey. On Saturday at Lake Mayer I believe there were 60-some children that were playing that day that participated in the survey. The vast majority of them want to leave this as it is. They don't want to join a board at this time, they don't want to join —, they were given various choices and Ms. Hennessy will show you what the options were. Ms. Hennessy said, you have the options. Ms. Goldsmith said, well, let them see the form. In a —, down the road we may be ready for a Countywide board, but we're not there yet. Right now hockey is growing. We don't have enough facilities to support really all we've got now, and we just want to see the rink time divided up fairly, and that's what Mr. Golden's trying to do. He said anybody that comes in there with a team or a league, we're going to sit down on December 8<sup>th</sup> and we're going to divide up the time. We're going to divide it up based on the number of teams and the number of participants. I'm afraid what we're having here today is kind of an in-run. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday to set up the schedules for January and February. The groups that our children play with and the majority of the players have been playing are signed up and they'll be represented on Wednesday as, yes, we've got this number of teams. I think the people that don't want this to happen are people that do not have teams and do not have participants enough that they could control the bulk of the rink time, and I really think that's why they're here.

Commissioner Murray said, first of all, I want to assure you and anyone else out there that's involved in this process that this Commission is not going to do anything or sign over our authority to the YMCA or anyone else. We've been through that and we aren't going to do that again. Whatever happens is we hope will be for the betterment of the youth that are playing this particular sport and the rest of the sports in Chatham County. So that is not part of what we're trying to do. I can assure you of this, in my opinion, was not an in-run, but this came to me. I looked at it and thought it was a good proposal. I didn't know anything about y'all's parents group until Ms. Hennessy called me yesterday and we talked, and I explained to her why it was on the agenda and what we were trying to do. It's not a decision that's going to be made today. The County Attorney needs to give us some recommendations on it, the Recreation Department needs to give us recommendations on it, and the purpose of this was to hear from all the groups. We have this proposal. To me it looks like a good proposal with some minor changes made, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we will go with this proposal,

but it's a start and, quite frankly, I think myself, and I'm not going to try to speak for the rest of the Commissioners, but I think they too are probably tired of the back and forth and the maneuvering and stuff that the different groups are trying to do, and you're probably right on target with some of that, and that's something that we would like to have resolved, whatever we have to do to resolve that. But my major concern are the youth and them being able to play the game that they want to go play on the facilities that the County has and that everyone is treated fairly with that, and that is my major concern, and I think that will be the concern of the rest of this Commission, but we will not be signing over any authority to any group with any of the recreational facilities.

Ms. Goldsmith said, well, Mr. Murray, that's really our concern too is because we're really just parents and we have kids that play and we're out there in the trenches playing every day, and, you know, Mr. Robertson and Mr. Eastwood aren't participating in hockey right now. I mean, they haven't been out there all Fall, but we've been out there day in and day out, and I just don't want a minority of people —. Hockey is really not in disarray, it's not in discord. The great majority of people are very happy right now with the way it's being run. That means that anybody can sign up with league and people can form a league, and they're welcome to come. There is no priority for any of these teams or any of these leagues that I know of. If you want to be on a team, you go sign up. If you want to form your own team, you go sign up, and you request time from the County, and that's fair, and —, because we're just not to the point yet where we deem that you have to belong to one group to play hockey or to have one boy that runs hockey. We're just not there yet. It's a growing sport and we've made —, it's just amazing the strides we've made in a couple of years. Thank you for building the rink, and —. Commissioner Murray said, well, we hope we can do some more. Ms. Goldsmith said, and obviously we need more. Once there are more rinks you won't have this quibbling because people will have plenty of time to play, but I think that's really the issue you're dealing with here. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Thank you, Ms. Goldsmith. Do we have any other persons who wish to speak on this.

Mr. Matthew Marr [phonetic] said, yes, I'd like to make a comment. My name is Matthew Marr and I'm a dad of two boys that have been playing hockey with the [inaudible] for quite some time. I also agree with what was just said. We don't have a problem in our league. There's a wonderful program that goes on out there every week, and we have a number of very dedicated people who have been running this thing for quite some time. I understand there were some complications that had to do with the County. I'm not really aware of that and I'm not interested in being aware of that. My kids play hockey and they play on —, with a group that has done an outstanding job. My kids happen to think this is the greatest thing that ever happened, and the people that are running it have been very good role models, and I think that Mr. Robinson's [sic] group has broken off from the main group, and now there seems to be a consideration of the YMCA also wanting to use the rink. We have no problem with that whatsoever except that we just want to make sure that it's done fairly. We have a group that is the dominant hockey group in the City and it runs very well. There's no complaints from the parents. We have a wonderful group, a wonderful group of guys that dedicate a tremendous amount of time. We met with Mr. Goldman [sic] and he's been very helpful, and the only point that I think that we need to stand on is that —, the scheduling problem, and Mr. Golden was the one that indicated that he would run the rink just like he would run any other athletic facility in the City, and we have no problem with that whatsoever. You come into a meeting and you show registration into your league of how many participants you have and the time will be dealt out from —, in that way. I don't see that there's a need to try to combine all these groups. Each one of these groups serve a different purpose. Our group is more advanced, the kids have been playing now for a number of years, and they don't want to go back to playing YMCA hockey. They played YMCA hockey and I thought it's a wonderful program, but it's an introductory program, it's a beginning program. This is a much more advanced group and this group doesn't want to have to go back and be governed by someone else to tell them what they need to do or where we want our kids to go with this type of program.

Commissioner Murray said, I'm glad you brought that up because that's one of the comments I meant to make and I didn't. When I say fair and equal to everyone, I mean those people that are in the developmental stages of learning the program, learning the sport, and also the competitive leagues, and I think there's —, even though we only have one rink right now, we're going to have to be able to incorporate that together with the schedule and so those people, if they don't have a place to go learn except for the streets, they aren't going to learn it too well. Mr. Marr said, and we support that wholeheartedly. Commissioner Murray said, and so I think you need the developmental part of it and you also need the competitive side of it. Mr. Marr said, correct. Commissioner Murray said, I agree you can't mix those, that you've got to have both, and that's what I meant when I said fair and across the board for everyone. Mr. Marr said, and I think where a lot of this problem comes from is that the group that we belong to and that our kids play in happens to be the largest group. It seems it boils down to another two groups, Mr. Roberts' [sic] group and the YMCA. We have no problem with that whatsoever. The problem I think they have with us is that we have the largest participants, so we should be able to get most of the —, as much rink time as we can to support and service these kids that we have in this league. The other two leagues are just kind of getting off the ground and they don't have a whole lot of people so they're very concerned about the scheduling, but it should be done on a fair basis. We have a number of children, I don't know how many we have, I couldn't quote that, but quite a few that need to be serviced, and I guess the parents are most concerned about being kind of —, that the scheduling program will not go to service the kids that are already in this program, that it will be divided up unequally. So that —, I think that's our biggest concern. Mr. Golden has been a great help with us, very cooperative and come up with some very good ideas, and he has assured us that as we go into these scheduling areas that the groups that have the most amount of kids to service will be taken into consideration with the time that they need to be serviced. It wouldn't be fair to take 200 kids and give them a smaller percentage of the time and give a larger percentage of the time to a very small

group, and I think that's the real basis of the concern here for the parents. We have no problem with our league. We think it's great.

Commissioner Murray said, the motion we have on the floor now is to send all the recommendations back to staff, and that means Jim Golden also and the County Attorney, to look over this and come back with a recommendation to this Commission, and certainly all of y'all will have input with that, and I know you'll be at a meeting —, what's it set, December 8<sup>th</sup>? For the scheduling meeting? Mr. Golden said, yes sir. Commissioner Murray said, and some things that take place there. I don't know how long it would take the staff to come back with recommendations to us or what their recommendation will be, but —, whether it gets here on the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month or whether it's the first meeting in January, I don't know. They need time to go through it and look at everything themselves.

Mr. Marr said, when all the turmoil, when all the turmoil came up with the hockey and just recently, a lot of the parents did just that. We decided, we took it upon ourselves to get together and we really called it a steering committee, to kind of just to find out what everybody's view were, where the problems were if there were problems, and tried to iron those things out. We had a number of meetings, four or five meetings, completely open to parents. We tried to publicize it through handing out different pamphlets and things at the hockey rink where everybody congregates. It's been open to everyone, so in essence we've done that. We've set up our own internal group open to everyone to take a look at some of the problems and make suggestions to Mr. Golden, who we understand is the one in control. I think this other group is coming in and there really is a control problem. I mean, plain and simple, it's a control problem. We've invited these folks into our group. They came in with a proposal. We said, well, we agree with some of it, we don't agree with some of it, this is what we're going to go with; we have a league, you're welcome to join with us or not. And I think we're here today talking about a group trying to take over this, this rink.

Commissioner Murray said, the purpose of me putting this on the agenda was not to have one group slight the other group and back and forth —. Vice Chairman Thomas said, exactly. Commissioner Murray said, and I'd rather not get into that today. I'd rather leave those comments out of it if we can because that is not going to accomplish anything on what we're trying to do. I just don't want to see us, one group knocking the other because that's what we've been going through since this program started, and what we're trying —. Mr. Marr said, I'm not trying to knock anybody. Commissioner Murray said, I understand that, but I don't even want to —, I don't even want to listen personally to those comments from one group to the other. Mr. Marr said, we welcome all hockey into the City. Commissioner Murray said, that's good. Mr. Marr said, we think it's a wonderful thing to bring into the City, but we would like to be able to choose where our children play, under what conditions, and not be governed by one group because we serve different purposes.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you. Mr. Marr said, thank you for listening. Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much. Any further —? Ms. Hennessy said, yes. Vice Chairman Thomas said, please try to make your comments very short.

Ms. Mary Hennessy said, I'm Mary Hennessy. I'm the one who actually organized the parents organization after the rink was taken over by the County. We actually didn't hear about it until it was in the paper that morning, and I believe it was a Saturday it broke, but we all discussed it that day and we got together. I just want to briefly tell you, we got together because our main concern was how time would be divvied out at the rink. That was our main purpose was to find out if things would be done fairly. We thought —, we also worked out the league we were involved in and we do have, you know, it's never a perfect world and there were some issues brought up as far as the league was concerned and we aired those issues. We met with the Super Goose, the YMCA and a member of the Pirates Hockey, we met with Carl Eastwood and look at his proposal. We were a steering committee, we were the majority of the parents that are out there. I will tell you right now there are approximately 180 to 200 participants in in-line hockey; 80 of those are adults, and I think that's something you need to look at too because my husband plays. As a matter of fact, they went out of town this last weekend and they won down in Jacksonville. So the adult hockey league is alive and well, and I think we need to remember that. I also have two children that play, I have two little boys that play, and my husband coaches and he has volunteered since the YMCA started hockey. I'm an avid hockey mom, if you want to call me that, and my only concern is that you —, I thought in what you were doing was to give us a choice and that the reason you were taking that —, the rink was not going to be given to any one group was to give us a choice, and all I ask is that you continue to allow us to make a choice on who we play hockey with and what league we belong to, and if we're not happy with the league fees, by gosh, we'll be the ones to go to that league and tell them we're not happy with it. That's why I did the survey. Unfortunately, Dr. Eddie Whelan couldn't be here today. He's been working hand in hand with me on doing this and really getting the feel of what all the parents feel out there not one or two, and you're always going to have someone who's not happy, and that's how life is, but we had tried to get the majority and we're just trying to keep hockey going, and I would hope that you would all keep that in mind and that you would just allow us to make the choice. I think a lot of those ideas are great. I think eventually it will get to that, but just like soccer it will develop over time. I don't see 600 participants coming out next season, and I think if you come out to the rink you'll see it's basically the same every season. We have about 150 to 200 participants. It's been that way since hockey started. It is growing, it's a growing sport. We have the Thrashers now in Atlanta, but I think you'll see it's not growing quite as fast as others would probably hope it would, as I would hope it would, because of all the other sports out there, but those are basically my comments, and that's just to give the parents a voice, give us a voice. We're the ones paying the bills to include the —, my son has a broken arm now, but give us a voice and let us be a part of this decision making process. And one more comment, it's the facility itself. It was great you built the rink. Now we have to look at the maintenance, and I will tell you there's some major problems out there, and if you would look at that too and maybe allow us to have a voice in that too because there are a lot of experienced people —, Rob Lanier is here, he coaches the 17 and

under traveling team and he also has played hockey all his life, grew up in Canada, played semi-pro hockey. He's well aware of what the surface needs to look like and I think that you could use some of his expertise in making sure that that hockey is kept up —, that the rink is kept up and that you don't have to go back and spend a lot of dollars fixing it. That's all I have, thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much. Commissioner Rivers said, call the question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, we'll have —, this gentleman here had his hand up. I'm going to —. Commissioner Murray said, Dr. Thomas. Vice Chairman Thomas asked, excuse me? Commissioner Murray said, the Manager wanted to make a comment. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. We're going to have comments from —, brief comments from them and then we'll have the Manager and then we will vote.

Mr. Jim Mercer said, yes mam. We're with —, we are the YMCA and as much as our name —. The Clerk said, state your name first. Mr. Mercer said, I'm sorry. My name is Jim Mercer. I'm the Executive Director of the Habersham YMCA, representing the YMCA of Coastal Georgia. Mr. Simons said, and I'm Mark Simons, the Branch Director of the West Chatham YMCA. Mr. Mercer said, and we're here today and as much as our name is appearing in the proposal and also as much as our name has been mentioned, and which we do appreciate all the compliments we have received for our part in bringing hockey to this community, we are not here aligned with any one particular group though we do applaud their efforts to resolve what difference they may have, but we're here only to say how much we appreciate everybody's involvement and whatever the Y can be a part of to be a part of the solution, that's why we're here today. Thank you. Mr. Simons said, thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much. Vice Chairman Thomas recognized County Manager Abolt.

County Manager Abolt said, Dr. Thomas and gentlemen, if you just give until the first meeting in January to make sure you get a fair array of options, I'd appreciate that if possible. Commissioner Saussy said, good. Commissioner Murray asked, first meeting in January then? Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay.

Commissioner Rivers said, call the question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, call for the question. All in favor of the motion, please vote? Opposes? The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner DeLoach were not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Murray said, before these people leave I'd just like to make a comment if I could. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Commissioner Murray said, I appreciate what each group out there is doing trying to get their leagues going and things like that, and I would only ask that all of y'all still try to work together from league to league to try to resolve these problems also and so we don't have the conflict between the different groups and I hope that we can work it out and, like the County Manager said, he'll have a recommendation back to us at the first meeting in January. I don't know what that date is. County Manager Abolt said, y'all will set your meeting next time, but I would assume it would be the second Friday in the month. Commissioner Murray said, whatever the second Friday in January is. County Manager Abolt said, it looks the 14<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Murray said, the 14<sup>th</sup> of January. County Manager Abolt said, the 14<sup>th</sup> of January.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. All right thank you. Commissioner Murray said, thank you.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Rivers moved that the issue of in-line hockey be referred to staff and recommendations be brought back to the Board at the first meeting in January of 2000. Commissioner Odell seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner DeLoach were not present.]

=====

#### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Vice Chairman Thomas said, I do have a note here from the CAT Board. Their meeting is going to be very short, but in order to maintain a quorum we need to do that by Noon and also to have the public hearing. We have one other item under the Commissioners Items. Is that a long item, #3? Commissioner Jackel? Commissioner Jackel said, I don't think it will be real long. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay.

=====

#### **7. RECOGNITION OF YOUTH COMMISSIONER, BONITA TAYLOR (COMMISSIONER RIVERS).**

Chairman Hair said, we're very privileged in Chatham County to have a young lady that Commissioner Rivers is going to tell us about that has achieved quite an accomplishment. Chairman Hair recognized Commissioner Rivers.

Commissioner Rivers said, good morning. Good morning audience and Mr. Chairman, fellow Commissioners. We have with us a distinguished Youth Commissioner who has the distinction of being appointed by Senator Coverdell to West Point. She was also appointed —, has an appointment offer, or a nomination to the Air Force Academy through Representative Jack Kingston. So she has two academies and she has a choice. I don't know what her choice is going to be. But her name is Bonita Taylor and she's presently serving on the Youth Commission, and that appointment was made or nomination was made yesterday, and it was appropriate for us to recognize one of our fellow Commissioners.

Chairman Hair said, thank you very much. We're going to —, I want Dr. Thomas to here as well. Dr. Thomas is the one that started the Youth Commission. It is quite an honor for you, and it's an honor for us to present this to you this morning. It says:

**COUNTY OF CHATHAM  
STATE OF GEORGIA  
to  
Bonita Taylor**

In recognition of the nomination of a member of the Chatham County Youth Commission to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point (by U.S. Senator Paul Coverdell) and to the U.S. Air Force Academy (by U.S. Representative Jack Kingston). This dual honor stands as testament to her scholastic and leadership abilities, and by it, she sets an example for others.  
Presented this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 1999

/s/ Dr. Billy B. Hair, Chairman  
/s/ Dr. Priscilla D. Thomas, Vice Chairman

=====

**CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

Vice Chairman Thomas declared the meeting of the Board of Commissioners in recess at 11:47 a.m., and the Board reconvened as the Chatham Area Transit Authority.

Following adjournment of the meeting of the Chatham Area Transit Authority, the meeting of the Board of Commissioners was reconvened at 11:50 a.m.

=====

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Vice Chairman Thomas said, if we could just go to the public hearing at this time. Commissioner Price said, so moved. Commissioner DeLoach said, second. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

[NOTE: The order of business was changed and Item IX-2 was heard at this point on the agenda.]

=====

**VIII. TABLED/POSTPONED ITEMS**

Unless action is contemplated at today's meeting, staff report and file material has not been duplicated in your agenda packet. The files are available from the Clerk. Those on which staff is requesting action are indicated by asterisk (\*).

None

=====

## **IX. ITEMS FOR INDIVIDUAL ACTION**

(Unless the Board directs otherwise, adoption of an Action Item will mean approval of the respective County staff report and its recommended action.)

1. **REQUEST BOARD APPROVE THE FOLLOWING: A GENERAL FUND M&O INTERDEPARTMENTAL TRANSFER OF \$6,000 FROM EMS TO THE ELECTIONS BOARD FOR A SPECIAL ELECTION, A GENERAL FUND M&O TRANSFER OF \$12,000 WITHIN THE TAX COMMISSIONER'S BUDGET FOR OVERTIME; CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM CONTINGENCY TRANSFER OF \$20,000 FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ANIMAL CONTROL FACILITY; AND A 1998-2003 SPLOST TRANSFER OF \$500,000 FROM PIPEMAKERS CANAL TO ROMNEY PLACE/PARKERSBURG.**

Commissioner Saussy said, move for approval. Commissioner Price said, second. Commissioner DeLoach said, question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, question. Discussion?

Commissioner DeLoach said, we're moving that \$500,000, pulling that out and moving it forward now so that we can move forward with that project. County Manager Abolt said, the gentleman testified before you all a few weeks ago. Remember they came forward and asked that that be accelerated. Commissioner DeLoach said, and then the funding that was already in place there, is that going back at that time? Is that going back to the funding of the Pipemakers Canal whenever that —? County Manager Abolt said, yes. Yes sir. As you know, Pipemakers is not going to stop. We're just looking at cash flow and we're trying to make you —. Commissioner DeLoach said, I notice you've appropriated X-amount of dollars from Pipemakers Canal and \$500,000 is a nice little hit on there, and I just want to find out if that money's going to be put back in the project at a later date. County Manager Abolt said, yes sir. As the cash flow is there it'll be put back in the project. The project will not suffer as far as total construction. Mr. Bungard's done an excellent job of being able to go three different directions at once. Commissioner DeLoach said, okay.

Commissioner Murray said, my question will be are we able to pull \$6,000 out of EMS will not affect the operation of that department. County Manager Abolt said, [inaudible] their expenditures, it's our evaluation it would not. This is one of those issues we could not ignore. You know, we have a special election coming up here for —. Commissioner Murray said, I understand that, Russ [Abolt], but when we start pulling from EMS, which is a safety thing, an emergency setup that we have, that's my question. Can we afford to pull \$6,000 out of that when we could probably pull it from somewhere else? County Manager Abolt said, well in our —, in our analysis we did not pick the EMS as the only one. We looked at the entire line items for each of the budgets. You'll see in the report from Mr. Persaud, there is a causative variance in materials and supplies in the EMS budget, and that was our [inaudible]. I cannot believe it will jeopardize —. Commissioner Murray asked, this will not enhance —, I mean, hurt the operation in any manner? That's what I'm saying. County Manager Abolt said, no sir. The only issue as you know we have on EMS is the filling of an EMT position, and that's what I'm concerned about.

Commissioner Price said, call the question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor of the motion. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner Odell were not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, it's carried.

### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Saussy moved to approve the following: a General Fund M&O interdepartmental transfer of \$6,000 from EMS to the Elections Board for a special election, a General Fund M&O transfer of \$12,000 within the Tax Commissioner's budget for overtime; Capital Improvement Program contingency transfer of \$20,000 for improvements to the Animal Control facility; and a 1998-2003 SPLOST transfer of \$500,000 from Pipemakers Canal to Romney Place/Parkersburg. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner Odell were not present.]

=====

2. **PUBLIC HEARING AS REQUIRED BY THE STATE ON THE COUNTY'S FISCAL YEAR 2000 BUDGET.**

Vice Chairman Thomas recognized County Manager Abolt.

County Manager Abolt said, Madam Vice Chairperson, we do have to read into the record, I know the Chairman was going to do that, but I would be glad to or your can, the third paper on your staff report, is required to perfect the record as far as

what the hearing is all about. Would you like to read this or would you like me to read it? Vice Chairman Thomas said, you can read it.

County Manager Abolt said, for the purpose of the record then, ladies and gentlemen, this hearing is being held in compliance with State law relative to Chatham County's proposed fiscal year budget for the year 2000. We'll be discussing the total budget with all the various funds. And there is and for the purpose of the Clerk's record, we have entered into the specific assignments of dollars to each fund. The total budget is in the amount of \$282,223,670, and again the specific breakdown will be given to Ms. Tillman. [NOTE: Breakdown of total budget for the first six-month period of FY 2000 is: General Fund (M&O) \$45,795,350; Special Service District \$9,757,400; Street Lighting Fund \$134,470; Chatham Area Transit District Fund \$2,061,260; Confiscated Fund \$118,760; Street Paving Fund \$5,530; Emergency Management Fund \$170,420; Emergency Telephone System Fund \$487,930; Land Bank Authority \$0; Land Disturbing Activities Ordinance \$112,270; General Purpose Capital Improvement Fund \$0; DSA Revenue Bonds 1999 - CIP Fund \$9,300,000; One Percent Sales Tax Fund (1985-1993) \$78,517,130; One Percent Sales Tax Fund (1993-1998) \$71,238,440; One Percent Sales Tax Fund (1998-2003) \$57,019,440; Chatham County Hospital Authority \$136,140; Water & Sewer Revenue Fund \$766,560; Parking Garage Revenue Fund \$130,920; Chatham Area Transit Authority Fund (Pending - Not received for FY2000) \$0; Solid Waste Management Fund \$1,259,960; Henderson Golf Club \$562,440; Catastrophic Claims Reserve \$65,710; Group Health Insurance Fund \$4,583,540 - Total Budget \$282,223,670.]

County Manager Abolt said, information packets showing the proposed budget for all funds are available at the front entrance. A list is being passed around asking for the names and addresses of those present. The purpose of this is to document that public input was solicited for future budget audit purposes. We will start at the right side of the room and go row by row. If you wish to speak, please come to the podium, state your name and address, and the group or organization you represent, if any. We have staff available to pass out any written material to the Commissioners. We would ask that you be brief and concise in your remarks since we have a number of people that may want to speak, and we want everyone to have an equal chance to be heard.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much. We'll start to my right and on the first row and move over in that order. Thank you. Please come up to the mike.

Mr. Jack Wardlaw said, my name is Jack Wardlaw. I'm the Chief Financial Officer for the Board of Education. I'm here today representing the Board and Superintendent, who are in Atlanta on a training exercise today as a requirement for their GSDA. We're here today to reaffirm our position relating to the tax collection fees that we discussed with the Commissioners on November 5<sup>th</sup>. We're handing out a brief key point type summary that, in essence, we went over with you before, and we'd like to reaffirm that —, our position on this situation. We think it's a very significant situation. It's important to us because it has some dire financial —, it's a dire financial situation for us. First, the item as it's going to be presented to you today on its first reading is requesting that you adjust the one percent collection fee from 1% to 2½%, which would cause a 150% increase in the dollars collected and the rate. Currently, the Board is paying approximately \$1,000,000 a year to the Tax Commissioner's office. This would raise this cost to \$2,500,000 on an annual basis. We've discussed the numbers with you before and I think we need to just reiterate them real quickly. If that happens, our first point is that we will be virtually paying for 100% of the Tax Commissioner's office. The office costs a little over \$2,500,000 to run; you would be collecting \$2,500,000 from the Board of Education. It may impact future funding initiatives with the community in relationship to the Board. We'll be looking at the entity that was caused to raise taxes as a result of this issue. This is a mid-year issue to us if it's done in January. Our budget year is from July 1 through June 30. This was cause us to be an out —, cause an out-of-balance situation for the Board of Education, which would cause us to have to go in and make cuts. As we described to you before, the cuts are exaggerated to a large degree because you only have half a year to work with. So instead of a half a million dollar cut, you're looking more at a —, on an annual basis of a million dollar cut, and the next year you're looking at a million and a half dollars in funding reduction. In essence, this is a .3 mill hidden tax increase that's being shifted from the Commissioners to the Board of Education. We just need to be up front about it and know that. This service is already been provided by the Commissioners at 1% and if no additional costs or services are provided, you're shifting that cost to us, and we need to be aware of that. Again, as I reiterated, this is a cost transference to us and there has been no real cost efficiencies or effectiveness done to reduce the cost of the office, so we're being asked to pick up all of those. So we ask for your cooperation. We want to make sure you're aware of the facts. Some of the information that you've been provided I don't believe is accurate, and in the item that you're voting on today it has some inaccuracies regarding the dollar values that will be collected. It's not \$1.7 million annually, it's \$2.5 million annually. If you increase the percentage from 1% to 2½% on \$1,000,000 of collection —, \$100,000,000 of collection, excuse me, — that's \$2.5 million. The increase to the Commissioner for a six-month period of time due to the fact that 41% of the collections for the Board of Education are made in the first six months of the year is a little over a million dollars, not 800 —, in round dollars, \$850,000 that's been given to the Commission. So I say those things because if you understate the revenue collection, then you don't need that same percentage to meet your objectives. So, if you understate the revenue, you have to raise the percentage up to make your objectives. So I think it's important that you know that. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Commissioner Jackel, Saussy, Murray.

Commissioner Jackel said, we received some figures that the School Board was receiving approximately 60% of the revenue collected yet was paying only about 30% of the cost. What's your take on that? Mr. Wardlaw said, that's an accurate number, the 60%. 30% only became effective for this year. If you go back and look at history, we have been paying close to 50%, but the budget in that area has gone up and, as a result of that, we pay a smaller percentage. In 1999 that office budget went from two million to two and a half million. So from '98 to '99 if our fees stayed the same, then —,

from two million to one million which we are paying is approximately 50%, but when the budget went up, then we paid a lower percentage. Commissioner Jackel said, all right, but if you're receiving 60% of the money, do you have a problem with paying 60% of the cost. Mr. Wardlaw said, I can't personally make that commitment. I think we would be willing to sit down and negotiate, as we discussed with the Commissioners last time, in some kind of a meeting with the appropriate entities and discuss what that should be. Yes, we had discussions on what was the appropriate cost, the direct cost of running the office, and what would be our fair share. I think that's, you know —. Commissioner Jackel asked, well, what do you see your fair share as? Not the one —, not the 1% currently if that's it, and you're saying 2.5 is too high. So what is the fair share? What is the figure? Mr. Wardlaw said, somewhere between those two numbers. Commissioner Jackel asked, you don't have a number that you think's fair? Mr. Wardlaw said, I'd be glad to —. I'm not authorized to really discuss this as far as the negotiating. I'm just not the body that needs to do that. Commissioner Jackel said, yes, but here's what I hear you're saying. You're saying, well, what we're doing's okay because you're only paying the 1% and if we go up to 2.5 that's not fair, but what is the number that you think would be fair? Mr. Wardlaw said, I mean, there's two sides to the issue. We believe we should be paying our fair share, but if you took it to the extreme and say if you didn't collect the taxes of the Board of Education what would be your cost? Basically, your cost would be just about what you're paying right now. Commissioner Jackel said, well, you know, that's the argument that Frank [Murray] used when he tried to fly to Atlanta. He said, it's not going to cost you any more if I get on the plane, you're already going to Atlanta, and they didn't let him on that time either so —. Mr. Wardlaw said, and I'm not saying that's the —, I'm not making that the argument, I'm just saying there's two extremes there. Commissioner Murray said, that wasn't my argument either. Commissioner Jackel asked, well, it somebody. Was it Harris [Odell] then? Commissioner Odell said, I think it was Ben [Price]. Mr. Wardlaw said, it must have been Commissioner Price, but there's somewhere in the middle there and until the parties sit down and discuss the issues, I'm not sure we can come to a resolution. Commissioner Jackel said, okay, well, my theory on this thing before I knew the numbers was I felt y'all ought to pay your share of the expenses, whatever that was, and I'm not sure the expenses necessarily add up to the percentage of the money you receive, but that was kind of what we've been told, that y'all have been getting about 60% of the money so you ought to pay 60% of the costs. Without knowing the figures, that was the philosophy I came in and really hadn't had any information to change that, so if the motion comes out where we say y'all are getting 60% of the money, you ought to pay 60% of the cost, that's where I'll be coming from. Mr. Wardlaw said, I see, and you have to start somewhere, and we'll be willing to start at that point.

Commissioner Rivers said, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, may I ask a question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay —. Commissioner Rivers said, I just want to ask a question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Commissioner Rivers asked, wasn't the staff and the Board of Education supposed to sit down before and iron all this out? Vice Chairman Thomas said, they were supposed to do that, yes. Commissioner Rivers asked, so why is this back before us today? Now I don't want to be hashing over nothing that should have been resolved so somebody tell me something different. Vice Chairman Thomas said, Mr. Manager? County Manager Abolt said, my understanding of the issue, and I can be corrected, was there was to be a gathering with the County Commissioners involved with the School Board. Certainly, you know, we will do this. I believe Commissioner Price has a meeting set up next week that we'll full participate in, but we're bringing back to you an issue that certainly must be resolved before the end of the budget year, and you still have many choices between now and the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Price said, but it would be improper today to do a first reading when we don't even have the meeting that we were supposed to have and, in fact, the information in the first reading is incorrect and you even —. County Manager Abolt said, two different —. Commissioner Price said, you even alluded to a change in the number yourself, something less than two and —. County Manager Abolt said, two different issues. Mr. Wardlaw is before you today in a hearing on the budget. A little later on you have the issue on first reading. Commissioner Price said, right. County Manager Abolt said, and you have choices there. Commissioner Price said, and my intent, I'll tell you right now, is when we get to that first reading, I'm going to move that we table that because it is inappropriate to read something that we haven't got to the extent of having had the meetings that we agreed to and that we suggested at the last, November —, whatever that first meeting in November was. We just haven't done the complete homework to get to this point yet, and that's my point. There is going to be some —, there's going to be some negotiating with the Board of Education to see what's fair. We can't dictate fairness. We have to sit down and agree, come to terms on what is fair. We can't just say this is fair and take it or leave it. I mean, that's not the way we should be negotiating with other boards of elected officials that represent basically the same people that we do.

Commissioner Saussy said, but I —, excuse me, I think this is just a hearing to hear not to —. Commissioner Price said, it is. Commissioner Saussy said, it's not a first reading. Commissioner Price said, well, there is a first reading under First Readings —. Commissioner Murray said, but that's later on. Commissioner Price said, on the ordinance. We'd have to change the ordinance. Anyway, that's all I —, that's what I'm saying is we need to have this meeting. It's scheduled for 3:30 in the Superintendent's office on Tuesday afternoon to sit down and finally do what we should have done by now.

Vice Chairman Thomas asked, Commissioner Murray, did you still want to speak?

Commissioner Murray said, yes. Danny Powers is still here. I'd like for him to come forward if he would. Vice Chairman Thomas said, he's ready. Commissioner Murray said, Danny [Powers], you —, this all comes out of your department. Do you have the figures of what percentage that you do for the Board of Education versus what you do for Chatham County? Mr. Powers said, when we calculated the numbers, I believed we disbursed last year in 1998 \$97 million went to the Board. Of course, that equates to about \$970,000 based on that 1%. Commissioner Murray said, all right. The percentage though of the tax —. Mr. Powers said, based on our total collections, I believe it was about 58% of the total collections

went to the Board. Commissioner Murray said, well, my recommendation would be then that each year whatever that figure is, whatever that percentage is, is what the Board of Education pays. Mr. Powers said, well, I think that's something that we do need to sit down and work out. Commissioner Murray said, okay. Mr. Powers said, at this point let me remind you, what I collect goes into the General M&O Fund, okay. It does not come to —, directly to my budget.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Thank you. Vice Chairman Thomas recognized Commissioner Saussy.

Commissioner Saussy said, you alluded to this in effect would be a .3 mill hidden tax increase. I don't think it's hidden at all. It's out in the open. I mean —. Mr. Wardlaw said, it's shifting the tax from one body to —. Commissioner Saussy said, well, let me ask you this. Do you call the other, when you weren't paying the full share of it, a hidden tax on your part? Well, all right then it's not a hidden tax.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Thank you Mr. Wardlaw. Mr. Wardlaw said, thank you. Anyone else on that first row. Mrs. Hilda Whitaker said, Madam Chairman, there are two people that need assistance. Vice Chairman Thomas said, sure. Please. Mrs. Whitaker said, I wrote his name on the pad. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay, thank you.

Mr. Michael Williams said, Madam Chair, members of the County Commission, I'm Michael Williams, President of United Way of Coastal Empire, and we represent 36 health and human services agencies in the community, 16 of whom receive grant-in-aid from the County to the tune of over \$600,000. This change in the fiscal year, which I understand the proposal, will eliminate funding, at least grant-in-aid funding, for the first six months of the year we believe will have a devastating effect on some of these agencies, and I'm going to be very brief. In fact, what I'm going to do is ask —, and we have several volunteers. Earlier today we had probably 30 people in here representing those 16 agencies. Many of them have left, but in the interest of time I have three volunteers and a couple of clients who represent the agencies that will be most impacted by this proposal if it is approved by the County Commission, and what I'd like to do is to call on our volunteers and then the gentleman and another lady who are here. The following people, Bernie Polite, I'm going to ask Bill Binns from Senior Citizens first if he will come forward because he has to leave, if that's acceptable, Bernie Polite, Carol Bell, who wears various hats, but she is a Board Chair of United Way this year, and then Mrs. Linda Taylor and Rev. Edgar Timmons. Thank you.

Commissioner Jackel asked, can I ask just one question before you leave? I understand you're unhappy with the proposal. Believe me, I understand that and I've heard that from the agencies and some close personal friends, and I understand the hardship it would work on some of the agencies. Is there some sort of proposal that you think you could live with, like getting 80% of the money now and then —, I mean, 40% of the money now and then 60% in the next year, or some factor that would give us a little relief? Mr. Williams said, Mr. Jackel, I'm sure that we could all come to some sort of an agreement. This information was just imparted to most of our agencies on Wednesday, and so we've had very little time to prepare anything. The information that you have before you, which is really just a summary of some of the impact that this will have, that was only put together last night and this morning so we haven't had time to really develop what I would say would be a recommendation along the lines of what you're talking about. We're certainly amenable to that. Commissioner Jackel said, because I was talking with Tom Kohler with Citizens Advocacy, who unfortunately couldn't be here, and their budget year doesn't start until during the Summer, so they would —, that \$7,000 wouldn't come in until the year, so they'd be \$7,000 this budget year, which is a tremendous impact on their budget. Mr. Williams said, it impacts every agency a little bit differently. Commissioner Jackel said, right. Mr. Williams said, but thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas asked, did you want to ask him a question?

Commissioner Rivers said, no, I don't want to ask him a question, but I want to ask the Manager a question so we all can be on the same page and clear and we're looking at a deferral of grant-in-aids until July. Okay, now —. Commissioner Saussy said, a deferral, not —. Commissioner Rivers said, now let me get my question. If we deferred until July, do we have the funds there in July to give these agencies? County Manager Abolt said, on point that will be your decision during the Spring of the year, and I'm not trying to avoid the question. The reason for the deferral, like the deferral of debt service payments, like the deferral of purchase of any major equipment for the County departments, is to give you a time to bridge over this six-month transition to a new fiscal year when you have a new tax digest. The reason we —, I'm sorry. Commissioner Rivers said, but that gets to the point, when we have a new tax digest, and what I'm concerned about is that when we get —, you know, we were talking about biting bullets, I might get lead poison come July 1<sup>st</sup> there's so many bullets out here to bite and I'm cautious about biting all these bullets. Commissioner Jackel said, if you become a squeaking wheel, I'll get you some grease. Commissioner Rivers said, yes, you're trying to get rid of me, but the fact is that I want to make sure that if we are looking at this budget and we're deferring, then this budget here is built basically on deferrals and fund balance. There's a big hole, as I told y'all before on this budget, and come July 1 will this Commission have the will to make up and put that hole —, cover that hole? That's the question, whether we're going to be able —. I don't want everybody here thinking that we've got money and you're going to get money, we got money in hand and we're going to automatically give money that's there. If we've got the will to put that money there and if these agencies can hold out for a six-month period, will we make it retroactive to give them their money beginning from the first of January? Now that would be my proposal to make it somewhat palatable to you, but first of all I have to know will my fellow panel members up here whether that's going to happen and whether that's going to be a commission or not, and whether that money is there based on this six months budget because all we did in July was deferred decisions that we should have made on finances then. So reshaping the fiscal year does not eliminate the shortfall that we have within our budget, which may very well take a tax increase.

Vice Chairman Thomas recognized Commissioner Murray.

Commissioner Murray said, Russ [Abolt]. Commissioner Rivers said, I want everybody to understand that. Commissioner Murray asked, if we decide to go ahead and fund a portion of the grant-in-aid, where would that money come from? County Manager Abolt said, at this time, sir, I do not know. Commissioner Murray said, all right. Are the employee raises going into effect January 1? County Manager Abolt said, yes sir. Commissioner Murray asked, why are they not being deferred until July? County Manager Abolt said, that's your choice. Commissioner Murray said, I mean, somewhere somebody's got to —, we as a Commission have got to make the decision we're going to either do one thing or we're going to do something else. The money's not there to do all of it, and my point is if we fund this 50% of it for the first six months, or whatever we do, then that money's got to come from somewhere. Where's it going to come from? It's going to have to come from employee raises or it's going to have to come from departments, it's going to have to come from somewhere, and I'm not saying that I agree or disagree with what they're asking for, but we're sitting here at a budget hearing listening to all the people talk about the money they're going to need for this first six months that we don't have in the budget. If we approve it and we say, yes, let's go ahead and do it, where's it coming from? I mean, can anybody answer that? Commissioner Rivers said, come July you will have to —. Commissioner Murray said, no, what happened was we had a proposal and everybody said, well, let's just defer it to next year, we can take up the time next year, and the majority of this Commission voted to do that and here we're stuck again with no money and we're not going to have money in July. Commissioner Rivers said, yes, as a matter of fact, that's the point that I'm making, Frank [Rivers], and unless we have the will to do what we should have done in July, last July, then we're going to be at wit's end.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay, we're going to go to Commissioner Odell, Commissioner Price and then we're going to go back out to the floor.

Commissioner Murray said, I knew you were supposed to leave early, but —.

Commissioner Odell said, I do not support a proposal to defer until after July on the funding for the grant-in-aid human services. I think we need to do it the first of the year, their half of this and this shortened budget and pay the other half [inaudible]. These agencies are necessary agencies to this community. They provide an invaluable service. We have as a Commission made some decisions that have caused this impact. It's nothing that you all have done. It's not to say that you haven't provided the services that we've given you money to provide. You've provided the services. I have no doubt in my mind that you have provided the services. We did a rollback, which was insignificant to the average homeowner, and now we are in a crunch position that we created. You didn't create it, we created it, and my position is that we do the right thing, and the right thing is that there are people who are dependent upon the County, the necessary services that are provided your agencies, and that we do not penalize you by putting you off until July when we may be in the same position and we have to put you off another year. It is not reasonable. I voted against a rollback and I'll vote against giving it up and putting you all off. I'll vote against that. That is something that is unacceptable to me. [Applause.] And it's not the County Manager, and we have an excellent County Manager, who often gets stuck with making our decisions work when we put him in impossible situations. I know how the remedy this, and it's not going to be popular and people are not going to be applauding to —, we need to go back to where we are. How many years ago, Joe [Rivers]? Mrs. Whitaker said, '83. Commissioner Odell said, and the millage. Commissioner Price said, he didn't have grey hair then. Commissioner Odell said, but I think you're speaking to the choir. I know that the agencies need the money. I know that most of you are operating on a shoestring budget anyway. I understand that. I understand that the predicament that you're in, you didn't create it, we created it. I understand that youth service people here in Chatham County, our citizens that we are sworn to honor and to administer funds wisely, I think it would be unwise for us to put you off until after July 1. Mr. Williams said, thank you very much. Commissioner Odell said, that's all I've got to say about it.

Commissioner Price said, the whole approach on how we're doing the budget this year is something that we can only turn around and look at ourselves for where we are and what we have. The recommendations that you have in front of you on the County budget are recommendations from the County Manager, and we asked him to give us these recommendations.

So we kind of —, we kind of built this little mess we find ourselves in right now, either by not becoming more involved in the budget process or by allowing, you know, the Manager to come with the recommendation, which is certainly what his responsibility is. I can't help but in the 11 years I've been on the Board of Commissioners remember that Springtime always seems to be a time of the year when we seem to find money. It always seems like come March/April time frame when we are balancing out the previous year's budget, when we find fund balance, that there are additional funds available. I can't remember when that wasn't the case. I'm not saying we should depend on it and we should rely on it because we are very much subject to a downgrade on our credit rating, which will increase our overall costs for anything we try to leverage, anything we try to go out and borrow and the issuance of bonds, so we're kind of in a pickle right now one way or the other. But I don't think that taking these agencies and telling them basically we're not going to give you for six months the money that you need is the answer either. I don't think this is the way we need to go, and I think we just need to plan between now and the 17<sup>th</sup> or whenever we need to do this, to do our homework better and to look at each of these departments and to find some way for us to otherwise, we're going to have to bite the bullet and we're going to have to pass a millage rate increase. There's no other way around it, but I don't believe —. These agencies save the County money because of what they do. If they didn't do it, who would do it? We would have to do it. So we have to understand that, and I don't believe that this is the correct way to go.

Commissioner Rivers said, can I respond to something that —? Commissioner Price said, sure. Commissioner Rivers said, Ben [Price] said, Ben [Price] said. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay, please do and then —. Commissioner Rivers said, Ben [Price],

there are two things. Yes, we get money every year from audit, but see when we get money from the audit, we take it and infuse that money into new programs or new things for the Sheriff and stuff like that so it creates a void. We use that money and that's just one-time savings that comes through the process of not hiring or not buying, so —. Commissioner Price said, but it happens every year. Commissioner Rivers said, so —, yes, it happens every year, but it's not money that we should use in the way that we use it. Now, also I wanted to do a millage increase in December, but we can't do one twice within one year, and the County Attorney came back with that opinion. I thought we would be home free. So we've got to come up with some other innovative ways, but consequently we're going to look at a millage increase. We just delayed that until next year. It's inevitable.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you.

Commissioner Saussy said, I've just got a question on what he just said. You say we can't do a millage increase in December. We're switching to this really a half year, are we not? The first half of 2000 is a half a year, and then we're going to the full year in July. Now, why can't we do a millage increase? County Manager Abolt said, the challenge deals with the digest, and you've adopted a digest this past Summer that we must use, and remember we had Mr. Tindol before you before we made the final changes in the fiscal year, and he said the way it can be done to make this bridge is that we would accrue six months of the revenue based on the previous digest. So you've already set the millage rate for that, and you also are challenged by the fact that you can only set the millage rate once a year, and so, in effect, because this bridge is necessary, that's why this was driven by —, well, it's driven by two things. One around your goals, and of course your top three goals are met in this budget proposal and, two, by the fact that unless we came up with additional fees, we would have some serious problems in making ends meet in all departments, and those fees could not be property taxes. Commissioner Rivers said, but we did not set this budget based on the millage rate because if we had set it based on the millage rate, the millage rate would have covered whatever was necessary within the budget. What we did was roll back the millage and then shored it up with fund balance so when we utilized the fund, come July there's going to be a requirement to put the necessary funds there to operate at whatever cost this government is, and we have to determine whether we're going to operate this government at its level that it is now or we're going to reduce it rather than raise the millage. And that's —, that's a fact. I'm not giving anybody any stories, but that's a fact. It's there, and I don't think a lot of times we do things and we don't realize the negative impact that it's going to have. You can do something three years ago that shows up today. You do something today, it's going to show up two years down the road, and I've been telling everybody the same thing over and over and over again, and it throws us right back to these painstakingly points, and whether we're going to have the will to do what we need to do come July, or are we going to reduce the size of this government or the services of this government to accomplish and to achieve and bring it into scale. That's the only way it's going to happen.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you, Commissioner Rivers. Now we'll go back to —. Mr. Binns, did you want to speak?

Mr. Bill Binns said, I'm Bill Binns, Chairman of the Board of Senior Citizens, and I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you today, and I also appreciate the grant-in-aid that we've been receiving from the County over the years. It's been very helpful, very beneficial to Senior Citizens, allowed us to take care of some important needs in the community. One thing important of your grant-in-aid to us is that when we receive it, we use it as matching funds. So \$7,000 of a grant-in-aid offering gets us \$70,000 in actual funds that we could use in our programs. As an example, it allows us to serve 1,735 meals in our Meals-on-Wheels Program. We have —, we have people who are in line waiting to receive meals-on-wheels. We can't provide this service because we don't have the funds to provide it, but we have the waiting list. So if we lost funds, we would not only be able to —, have to push those people back down the line, but we have to stop serving some people that we're serving now. So it's vital to us. We appreciate what we've gotten in the past. We hope you'll look favorably on giving us an opportunity to use those funds, match those funds for the benefit of the community.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you.

Mr. Bernie Polite said, good afternoon. I want to thank you for this opportunity to stand before you like this. The Clerk asked, first state your name please. Mr. Polite said, my name is Bernie Polite. The Clerk said, thank you. Mr. Polite said, I work at International Paper and I serve as Chairperson of the Youth Futures Authority, but I'm here today representing those 16 or so agencies that Mike Williams spoke about just a moment ago, who are a part of the County's grant-in-aid program. We got officially notified early this week, as Mike [Williams] mentioned, and hastily came together to assess what this really meant. We tried to put together some information to you, and I think you all have the hand-outs that are sort of, fits some interim facts. We hope to come back over the next several days with what will be a more comprehensive listing of consequences. But I really want to talk to you about what I view right now as an upcoming train wreck with the way that this thing seems to be unfolding, and I'm speaking in terms of the staff's recommendation for the exclusion of the grant-in-aid in this budget during the first six months. I know that while some of these agencies might be able to maneuver and shift and adjust various services, there are some who actually will have to eliminate programs, and that elimination of programs may result in services not being given to specific people. Other agencies may even have to close their doors and not be in place anymore because of this disruption. And when you think about a disruption like this, you think about other consequences. Nationally you think about research that's been done that determines already that if children, as an example, don't have things to do in the afternoon or when they're out of school or when they're not occupied, that they get into mischief or that bad things happen. Many of these agencies are working in a preventive way to keep those bad things from happening. Once those bad things do happen, they very often cause some more to turn that around. Commissioner

Odell I think was referring to that point. You pay now; if you pay later, you pay the bigger price. I would just say to you that as we hurriedly put those facts together, you don't really see a face, but you all need to look at the face that's being affected by the decision that is being recommended and I would ask you to, over the next several days, to consider individuals who will not receive services because of this. I know that the grant-in-aid committee, the County's grant-in-aid committee, has met and I understand disagrees or has made an alternate proposal. I don't know how you all will feel about that, but I will ask you if you would consider going down a different road than the road that's recommended here today. Thanks.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you. Ms. Bell?

Ms. Carol Bell said, hi. I'm Carol Bell, the Chairman of the Board of the United Way of the Coastal Empire, and I will be very brief. Thank you first for the opportunity to appear before you. I stand before you today on behalf of the 16 agencies, health and human services agencies who will be affected by the staff recommendation. I also should preface my remarks by saying I'm very grateful to the staff, and certainly I'm sympathetic to the plight. I thank Russ [Abolt] and his staff for being very cooperative in terms of explaining to me, and I quickly called [inaudible] on yesterday why he'd made the recommendation that he has, and I certainly do appreciate that and your staff, so this is no reflection on that staff, but just on the impact, and I have to speak on behalf of the people who will be affected. I just want to perhaps take off of Bernie's [Polite] comments. You see dollars out there, and perhaps Commissioner Odell and Commissioner Price said, it best when they talked about the services that will not be delivered to citizens in this community through no fault of their own, and you're asking them, if you accept this recommendation, you're asking that they make adjustments so quickly. They just received notification this week and we're talking about in less than a month you're asking them to reshuffle. As Bernie [Polite] said, some agencies may be able —, a few may be able to change and find alternate sources of funds. A few can do that. In fact, many services will not be delivered. So I'd say to you, I'm just really probably reiterating that that has been said. I don't think we can afford as a community and as a taxpayer to look around and recognize that services such as medication to terminally ill patients won't be given because an agency doesn't have funding for the first six months. I don't think we want to think about seeing a mother, and some will not receive services, the after-school programs that are provided, the services that are provided to housing authority children, trying to develop character development. I don't —, and the list goes on and on. You have a list before you, but I want to be brief. I just perhaps would like to close with perhaps recalling a statement from one of the greatest books on earth, and I think about in the Old Testament, I think about the question that was polled: Am I my brother's keeper, and a resounding response comes to that when I think of this particular situation. Yes, we are our brother's keeper, so I ask that you go back, reconsider. Yes, there are some options here, but we're not talking about waiting until July, and even going back [inaudible] because some of these programs will die if they don't get funding in January. Thank you very much, and I'd like to further call a couple of clients, Reverend —, well, Mrs. Taylor from Savannah Association for the Blind, first, and Reverend Timmons, also from Savannah Association for the Blind. Thank you very much. I do appreciate the opportunity.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you.

Mrs. Linda Taylor said, my name is Linda Taylor and I'm a student at Savannah Association for the Blind. I just want to say I'm a mother of three, two of which are in elementary school, so you know it's difficult for me to do homework with them. So what I do is some of the class work I take to the blind school and they have machines there that will enable me to enlarge the print so I can read their work so I can keep up with my children's class work. Also, they're teaching me the computers so once I master that maybe I'm going to get back out into the work force. Then I'll —, and they helped me with little things around the house because I still clean my house and I do the laundry and cook. So there are a lot of things that they help me with that normally I wouldn't know how to do, so I wanted to speak for the blind school. Thank you. Commissioner Price said, thank you.

Rev. Edgar Timmons, Jr. said, good afternoon. I'm Edgar Timmons, Jr. I'm a veteran, a resident of Savannah, Georgia, Chatham County. I, too, am a client of the Savannah Association for the Blind, the only agency in this area where a blind or visually impaired person can go and receive skills to continue in life with some integrity and some pride. I can say very truthfully that we will not be able to receive the skills and the training that we need if these cuts go on as they are now headed to. I —, I'm in a situation that I really don't want to be in, but I'm here by —, because of certain things that I cannot control. I, too, would like an interview. I had a job and loved my work, loved the challenge, but blindness struck me. I never thought it would, but it did, and so I'm put in this situation and I'm depending, besides myself, many others who are blind and visually impaired, are depending on the Savannah Association for the Blind to help us to get another grip on life and go on with some pride. I certainly ask that you reconsider because to have this cut in our agency is to cut us out of having the choice or the chance to receive skills that will help us as citizens to go on in life. Thank you very much.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you. Are there others on the first row? Please step up. Step up to the mike please.

Mrs. Hilda Whitaker said, my name is Hilda Whitaker. For the record I'd like to say I appreciate you folks staying today, and people grip about you, but today you stayed and showed what you're made of because all of us were here. I appreciate it. After Mrs. Taylor, I'm sort of shook, but I bought you a picture today because they say a picture's worth a thousand words. I hope this picture will help you make decisions about thousands of dollars. I want to show you how much of Chatham County has been annexed when you go to talk about the budget. The white area is not incorporated, and here is the smaller one that shows you in the bolder colors which have recently been annexed, and I'm going to submit these for the record so that you'll have them to look at later. When departments grow, I question why the expenses increase when the area decreases, and if it comes to the Police Department, I think one of the things you could have done instead of

overlapping areas or having to go through another jurisdiction areas under House Bill 481, that was your opportunity to negotiate a contract for them to patrol the areas nearest to them. But none of this stuff was brought out because I didn't think y'all got that far into it. I agree with Commissioner Price that in the Spring they always find money, and after I've thanked you for staying, I'm going to tell you up front that it appears to me over the years that the County Manager always manages to find money for a special project for a Commissioner from time to time. I want to talk to you about the planning and not reacting applies not only to land use, but also on how the efficiency of departments are run, and I'd like to go back to, you know, 40 hours a week doesn't mean you work eight hours Monday through Friday. Hours can be staggered like they are in hospitals. You can come in at six o'clock and move equipment so somebody else can start working at eight o'clock in Public Works, and they can go there and you don't lose that extra —, those extra hours moving equipment after eight o'clock and tying up the traffic because somebody didn't have enough sense to get off the road with a backhoe or some of this heavy equipment. Somebody can go in early and they can leave early, and somebody can work on the weekends so work can continue. You need to just think about some of the simple common sense things that need to be done. When you talk about our trash, I still say that Mr. Abolt has, and I've argued for years, about the charge-back for services rendered to the Special Service District or on behalf of the Special Service District, and our Enterprise Fund, I understand, works as —, like a private business. Well, the time has come, folks, when we put it out for bids to see if we can get private business to do it for the tax dollars currently being collected. See if you can negotiate a fairly long term contract. Perhaps the people who are providing this service can be then employed by the people who are familiar with the area and utilize and we wouldn't lose jobs. I want to talk about SAGIS because of —, I don't get to see that in the MPC budget anymore. Because I was critical of it, it got taken out, separated. I've got a gripe about something. When we paid for the one-foot contours, and I know —, I believe it was, was it \$325,000, Mr. Abolt, or \$125,000? It was hundreds of thousands of dollars. I know it was at least \$100,000. It bothered me that the taxpayers who paid a third of this group —, money, turned around and had to pay that kind of money to get the one-foot contours for the flood program. I just don't understand that, and I would like to suggest that the professional people, who utilize SAGIS more than the average citizen, be required to pay a fee per year to be a member to utilize the maps and things that come out of there to help fund it, \$1,200, \$1,500 a year. It'd be an annual fee and then you wouldn't have to go up on all these small business people's license that struggle all the time, and then they would still have to pay so much per copy for a map. It seems logical instead of everybody doing it that the people who utilize it the most, and this was a third that the County put in, but it still gripes me that that money was spent for those one-foot contours. We needed them, but I thought we paid for it twice, maybe three or four times. I know we don't have any money. I've been saying for —, since 1989 I've been watching \$5,000,000 on paper and that's all I'm going to say about that. I would like to suggest to you that you go to the Legislators and ask for a referendum so the citizens of this County can go to the polls and vote on what services and what —, how they want to be taxed or how much money they want to give or what services they want to receive above the public health and safety, which you're required to do. And some have suggested to me, well, public good. I don't know how you define public good. I would need a definitive definition before I would add that. But I think that the time has come that everybody's got their hands out. We're losing acreage. We need to find a —, to determine just exactly what we're going to do, the quality of service that we're going to provide, and how's the most economical and efficient way to get it done. As I say, I am against the —, in fact, I think the increases on the small business people are back-door taxes. They stay here year after year, some of them could work hard, double hard. Those of you in business know it takes more to employ people than it does to it by yourself. If you employ people, you pay —, you have all of those obligations to pay. Some years you're lucky to break even, some years you may make a small profit, some years you may make a moderate profit, but I don't think that we need to take all of the hurdle —, this hurdle that we've known's been coming all these year and start lumping it on the small business people who can least afford it. I'd also like to go back to the discussion that I heard with S.T.O.P. and the Tax Assessor's office, and I have tried for years and no one's listened to me, and perhaps this is a good day to bring it up again. Under planning in Georgia, and I'd be happy to bring it back out and show you again in writing, there are five categories —, the classifications of property. If Chatham County classified property according to its actual use —, the land's actual use instead of all of these little sub-categories that you —, you can have sub-categories, but an industrial use is industrial use. It's not light industrial. The State says it's that. That's the highest and best use. Surface mining. I have one. It's highest and best use. I've been trying to get them to go back for years and to get the MPC zoning and the land use and the planning that we do so you can legitimately collect the money for the use of the land, and you need to really think about that, and there are some present who think I don't know what I'm talking about, but I assure you I do, and that would be a good place to start. And I'd like to thank you for your time and I'd like to give Ms. Tillman these maps so you'll have them, and do —. Isn't it important if you've got less area, you wonder why the departments have to grow. Thanks.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you, Mrs. Whitaker. Anyone on the second row? Just start on the right and come across. If you all could just kind of —, we want you to say what you want to say, but let's be a little more brief. Thank you.

Mr. David Richards said, Madam Chairman and Commissioners, I am David F. Richards, Jr., Chair of the Human Services Task Force. Commissioner Odell said, Fifth District. Mr. Richards said, of the Fifth District. We sent out letters to each one of the Commissioners and each one of the 31 agencies that we support. We do have some of our other members here and I'd like to just introduce them: Ms. Jennifer Kirk, Ida Cruse, Bill Broker, Jerry Loupee, Patricia McKenna and Libby Shearouse. Why I am here is that the committee met Tuesday morning at which time it was advised that the budget recommended by the County Manager concentrated no funding for human services agencies during the first six months of 2000. The Task Force disagrees with this recommending —, recommendation and would like to make one of its own for the Commissioners to consider. A little background on this is that I was appointed by Commissioner Odell from the Fifth District to serve on the Task Force, and have done so for four years. Each person on the Task Force has been appointed by one of the Commissioners to serve, and all have taken very seriously their charge. The Task Force has been fortunate in that the Commission has backed the recommendations of the Task Force since I have served. I and the other

Task Force members have come to know the agencies that are funded, and we greatly respect the work they do on behalf of residents of Chatham County. For the past two years we have met with each agency that has requested funding and we have made our recommendations based upon the review of the application and upon which —, what was and has been learned during our interview. Recommendation: Last year the Task Force recommended that the County fund 31 human services agencies \$743,680, and you implemented that proposal. (B) For the coming shortened fiscal year we urge that you take one-half of that amount and distribute it among the 30 agencies that have sought funding for the coming year. One agency did not reapply for funds, which was \$2,250. In effect, we ask that you give the agencies for the first six months of 2000 one-half of what you gave them for 12 months in 1999. We have sent each of you a letter indicating this as I spoke previously. Reasons behind the recommendations: We know these agencies and we know what they do. It is important to the residents of our community and should be funded. The funding you provide is not the backbone of most of these organizations, but is an important part of the base of their support. All of them have contemplated some funding from the County in their budgets for the coming year, and to pull funding from 30 agencies at this late date is simply not responsible. While the County has seen fit to reduce the funding it has provided the human services agencies since 1994 \$799,560, we think the reduction in funding should stop and the County should shoulder its responsibility for assisting these programs. The programs you fund assist the blind, the elderly, at risk children, the dying and homeless, and by turning our back on these agencies, we turn our back on those they serve. In closing, we live in a complex community with complex human needs. The agencies you work with seek to meet these needs and do so professionally, efficiently and in a cost-effective manner. The Human Services Task Force, the people you have appointed and entrusted with this task, respectfully request that you consider our recommendation and, in closing, we trust that you have a most enjoyable holiday season and a fruitful new year.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you. Next?

Commissioner Murray said, we could probably save some money if we turn this air conditioner off. It's 50 degrees outside and probably 45 in here.

Ms. Beth Palmer said, I was thinking about turning the air up actually. I've got a little extra insulation right now. My name is Beth Palmer and I'm here on behalf of the Isle of Hope Beautification Committee, which is a [inaudible] of the Isle of Hope Neighborhood Association, and I feel pretty certain I'll be the briefest speaker y'all have had today. My business is regarding the Isle of Hope Neighborhood Park, and I regret that I'm the only member of my committee that was able to come today, but unfortunately we had rather short notice about the hearing today, but I do have a letter of support from our President of our Neighborhood Association that just supports everything I'm saying today, but I'll show y'all. The interest in renovating the Isle of Hope Park began back in February of this past year when we had our first meeting at the park. At this meeting was myself, Jim Golden, who's head of Parks and Recreation, his associate, a member of my committee, and then Chuck Figlia [phonetic], who is a Gametime Designs representative, a playground equipment representative. At this meeting it was determined that our park is in really, really poor condition, and it's quite outdated. And I can speak to you as someone who grew up at Isle of Hope, a little bit less than 30 years ago, and tell you that the majority of the equipment that's at the park right now is the equipment that I played at when I was 2 years old there 20-some-odd years ago. Because the park is in such poor condition, it really is unusable. I have a 2-year-old and we cannot go there because she will get hurt there, and that forces the families of Isle of Hope to go to surrounding communities to find adequate and safe facilities for recreation. Since this meeting that we had back in February, I've had many phone conversations with Jim Golden, who's been very supportive and very helpful. I've had hundreds of phone conversations with people in the Isle of Hope community who are very supportive of helping get this park renovated, and I've also met with Chuck Figlia of Gametime Designs, who has given us a concept design of our playground layout that I've since forwarded to Jim Golden, who wholeheartedly supports the plan to renovate this park. It's my understanding from Mr. Golden that this park —, that the neighborhood park is currently on the CIP unfunded budget, and I guess I would just ask you to consider in your year 2000 budget. I would also ask you to include my name and my committee's name in any further meetings that you have regarding the CIP budget or anything that might affect the funding of the Isle of Hope Neighborhood Park project, and I just look forward to working with all of you and expanding and improving the leisure opportunities at Isle of Hope and hopefully in making Chatham County a better place to live, work and play. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you.

Commissioner Murray said, the park you're speaking of is the park next to the swimming pool, is that correct? Mrs. Palmer said, yes. Commissioner Murray said, all right. Didn't we put some equipment or do something in that park —. Mrs. Palmer said, in the late 80's —. Commissioner Murray said, working with the residents. Mrs. Palmer said, they added a big jungle gym in the middle, and I have —, I don't know if it's the appropriate time. I have pictures of how bad the condition is. Commissioner Murray said, no, but I was thinking that we did something in that park with the residents, more recent than that.

Mr. Jim Golden said, we did some renovations several years ago in that particular park, Isle of Hope. Commissioner Murray said, okay. That's what I was thinking, but I didn't know what all took place at that time. I do know that there was a group of people who utilized the park that came in. I think they wanted to —, the County to purchase the equipment and they would install it, or vice versa or something. Mr. Golden said, well, we were working with several groups, but this particular group is played the same as the past, to help maintain it and also raise funds to match to assist with the renovation. Commissioner Murray said, okay.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you.

Commissioner Price asked, when are you expecting? Mrs. Palmer asked, when am I expecting? Shall I make you guess? Commissioner Price said, hopefully not today. Mrs. Palmer said, about six weeks so not as soon as I look, I guess.

Commissioner Rivers asked, Jim [Golden], what are we looking at cost factor there? Mrs. Palmer said, right now the cost and installation is at \$29,000. That's the full cost of the playground, and I would encourage anyone to drive by there because it's —, I know there are plenty of parks in the Chatham County area that are pitiful, but this one is particularly pitiful.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Thank you very much. Mrs. Palmer said, thank you.

Mr. Gene Wheaton [phonetic] said, good afternoon. I'm Gene Wheaton of Hope House of Savannah. Hope House of Savannah is a home for single homeless mothers. They are not a faceless society. They are your brothers and sisters. The monies that you make available to us and similar organizations that I've been associated with are not for us. They're for taking care of those that are less fortunate than us that can't speak for themselves. A funding cut to Hope House of Savannah would be devastating to us in the fact that we've got ourselves in a position now that we're fiscally responsible and operating on a bare bones budget. Any depletion of monies made available to us means a cut in services. I'd like to have you tell me which one of our three ex-residents that are graduates from regional colleges would you like to tell that to. We make a difference in the life of the people that come to us. It's not a house, it's a home. We teach them living life skills. I know you all live your own lives. You're familiar with the necessities of life and the things that are pleasures to you. When people come to us, they come with a brown bag. When they leave with us —, leave us, they have our hope, and I believe they need your support. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much. Anyone else on this side? The next row.

Mr. Sharon Carson said, good afternoon. My name is Sharon Carson and with me is Mary Burdsal [phonetic], as representatives of Chatham County Department of Family and Children Services, and asking your continued support of funding for all of our programs, and we'd like to highlight two program areas this afternoon that we sorely need funding in. The first is our Family Services Program, the Adult Contracted Services Unit, which provides for in-home services to frail, elderly and disabled adults. These services are provided free of charge to those individuals because their income is so low that they cannot afford to pay for traditional home health services. They may not necessarily qualify for home health services or they may need the preventive services in addition to home health services. These services help to meet the basic safety and health needs of the client, helps to reduce social isolation and prevents premature institutionalization of our adult clients. The cost of the services adds up to about \$206 per client per month, and it is more costly factored to more humanistic for our individuals that we're serving so that they can remain in their homes as opposed to go into a nursing home or a personal care home. Last year in our program area we served approximately 75 clients and we were able to help them to remain in their homes without having to go into a nursing home. Right now we have a waiting list of about 45 individuals who are waiting for these particular services. Without the funding from the County because we do use the County funding to help match other funding that we are able to get, and without this funding we are looking at having to reduce services to a number of the clients that we do serve. I'll welcome any questions that you may have about this particular program area before we move on to the next. The second program area that I'd like to talk with you about is our Foster Care Program. The Chatham County Department of Family and Children Services is requesting funding from Chatham County to support the delivery of quality foster care services. During the first six months of 1999 an average 215 children resided in 146 foster homes. Despite a slight decline in the number of children in foster care, the Department is still challenged financially to meet the needs of these children and their care givers. The 2000 budget request will allow the Department to (a) more effectively meet the special needs of children in the foster care system, and (b) address the out-of-pocket expenses of foster parents, and (c) implement more effective intervention strategies for at-risk children. The Georgia Department of Human Resources is committed to building a stronger result based child welfare system. Chatham County DFCS reflects this goal through prevention of child abuse, protection of children and permanency planning that will afford every child a safe and stable family. Developing and expanding community partnerships is at the heart of this endeavor. Initiatives, such as the Family Unity Project, which builds on the strength of families and neighborhoods, have provided new tools for strengthening and stabilizing families and have contributed to the reduction of foster care placement. These opportunities, however, often require the financial commitment of local matching funds. This budget request will allow Chatham County Department of Family and Children Services to aggressively seek additional funding opportunities. The State Division of Family and Children Services funds the Foster Care Program through a per diem service. Effective July 1999 the foster care per diem was increased from \$11.10 to \$11.25. This allows —, provides for basic food and shelter, leaving many expenses unmet. In addition, the inadequacy of the allowable reimbursement negatively impacts the Department's ability to recruit qualified new foster parents. Each year with the help of the local Foster Parents Association, the Department identifies the needs of the County's foster children which are not adequately funded by the State. These expenditures become the out-of-pocket costs for foster parents. County funding is requested to offset the following out-of-pocket expenses: non-Medicaid medical and dental and pharmacy needs, replacement clothing, basic hair care, allowances, enrichment activities, transportation and training for foster parents, Christmas and vacation assistance, and other special needs for children who are in foster care. In addition, back to school expenses and the cost of participating in sports, band, field trips, et cetera, create a significant financial hardship for foster parents. It is important to note that foster children are typically victims of severe abuse and neglect. The State Division of Family and Children Services reports that approximately 20% of Georgia's foster children have special needs. The State and local communities face

the challenge of funding the high cost of meeting these needs. In doing so, the quality of the foster care experience, including the ability to participate in self-esteem building activities, such as sports, band, scouting, et cetera, strengthens their ability to recover from victimization. Every parent realizes the cost of rearing children. The cost of raising a child is conservatively estimated at \$10,000 annually. The Department of Family and Children Services is asking the Chatham County Board of Commissioners to approve an investment of \$1,152 per foster child. The return on this investment will be seen in the next generation of physically and emotionally healthy and stable and productive citizens. We appreciate the time that you have given us to make this presentation to you, and if you have any questions, we'll be glad to answer them at this time.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you very much. Do we have others who wish to speak? No one else wishes to speak? No one? Commissioner Murray said, I move we close the public hearing. Commissioner Price said, second. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair and Commissioner Odell were not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried. Thank you very much.

County Manager Abolt said, Dr. Thomas. Vice Chairman Thomas said, yes. County Manager Abolt said, I've asked the —, made a suggestion to the Chairman, and he's not here right now, I would make the suggestion to the entire body that possibly you would wish to have another budget workshop or work session next week. I'm very apprehensive about going into a second reading situation on a budget in which obviously questions have to be answered. Staff certainly will do our best to answer them, but I would feel much better in making sure you're properly prepared if you could have a work session as early as some time next week, at which time staff can bring you additional information, certainly within our building, but also I would be able to get from you some direction, guidance as to priorities.

Commissioner DeLoach said, just pick out a time. Commissioner Price said, you'll want to check with Billy [Hair] too. Vice Chairman Thomas said, yes, we need to do that, the Chairman.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Public hearing received as information.

=====

**3. REQUEST APPROVAL TO RECORD THE SUBDIVISION PLAT FOR WHITEMARSH CENTER, PHASE 2, AND ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL GUARANTEE, MR. ED FEILER. NOTE: AT THE TIME OF WRITING MUCH WORK HAS YET TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ENGINEER FOR THE DEVELOPER. THIS WILL NOT BE RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL UNLESS THE COUNTY ENGINEER IS SATISFIED AS TO THE FINAL SUBMITTAL.**

County Manager Abolt said, Madam Vice Chairperson. I'm told by Mr. Bungard that the applicant, the developer and his engineers are satisfied all the necessary requirements so you can approve this as requested.

Commissioner Murray said, move for approval. Commissioner Price said, second. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay, the motion's carried.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved that the request of the engineer for the developer, Whitemarsh Island Properties, GP, to record the subdivision plat for Whitemarsh Center, Phase 2, accept the financial guarantee, and create a new streetlight district, be approved subject to the County Engineer receiving a satisfactory revised subdivision agreement and streetlighting plan. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**X. ACTION CALENDAR**

(The Board can entertain one motion to adopt the below-listed calendar. Such motion would mean adoption of staff's recommendation. Any Board Member may choose to pull an item from the calendar and it would be considered separately.)

Commissioner Jackel said, I'd like to pull Item P. Vice Chairman Thomas asked, Item what? Commissioner Jackel said, Item P, like in Paul. Commissioner Saussy asked, that'll do it? Commissioner Price said, okay, that will be 11-P. Commissioner Murray said, 7, Item 7. Commissioner Price said, 7 and 11-P. What else? I move for the approval of the

balance of the Action Calendar. Commissioner Rivers said, second. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve Action Calendar Items 1 through 11-Q, except Item 7 and 11-P. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

**[NOTE: ACTION OF THE BOARD IS SHOWN ON EACH ITEM AS THOUGH AN INDIVIDUAL MOTION WAS MADE THEREON.]**

=====

- 1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON NOVEMBER 19, 1999, AS MAILED.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 19, 1999, as mailed. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 2. **CLAIMS VS. CHATHAM COUNTY FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 11 THROUGH NOVEMBER 23, 1999.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved that the Finance Director is authorized to pay claims for the period November 11 through November 23, 1999, in the amount of \$5,835,824. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

=====

- 3. **REQUEST BOARD CONFIRM USE OF THE PIT AND PADDOCK AREA AS OVERFLOW PARKING FOR THE WESTIN RESORT.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to confirm use of the pit and paddock area as overflow parking for the Westin Resort on Hutchinson Island. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 4. **REQUEST BOARD DECLARE AS SURPLUS AND OFFER FOR BID CHATHAM COUNTY'S INTEREST IN A PROPERTY HELD BY TAX DEED ON HANCOCK STREET IN SAVANNAH. [DISTRICT 5.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the request to declare as surplus and offer for bid Chatham County's interest in a property held by tax deed on Hancock Street in Savannah. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

5. **REQUEST BOARD DECLARE AS SURPLUS AND OFFER FOR BID CHATHAM COUNTY'S INTEREST IN A PROPERTY HELD BY TAX DEED ON EAST BOULEVARD IN BLOOMINGDALE.  
[DISTRICT 7.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the request to declare as surplus and offer for bid Chatham County's interest in a property held by tax deed at 0 East Boulevard (PIN 80010M-04005), located next to 7 East Boulevard, in Bloomingdale. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

6. **REQUEST BOARD APPROVE EARLY ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY OWNED BY DON AND DEBORAH RILEY, 9 RIVER BLUFF DRIVE, FOR THE WHITFIELD AVENUE WIDENING PROJECT.  
[DISTRICT 1.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the early acquisition of property owned by Don and Deborah Riley, 9 River Bluff Drive, for the Whitfield Avenue Widening Project. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

7. **REQUEST BOARD APPROVAL TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE WHITEMARSH ISLAND COMMUNITY CENTER TO THE ISLANDS COMMUNITY CENTER.  
[DISTRICT 4.]**

Commissioner Murray said, the only reason I wanted to pull that is just so y'all would understand. We just opened this center not long ago and it was called the Whitemarsh Island Community Center. There happens to be another Whitemarsh Island Community Center behind the fire station on Whitemarsh Island, and so after people coming —, going to that one rather than the new one for meetings and things, it kind of caused some problems. I don't know what the new name will be. I guess just the Islands Community —. County Manager Abolt said, the Islands Community Center. Commissioner Murray said, the Islands Community Center. Commissioner Odell said, we do it like we do Baptist churches. Commissioner Murray said, but I move for approval. I just wanted to explain. Commissioner Jackel said, second. Commissioner Murray said, this having to be done after it's just been opened. Commissioner DeLoach said, ten-four.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor. All in favor please vote. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved to approve the request to change the name of The Whitemarsh Island Community to the Islands Community Center. Commissioner Jackel seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

8. **REQUEST FOR TRANSFER OF BEER AND WINE RETAIL LICENSE FOR 1999. PETITIONER: JEFFERSON WILCOX SIRMANS, JR., D/B/A TIMESAVER #100, LOCATED AT 108 SHIPYARD ROAD.  
[DISTRICT 1.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the petition of Jefferson Wilcox Sirmans, Jr., d/b/a Timesaver #100, located at 108 Shipyard Road, for transfer of a beer and wine retail license for 1999. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 9. REQUEST FOR NEW BEER, WINE AND LIQUOR POURING AND SUNDAY SALES LICENSE FOR 2000. PETITIONER: DANIEL L. BUTLER, D/B/A STEAMERS RESTAURANT AND RAW BAR, LOCATED AT 1190 KING GEORGE BOULEVARD. [DISTRICT 6.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the petition of Daniel Butler, d/b/a Steamers Restaurant and Raw Bar, located at 1190 King George Boulevard, for a new beer, wine and liquor pouring and Sunday sales license for 2000. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 10. REQUEST FOR NEW BEER, WINE AND LIQUOR POURING AND SUNDAY SALES LICENSE FOR 1999. PETITIONER: DEBBIE WYNDHAM HELMLY, D/B/A ISLAND GIRLS STEAMED SEAFOOD BAR, LOCATED AT 7400-D SKIDAWAY ROAD. [DISTRICT 1.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve the request of Petitioner Debbie Wyndham Helmly, d/b/a Island Girls Steamed Seafood Bar, located at 7400-D Skidaway Road, for a new beer, wine and liquor pouring and Sunday sales license for 1999. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 11. REQUEST BOARD APPROVAL TO AWARD BIDS AS FOLLOWS:** (Please note that new purchase thresholds of \$10,000 or more have been enacted; however, contracts and change orders of a lesser amount still will appear.)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DEPT.</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>FUNDING</u>
A. Annual contract with option to renew for two additional one year terms to provide maintenance, exceeding the capability of the "in house" work force, of the three draw bridges	Bridges	Alloy Industrial Contractors	Varies by service required	General Fund/M&O - Bridges
B. Contract to provide and install a security system	SPLOST	ADT Security Services	\$126,421	SPLOST (1993-1998) - Trade Center (FF&E budget)
C. Two spotlights and lamps	SPLOST	Stage Front Presentation Systems	\$9,309.22	SPLOST (1993-1998) - Trade Center (FF&E budget)
D. Various industrial/custodial equipment	SPLOST	•Paper Chemical •Doyle Chemical	•\$37,074.34 •\$76,929.48	SPLOST (1993-1998) - Trade Center (FF&E budget)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DEPT.</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>FUNDING</u>
E. Portable theater posts	SPLOST	Lawrence Metal Products	\$7,410	SPLOST (1993-1998) - Trade Center (FF&E budget)
F. Change Order No. 5 to the contract for the design of the Westlake Drainage Improvement Project for additional construction plans and specifications and coordinate permits for Phase II	SPLOST	EMC Engineering	\$33,278	SPLOST (1998-2003) - Drainage CIP, Westlake/South Springfield
G. Change Order No. 8 to the professional services contract for the Romney Place/Parkersburg Drainage Improvements for modifications to the construction and right of way plans	SPLOST	Stevenson & Palmer (formally Freeman & Vaughn)	\$16,100	SPLOST (1998-2003) - Pipemakers to Romney Place/Parkersburg (pending transfer)
H. Contract to resurface sixteen (16) tennis courts	Parks and Recreation	Premier Tennis Courts	\$67,640	•Vehicle and Equipment Lease •Lake Mayer Bond Proceeds •General Fund/M&O - Parks and Recreation
I. Contract to provide "on site" microfilming services	Administrative Services	SDM, Inc.	\$39,745.20	General Fund/M&O - Administrative Services
J. Roof replacement at the Port City Branch Library	Library	A-Z Coatings, Inc. (FBE)	\$17,000	General Fund/M&O - Library
K. Change Order No. 7 to the contract for Skidaway Road Project for updating traffic information	SPLOST	Thomas & Hutton Engineering	\$17,865	SPLOST (1985-1993) - Skidaway Avenue Widening Project.
L. Confirmation of Change Order No. 5 to the contract for design of Central Avenue for additional surveying services	SPLOST	Clemmons Engineers	\$1,255	SPLOST (1985-1993)- Central Avenue
M Six (6) double stack convection ovens	Detention Center	Restaurant Equipment Company	\$23,964.60	Vehicle and Equipment Lease
N. 4 x 4 utility truck cab and chassis	Mosquito Control	Willoughby Ford	\$27,160	Vehicle and Equipment Lease
O. Mini Van	I.C.S.	J.C. Lewis	\$16,896	Vehicle and Equipment Lease
P. Reject bids for a sedan	Tax Assessor	N/A	N/A	N/A
Q. Short list of architects for final competition to design the modification of a portion of the structure at 1117 Eisenhower to accommodate a consolidated inspections and permitting function	Inspections	• Gunn-Meyerhoff-Shay •L. Scott Barnard and Associates •Bazemore, Mastrianni and Wilson	N/A	N/A

**As to Items 11-A through 11-Q, except 11-P:**

Commissioner Price moved to approve Items 11-A through 11-Q, except Item 11-P. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

**As to Item 11-P:**

REJECT BIDS FOR A SEDAN; DEPARTMENT: TAX ASSESSOR

Commissioner Jackel said, I just wanted to bring this item up because this is another example of the good work the General and his staff is doing and I don't think they get enough credit. They had a bid out, circumstances changed and they found out they could save us \$2,500 by rebidding it, and they're asking us to do that, and that's wonderful. Mr. George Lynch said, thank you, sir.

Commissioner Saussy said, move for approval. Commissioner Price said, second. Commissioner Odell said, second. Commissioner DeLoach said, he's always ahead of the game.

Vice Chairman Thomas asked, okay, was there a motion? Commissioner Saussy said, yes, I made the motion. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

1. Commissioner Price moved to approve Items 11-A through 11-Q, except Item 11-P. Commissioner Rivers seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]
2. Commissioner Saussy moved to approve Item 11-P. Commissioners Odell and Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**XI. FIRST READINGS**

Proposed changes to ordinances must be read or presented in written form at two meetings held not less than one week apart. A vote on the following listed matters will occur at the next regularly scheduled meeting.  
 Comments, discussion and debate from members of the public will be received only at the meeting at which a vote is to be taken on one of the following listed items.

1. **PETITIONER, WILLIAM M. FOSTER, OWNER, IS REQUESTING A ZONING CHANGE FOR A 19.5 ACRE PARCEL LOCATED AT 612 WILMINGTON ISLAND ROAD (OLD SHERATON SAVANNAH HOTEL SITE) BE REZONED FROM T-B (TOURIST-BUSINESS) TO A PUD-M-18 (PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT-MULTI-FAMILY) CLASSIFICATION TO ALLOW CONDOMINIUMS. A TOTAL OF 265 CONDOMINIUMS ARE PROPOSED ON THE SITE. THE MPC RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF THE REZONING OF THE PETITIONED SITE FROM T-B TO A PUD-M-18 CLASSIFICATION. MPC FILE NO. 99-12785-C [DISTRICT 4.]**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Read into the record as first reading.

=====

2. **AMEND SECTION 7-208 OF THE CHATHAM COUNTY CODE TO PROVIDE FOR AN INCREASE FROM ONE PERCENT (1%) TO TWO-AND-A-HALF PERCENT (2½%), THE COMMISSION ON TAXES FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION COLLECTED BY THE COUNTY TAX COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE.**

Commissioner Price said, this second item has to do with the ordinance that would be required to increase the percentage of the collection of fees that the Tax Commissioner's office collects for the Board of Education, as we talked earlier. There's still the meeting that we need to have before this reading would be read, and I move that we table it until the 17<sup>th</sup>, until the next meeting of the County Commissioners. Commissioner Jackel asked, you're moving to table the first reading? Commissioner Price said, yes. Commissioner Murray said, do you know that the second reading would be in January? Commissioner Price said, well, I know that whatever this number is here is not going to be the number. Commissioner Murray said, yes, but that can be changed from the first to the second. Commissioner Rivers said, we can amend it. Commissioner Price said, I also know —, I also know that the facts that are in the Facts and Findings on this item are incorrect. This item isn't, in my opinion, this item is not properly presented in this fashion --, in the form that —. Commissioner Jackel said, we still can amend it though.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, so what do we have here? Do we have a motion? Commissioner Price said, well, I made a motion to table and it didn't —, it evidently failed for lack of a second. Commissioner DeLoach said, I make a motion

that we don't do anything with it. Commissioner Rivers said, this is just a first reading. Commissioner Price said, yes, go ahead and read it Priscilla [Thomas].

Vice Chairman Thomas asked, go ahead and read it? Commissioner Price said, yes. Vice Chairman Thomas then read this item into the record as first reading.

Commissioner Price said, we have a meeting on Tuesday afternoon at 3:30 in the Superintendent's office, Virginia Edwards, and Russ [Abolt] and his staff will be there as well as the Tax Commissioner. Vice Chairman Thomas said, very good.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Read into record as First Reading.

=====

**3. AMEND ORDINANCE TO CHANGE BUILDING PERMIT FEES.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Read into record as First Reading.

=====

**XII. SECOND READINGS**

**1. AMENDMENT TO THE CHATHAM COUNTY LAND DISTURBING ACTIVITIES ORDINANCE (LDAO) TO ESTABLISH REQUIREMENTS FOR PROTECTION OF WETLANDS AND GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREAS. [ALL DISTRICTS.]**

Commissioner Price said, so moved. Commissioner DeLoach said, second. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor of the motion let it be known by voting. Any discussion?

The Clerk said, there was a new order that was sent out to the Chairman that these need to be read in a specific order.

County Manager Abolt said, if I may, on the advice of MPC staff yesterday, we did a suggested change in the order only to allow some logic to the way in which staff working reports are presented to you. Some of these issues are directly related. We were trying to array them in a new order. So that's what Sybil [Tillman] is addressing.

County Attorney Hart said, your book's out of order.

Commissioner Odell asked, is that form over substance? County Manager Abolt said, only if you get in great detail about the issues you want to make sure that the form doesn't overcome the substance. Commissioner Odell said, I like that.

[NOTE: At this point, Vice Chairman Thomas moved to the new order of items on Second Reading.]

\* \* \*

[NOTE: This item was read into the record as being renumbered as Item #3.]

Commissioner Murray said, move for approval. Commissioner Jackel said, second. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor of the motion let it be known by vote. Opposes? The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved to approve the amendment to the Chatham County Code, Chapter 24, Article II, Land Disturbing Activities Ordinance, to establish requirements for protection of wetlands and groundwater recharge areas. Commissioner Jackel seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**2. AMENDMENT TO THE CHATHAM COUNTY SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR WELL SITES FOR COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEMS. MPC RECOMMENDED APPROVAL. MPC FILE NO. 99-12740-C [NO DISTRICT/UNINCORPORATED AREA OF COUNTY.]**

[NOTE: This item was read into the record as being renumbered as Item #4.]

Commissioner Murray said, move for approval. Commissioner Price said, second. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion is carried.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved to approve the amendment to the Chatham County Subdivision Regulations to establish minimum standards for well sites for community water systems. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**3. AMENDMENT TO THE CHATHAM COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH WETLANDS PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS. MPC RECOMMENDED THAT THE TEXT AMENDMENT BE APPROVED. MPC FILE NO. 99-12741-C [NO DISTRICT/UNINCORPORATED AREA OF COUNTY.]**

[NOTE: This Item was read into the record as being renumbered as Item #1.]

Commissioner Rivers said, so moved approval. Commissioner Saussy said, second. Commissioner Jackel said, I just —. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all those in favor let it be known by voting please. Commissioner Jackel said, I'd just like to make a couple of comments. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Discussion?

Commissioner Jackel said, this ordinance is like the others that follow it on the new amended schedule and they all have to do with environmental concerns in the County and coming up to speed on the new regulations of the Federal government and the State government. I had a talk with the County Manager and the County Engineer, Mr. Bungard, at some length about these things. One of my concerns was who the Zoning Ordinance Administrator was and we got that straightened out. It's Mr. Anderson. And then if —, for some reason if who —, whichever side is not satisfied with these new ordinance, they still have a right of appeal to the Commission. So we'll be the final say on these things. I also tried to ascertain and, Milton [Newton], maybe you might want to say something, but I also tried to ascertain that wherever these ordinances fall as being friendly to builders or friendly to environmentalists, and it was Mr. Bungard's opinion that it kind of, you know, it fell in the middle that it was a fair as they could make to either side on this thing. Do you feel the same way, Milton [Newton]? Mr. Newton said, yes. Commissioner Jackel said, and there's some of the things when you read over these things, like there's on the wellhead issue there's 15 people, and they explained to me where they got that number because it just didn't make any sense to me, I've read over the material, but I can't say I fully understand it after reading over it. I just don't have the background to judge —, to judge this stuff to see whether it's really good or not. It's just out of my area of knowledge and expertise by far. So I'm counting on you and the County Manager and the County Engineer that this is where we need to be because I cannot tell by myself. So —.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay. Commissioner Jackel said, I can now vote for —. You're waiting on my vote. Commissioner Price said, call the question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, I call for the question. Are we ready to vote? Commissioner DeLoach said, yes. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried. Thank you.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Rivers moved to approve the amendment to the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance to establish wetlands protection requirements. Commissioner Saussy seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**4. AMENDMENT TO THE CHATHAM COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREA PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS. MPC RECOMMENDED THAT THE TEXT AMENDMENT BE APPROVED.  
MPC FILE NO. 99-12742-C  
[NO DISTRICT/UNINCORPORATED AREA OF COUNTY.]**

[NOTE: This item was read into the record as being renumbered as #2.]

Commissioner Murray said, I've got this copy too. I'm just wondering —, I want to explain a little bit more about that. Nobody's here from MPC? Oh, okay.

Ms. Jean McDowell said, hi. I'm Jean McDowell, I'm the Natural Resources Planner at MPC. Commissioner Murray asked, all right. What is the purpose of this. Ms. McDowell said, the groundwater recharge areas are three areas within Chatham County that the State of Georgia has determined are the areas where it's likely that the aquifer is recharged from the surface water so they want to protect those areas by preventing harmful activities from going on that could pollute the surface water, which would then go into the aquifer.

Commissioner Murray asked, so this has nothing to do with a company coming in and drilling down and recharging them? Ms. McDowell said, no, nothing whatsoever. It adds some restrictions on activities. Commissioner Murray said, move for approval.

Commissioner Jackel asked, and you're satisfied —. Commissioner Saussy said, second. Commissioner Jackel said, these things are a pretty good compromise between all parties? Ms. McDowell said, yes, we had a task force that involved a lot of City and County staff, as well as developers, engineering companies and environmentalists. Commissioner Jackel said, good. Ms. McDowell said, they developed this over several months.

Commissioner Price said, I call the question. The Clerk asked, who made the motion. I'm sorry, I didn't hear. Commissioner Murray said, I did. Commissioner Odell said, I did —, somebody did. Commissioner Price said, I heard two motions, two voices.

The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion's carried.

Mrs. Hilda Whitaker asked, Madam Chairman, may I say something about the ordinance that was just approved? Some of them are required to get short term work programs up to snuff to get the State off the County's back. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, thank you.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved to approve the amendment to the Chatham County zoning ordinance to establish groundwater recharge area protection requirements. Commissioner Saussy seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

5. **PETITIONER, ROBERT W. ANDERSON, III, OWNER, IS REQUESTING THAT A TWO-ACRE TRACT OF LAND LOCATED ON THE SOUTHEASTERN CORNER OF U.S. HIGHWAY 17 SOUTH AND CHEVIS ROAD BE REZONED FROM A P-A-T (PLANNED AGRICULTURE-TOURIST) TO A P-B-C (PLANNED COMMUNITY-BUSINESS) CLASSIFICATION IN ORDER TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY BUSINESS USES ON THE SITE. MPC RECOMMENDED THAT THE PETITIONER'S REQUEST BE APPROVED BASED ON A FINDING THAT THE REQUESTED ZONING EXISTED ON THE SITE UNTIL CHANGED TO THE CURRENT ZONING IN 1998.**  
**MPC FILE NO. 12764-C**  
**[DISTRICT 6.]**

Commissioner Price said, move for approval. Commissioner Saussy said, second. Commissioner DeLoach said, question. Vice Chairman Thomas said, questions.

Commissioner DeLoach said, I want to know why —, what happened in '98 and then what happened now? Commissioner Rivers said, the man changed his mind.

Mr. Milton Newton said, I don't know if the petitioner is here or not, but from the Planning Commission's perspective the rationale was simply to return it to the zoning classification that it was previously. Perhaps the applicant can answer the question of why his individual request, but it is consistent with the surrounding zoning on either side.

Vice Chairman Thomas asked, is the applicant here? Commissioner DeLoach said, yes. Vice Chairman Thomas said, okay.

The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion is carried.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved that the petition of Robert W. Anderson, Owner, requesting that a two-acre tract of land located on the southeastern corner of U. S. Highway 17 South and Chevis Road be rezoned from a P-A-T (Planned Agriculture-Tourist) to a P-B-C (Planned Community-Business) classification in order to develop community business uses on the site, be approved based on a finding that the requested zoning existed on the site until changed to the current zoning in 1998. Commissioner Saussy seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

6. **PETITIONER, DANIEL W. FISHER, AGENT, EMC ENGINEERING SERVICES, INC. (FOR W. O. SASSER, OWNER) IS REQUESTING THAT A PORTION OF A 1.93 ACRE TRACT LOCATED ON JOHNNY MERCER BOULEVARD ON WILMINGTON ISLAND BE REZONED FROM P-W-I (PLANNED WATERFRONT INDUSTRY) TO A P-B-C (PLANNED COMMUNITY-BUSINESS) ZONING CLASSIFICATION IN ORDER TO DEVELOP RETAIL/PHARMACY USES. MPC RECOMMENDED THAT THE PETITIONER'S REQUEST BE APPROVED BASED ON ITS CONSISTENCY WITH SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USE PATTERNS AND THE RELATIVE DIFFICULTY OF UTILIZING THE AREA ZONED WATERFRONT INDUSTRY DUE TO ITS SMALL SIZE AND SHAPE.**  
**MPC FILE NO. 99-12766-C**  
**[DISTRICT 4.]**

Commissioner Murray said, I would like for somebody from MPC to answer some questions please. If this is approved, what happens with the old oak trees on the waterfront and around that property? Do they get taken out? Mr. Clyde Wester said, those —. Commissioner DeLoach said, that is the house they're talking —, isn't that the house they're talking about? Commissioner Murray said, right, because the house is there right now, yes. Mr. Clyde said, this is just the zoning of the property. If the zoning is approved, we'll review the site plans for the proposed development tentatively scheduled for the December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, I believe. Commissioner Murray said, well, what happens though is if we approve the zoning and y'all approve a site plan and this comes back and they get permission to go in and just clear-cut all those big oak trees that are in there, I've got a problem with that. Commissioner DeLoach said, me too. Mr. Wester said, if the zoning is approved and —. Commissioner Murray said, I can understand —, I know Mr. Sasser's in the audience, and I understand what he's trying to do there, and I agree that that's the only parcel left that's not commercial in that whole area, but I think that if we're going to do this, it has to be done with some restrictions and some guidelines put on there about what can be done with that property and those existing old oak trees that are on that property. Mr. Wester said, I can only say again that those —, that particular issue that we're discussing will be addressed in the site plan development phase of the project. Commissioner

Murray said, so we would not have any guarantees whatsoever if we rezone the property —. Mr. Wester said, at that phase in the development reviewing process, namely the site plan approval stage, we would have that type of control.

Commissioner DeLoach said, let me go this angle. Commissioner Price said, amend it. Commissioner DeLoach said, as it stands now, it would be —, with what it is right now could he take the trees down anyway? Mr. Wester said, the waterfront —, the current zoning or the proposed zoning would go through the same process as far as site plan review. What we would do if this should pass is that we would hear the County Commission's concerns, and this would require a site plan review by the Planning Commission and a public hearing on that site plan.

Commissioner Murray said, yes, but the MPC would have the authority to say yes or no to the site plan, not the County Commission. That's where I'm having a problem with it. Mr. Wester said, that's correct, but I assure you that we would be sensitive to your concerns. Commissioner Murray said, I know you can assure me all that you want to, but I used to sit on the MPC so I know what happens up there sometimes.

Commissioner DeLoach asked, can we pass it with the idea of requiring it to come back to us? Commissioner Murray asked, can we pass it —, can we put in this motion that it comes back to us for approval of that site plan? Commissioner Price said, Jon [Hart]. Ask the question again, Frank [Murray]. County Attorney Hart said, I'm sorry. Commissioner Murray asked, can we approve this zoning request with the understanding that any site plan would have to come back before the County Commission for final approval? County Attorney Hart said, yes. Commissioner Jackel asked, so it's a conditional approval? Commissioner Price said, just amend —, amend the motion on the second reading. Can you do that? Commissioner Murray said, this is the second reading. Commissioner Price said, that's what I'm saying, amend it —. Commissioner River said, just stipulate in the motion. Commissioner Price said, if I may amend —.

Commissioner Murray asked, do you know which one we're on? County Attorney Hart said, on six. Commissioner Murray said, yes. County Attorney Hart said, yes, you can amend your motion to include that as a stipulation. Commissioner Murray said, okay, before I make the motion I would like to say that I really hate to see that piece of property go commercial to begin with. I know that there's nothing that we can do legally to prevent that because of what's happened in that area already, but I think it's a shame that a piece of property like that will go to a commercial business to do what's going to be done with it. Of course, I don't know of any way to stop that part of it, but I will move that we approve it, approve the zoning contingent upon the fact that any site plan comes back before the Chatham County Commission for final approval. Commissioner Price said, second.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, all those in favor of the motion, please vote. Opposes? The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion is carried.

Commissioner DeLoach said, you might make sure they understand that there's sensitivity on this Board concerning those oak trees and they'd better come back with something that —. Commissioner Murray said, if they're planning on clear-cutting those trees out, they might as well not come up with a site plan.

#### **ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Murray moved that the petition of Daniel W. Fisher, Agent, EMC Engineering Services, Inc. (for W. O. Sasser, Owner), requesting that a portion of a 1.93 acre tract located on Johnny Mercer Boulevard on Wilmington Island be rezoned from P-W-I (Planned Waterfront Industry) to a P-B-C (Planned Community-Business) zoning classification in order to develop retail/pharmacy uses, be approved based on its consistency with surrounding land use patterns and the relative difficulty of utilizing the area zoned Waterfront Industry due to its small size and shape, and conditioned upon the site plan being brought before the County Commission for approval. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

#### **7. AMEND THE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE ORDINANCE TO ADDRESS THE ACCUMULATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES ON REAL PROPERTY AS A HOBBYIST USE GROUP.**

Commissioner Jackel said, I move to approve it. Commissioner Price said, second. Commissioner Murray asked, does that mean there's zero cars? Commissioner Price said, call the question.

Vice Chairman Thomas said, call for the question. Please vote.

Commissioner Saussy said, I want to hear for something on this. Commissioner Price said, David [Saussy] asked for discussion. Vice Chairman Thomas asked, did everybody vote? Commissioner Saussy said, I just wanted to know if we've got this thing tight enough. Commissioner Jackel said, zero cars. Commissioner Saussy said, okay, fine. Vice Chairman Thomas said, zero tolerance. Okay.

Commissioner Murray said, wait. There's no grandfather clause? Commissioner Jackel said, no grandfather clause. Commissioner Murray said, okay.

The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion is carried.

Commissioner Price said, so this ordinance now is the same as the City's ordinance. Commissioner Saussy said, right. Commissioner Odell said, yes. County Manager Abolt said, and you all remember it was not a question of not sending the staff out there. We were sending the staff out there, going to court and having certain things reversed. Commissioner Jackel said, well, we've got a new umpire in the courthouse.

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Jackel moved to approve the amendment to Chatham County Code, Article V, §21-501, Property Maintenance Ordinance, to address the accumulation of motor vehicles on real property as a hobbyist use group. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**XIII. INFORMATION CALENDAR**

- 1. **PROGRESS REPORT ON GENERAL FUND CONTINGENCY ACCOUNT - M&O AND THE SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT (SEE ATTACHED).**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

- 2. **LIST OF PURCHASING ITEMS BETWEEN \$2,500 AND \$9,999 (SEE ATTACHED).**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

- 3. **STATUS REPORT ON THE YEAR 2000 REMEDIATION PROJECT. ICS Director Lewis Leonard can give a verbal briefing also if you wish.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

- 4. **REPORT ON STATUS OF PARTICIPATION BY LOCAL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESSES ON THE TRADE CENTER'S CONSTRUCTION.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

**5. MONTHLY ROADS AND DRAINAGE BRIEFING.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

**6. STATUS REPORT ON INSPECTIONS CONSOLIDATION.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

**7. STATUS OF SURPLUS PROPERTY.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Report received as information.

=====

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Vice Chairman Thomas said, someone give a motion to go into Executive Session. County Manager Abolt said, if I may, Dr. Thomas, I know —, I realize it's late and I don't want to cause you to stay any longer here. This would be your last opportunity, if you choose to exercise it, to review our preparations for Y2K. Mr. Leonard happens to be in the audience. You have a written report, which essentially says with some minor exceptions we are fully Y2K compliant, but because of the community and national and international concerns, if you would like to ask any questions of Mr. Leonard to test us on our preparedness, now's your time.

Commissioner Odell said, moved to go —. County Manager Abolt said, personnel, litigation and land acquisition. Commissioner Rivers said, it needs to be stated. The Clerk said, we need a second. Commissioner DeLoach said, second. Vice Chairman Thomas said, all in favor. County Manager Abolt said, and you're just recessing. Vice Chairman Thomas said, just recessing to go into Executive Session. The Clerk asked, everybody vote please. The motion carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.] Vice Chairman Thomas said, the motion is carried.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Odell, seconded by Commissioner DeLoach and unanimously passed, the Board recessed at 1:35 p.m., to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation, land acquisition and personnel.

Following adjournment of the Executive Session, the Board reconvened the meeting of the Chatham County Commission at 1:47 p.m.

=====

**ITEMS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 1. **REQUEST BOARD APPROVE SETTLEMENT OF JANICE G. INGRAN V. CHATHAM COUNTY, CIVIL ACTION NO. X92-0690-H (JON HART).**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner DeLoach moved to approve a transfer of \$17,780 to effectuate a settlement of *Janice C. Ingram v. Chatham County*, Civil Action No. X92-0690-H, in the total amount of \$73,799.62. Commissioner Saussy seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 2. **REQUEST BOARD FORMALLY APPROVE CONTRACT WITH TIC FOR REMOVAL AND STORAGE OF TEMPORARY BARRIERS, HUTCHINSON ISLAND (JON HART).**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Price moved to formally approve a contract with TIC-The Industrial Company for removal and storage of temporary barriers located on or around Loop Road on Hutchinson Island. Commissioner DeLoach seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 3. **REQUEST BOARD AUTHORIZE SETTLEMENT OF THE CLAIM OF ALEXANDER DEAN (JON HART).**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner DeLoach moved to authorize the settlement of the claim of Alexander Dean in the amount of \$7,500. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 4. **REQUEST BOARD AUTHORIZE SETTLEMENT OF LINDA SHARPE - WORKER'S COMP CASE (JON HART).**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner Odell moved to authorize settlement of the Worker's Comp case of Linda Sharpe in the amount of \$1,500. Commissioner DeLoach seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

- 5. **REQUEST BOARD APPROVE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO EXECUTE AN AFFIDAVIT THAT THE EXECUTIVE SESSION WAS HELD IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT.**

**ACTION OF THE BOARD:**

Commissioner DeLoach moved to authorize the Chairman to execute an affidavit that the Executive Session was held in compliance with the Open Meetings Law. Commissioner Odell seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. [NOTE: Chairman Hair was not present.]

=====

**APPOINTMENTS**

None.

=====

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, Vice Chairman Thomas declared the meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

=====

APPROVED: THIS \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 1999

\_\_\_\_\_  
DR. BILLY B. HAIR, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF  
COMMISSIONERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

\_\_\_\_\_  
SYBIL E. TILLMAN, COUNTY CLERK