

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL-CALLED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA, HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2005, 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 Pete Liakakis called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m., Tuesday, February 8, 2005.

Chairman Liakakis said, we appreciate each and every one of you coming this evening. This is an historical moment for us. You know, Chatham County came together in 1777. So this is the first time that we are having regular meetings with all the cities in the County, all the municipalities in the County coming together, and I think that's important because what we're going to be able to do is assist one another in many projects and issues that will come up.

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II. INVOCATION

Councilman John McKenna of Thunderbolt, Georgia, gave the invocation.

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III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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IV. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Pete Liakakis, Chairman
 Dr. Priscilla D. Thomas, Vice Chairman, District Eight
 Dean Kicklighter, Chairman Pro Tem, District Seven
 Helen L. Stone, District One
 Patrick O. Shay, District Three
 Patrick K. Farrell, District Four
 Harris Odell, Jr., District Five
 David M. Gellatly, District Six

ABSENT: James J. Holmes, District Two

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

Also in attendance at this special-called meeting were: Mayor Otis Johnson, Jeff Felser, Van Johnson, Mary Osborne, Ellis Cook, Kenneth Sadler, Clifton Jones, Jr., Tony Thomas and Michael Brown, City of Savannah; Anna Maria Thomas and John McKenna, City of Thunderbolt; Mayor Mike Lamb, City of Pooler; Mayor Ben Rozier and John Myrick, City of Bloomingdale; Mayor Walter Parker, Paul Wolff and Mallory Pearce, City of Tybee Island; Mayor Tim Holbrook and Jimmy Gunby, City of Port Wentworth; Bessie Kicklighter, Tennyson Holder, Judy Shuman, Earl Wilson and David Aldrich, City of Garden City; Lt. Col. Jeff Goble, Hunter Army Airfield; and Sheriff Al St. Lawrence, Chatham County.

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V. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. **ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS—ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS; FORMALIZING MEETING SETUP; ETC.**

Chairman Liakakis asked that each person introduce themselves and give the name of their city or the County. [Each person then introduced themselves.]

Chairman Liakakis said, as some of you know, we've been talking about coming together as a team and what we can really accomplish is a lot. As you know, sometimes in the past some of the smaller cities had the feeling that maybe the larger cities weren't working with us or didn't care about us or maybe kind of negative towards us. You see, what has happened in the past, as some of you know, when certain pieces of legislation were presented by a city, whether it was the Westside, Eastside or wherever it might be, that we couldn't always get all of the legislators to come aboard and to sign on that legislation. As you know, that you need several members of the House of Representatives and also two of the State Senators to sign that and, as a number of you know, in the past that we couldn't get the numbers that we needed to sign the legislation so it was good for the cities or whatever. Now I think that all of us coming together, as we are starting this evening, we're going to be talking about specific issues and also when we lobby, whether it's on the State level or on a Federal level, we can see that we have more of a voice and we will have more people that will be able to come on board with us.

Chairman Liakakis said, what I'd like to do for one of the items for discussion is the attendance for the meetings now. As we mentioned before, this is the first meeting that we're starting with the County and all the cities. Now one of the entities was unable to come, the Town of Vernonburg. They had three of their members that were sick and one of the other ones was going out of town. So they weren't here, but their Intendant stated to Gail Gordon that he would make sure that he's at our next meeting in April. But I want each and every one of you this evening to feel like this is your organization. It's not the County's, it's not just one city, but it's all of us so we want your input about how you would like this organization, what we're going to do and what directions that we're going in addition to doing the lobbying on a State or Federal level. What we have done is we've checked all of the meeting dates for all of the cities to find out what day of the week was the best, and we found out that Tuesday, we have no cities and nobody having a meeting on Tuesdays so what we tentatively set up, and you can change this, is that we have the meetings on the second Tuesday of the month every other month, every 60 days. Now one of the other important things is that we need your input to tell us whether you want all of your city council members to come or you want your mayor or representatives to attend the meetings so that we can have these workshops in issues that you are interested in. What I'd like to do right now is to ask for any input from any of the members this evening about how you see this group working as a team and what we can do to help one another or if you've got some specific area in your particular city or the County that you would like for us to discuss, feel free to do that now.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Councilwoman Bessie Kicklighter.

Councilwoman Bessie Kicklighter said, as far as just the personnel, I think that maybe the mayor, city administrator or manager and one council person because if you get a lot of people you're not going to get a lot of agreement on basic things, and I know we need help with the port and if everybody in the County would help us to lobby with our legislators, it would help us tremendously. We've got our seven cities here and everybody else, I think that's a bit much to get a one-on-one.

Chairman Liakakis said, and what the numbers are for all of the cities, Vernonburg and the County, there are 65 elected officials in our County. As was mentioned by Bessie [Kicklighter], is to have some designees from each elected body so that they can bring their city, whether it's Garden City or Thunderbolt or Tybee or the City of Savannah, what specific issues that you want us to discuss, but always everybody's invited to come to the meetings because it's open meetings and we want the public to know that. It's not something that we don't want people to find out. This is an open meeting and will continue to be an open meeting. One of the other invitees this evening is from Hunter Field. You know, Hunter Field is a city in itself. It has a large population. They have been involved in many things in the cities and the County, and I'm going to ask him to speak, and that's Col. Jeff Goble, the top man at Hunter, and I'd like for you, if you will, to address the board.

Col. Jeff Goble said, thank you. I've been in command at Hunter now for about 18 months and one of the things that I've tried to do since I've been there is to become more involved in the community as any of the other municipalities in the County. Just like the Chairman said, I've got a city of six to ten thousand people right in the middle of Chatham County there and, you know, there's a lot of issues that Hunter can assist with and provide input with as a member of the community and to get the officers and senior noncommissioned officers on the post involved as leaders in the community, and I've been able to strike good working relationships with Mayor Johnson and other leaders in the community and get involved in that kind of stuff. So this is just one other thing that I was glad to be invited to and asked to participate in. One of the things that I'd like to offer to y'all, not a lot of people knows what goes on inside the wire there at Hunter Army Airfield. It's a United States Army Base and it's open to everybody, but a lot of people don't know that. What I'd like to do is at one of these future meetings every other month, I'd like to host one of those meetings at Hunter and use that as an opportunity to show you all what we do at Hunter Army Airfield and kind of give you a little bit of a tour and then we can have our regular meeting maybe in April or in June at Hunter Army Airfield if y'all are interested.

Chairman Liakakis said, okay. All right, fine. We'll see about notifying you on one of the dates then, Colonel, for that.

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2. COMMENTS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS.

Chairman Liakakis said, Walter [Parker], you've been a long-time mayor for the Town of Tybee and have been involved in many things and negotiations that we've had in the past. Is there anything specifically that you would like to discuss with us this evening?

Mayor Walter Parker said, I don't have anything specific. You know what our main need is at Tybee, and that's to maintain the beach, but I agree with Bessie [Kicklighter] about the numbers, and I'm not saying that everybody shouldn't get together at certain times, but I think if we're going to get down to the nitty-gritty of any issue, we need to have fewer people than 65.

Chairman Liakakis said, right. And one of the things, you know, we have a social organization, Chatham Municipal Association, that has been in existence for a number of years and they've done a lot of things, but this is more formalized so that we can get together to be able to discuss issues that are important to each one of the governmental entities. Otis [Johnson], do you have anything specific that you might want this evening?

Mayor Otis Johnson said, no sir, not tonight.

Chairman Liakakis said, okay. As I mentioned, we did a survey and found out that Tuesday is the best time to have these particular meetings. Would anybody like to offer another day because we'd like to continue to make sure that we have the attendance for these meetings? [NOTE: There was no response from the attendees.] Chairman Liakakis said, I'd like to right now call on Commissioner Dean Kicklighter. He had a particular issue. Go ahead, Tony [Thomas].

Alderman Tony Thomas said, let me go back to one question. Mr. Chairman, what length of time do you anticipate these meetings lasting? Chairman Liakakis said, it's according to —, we will set up an agenda. Each particular entity will give us the information to put on the agenda so that we can address that at the meetings. The meetings could last anywhere 45 minutes to an hour or we've got some specifics that we're bringing other people in that we need to address some issue, it could go an hour and a half. It's specifically what we have on the agenda. We don't want to be very labor intense on this thing, but we do need to go over issues. For example, if the City of Savannah has something that they feel, whether it's a specific grant, that we get all the information on that because it's really important. You know, a lot of our budgets are taxed right now and we're looking for more monies to come in and how we're going to get it and all and there are a quite a number of grants out there that we can see about applying for. So if we have Bloomingdale needs to get that grant, or we need something for the County or Thunderbolt or whatever the case might be, that all of us working together because if we sign onto that particular grant, and what I'm talking about the grant is not something that we're in competition because we need to discuss that to see because there could be some competition out there and we have to look at all of that and make some decisions on that.

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3. MUNICIPALITIES AND JAIL COST (COMMISSIONER KICKLIGHTER).

Chairman Liakakis asked, Dean [Kicklighter], do you want to go ahead and discuss the jail situation?

Commissioner Dean Kicklighter said, yes sir. I'd first like to state that Mayor Andy Quinney called and he was very sick and said he was really sorry he wasn't going to be able to be here tonight. I'd like to thank all of the elected representatives from all the cities for showing up here tonight. A special thank you to our new Chairman, Pete Liakakis, for initiating and calling this meeting. It's one thing to have a pledge when you're campaigning and the Chairman pledged that he would treat all cities equally and hold regular meetings, but it's another —, which is happening here tonight —, to actually come through with something you said, and I'm really proud that he's now off to a great start in upholding his campaign pledges. This meeting tells me that the Chairman, as well as this new Commission, will treat all of the cities with equal respect no matter what their size or population, and I truly appreciate that, especially representing five cities within my district.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, tonight I believe is the start to a new partnership between the County and all the cities. I believe that if we work together on the problems that every citizen living throughout this County will benefit. We definitely are partners for all of the people, not enemies. I know a lot of politicians from the County and the cities perceive each other as being enemies in the past, but we're not. We're partners to work for the people here. I, as well as the Chairman here, have had the unique opportunity to serve as an elected official on both government bodies. We both worked for the cities and city government as elected officials. The Chairman actually served on the City Council for Savannah and I had the honor and privilege of serving as Mayor Pro Tem for Garden City and then as Mayor of Garden City. So I believe that we'll bring together a unique prospective of understanding, a good understanding of what you go through as city leaders and now on the flip side of our goals and duties on the County side. I believe that's going to really pay off and I believe it's already started here tonight. The experience from actually serving on both boards has taught me that both the city and the County governments come with differing duties, goals and objectives, but both governments are similar in what I believe is our number one duty as elected officials and that's protecting the people in this County, protecting the people that elected us to represent them. That's why I'm bringing something to your attention that I don't think you may have knowledge of and that's the possibility, not a conclusion that I've come to, but that's the possibility that alleged criminals caught in the cities are possibly being

released early from the County jail in order to save money. That's a rough thing for me to sit here and say that there's a possibility of that, and if it wasn't near and dear, I sure wouldn't say it because I've got five out of the eight cities within my district if you include Vernonburg. If this is the case, it's serious and we have to look at it and do something.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, you as elected officials probably do not or did not have the jail expense numbers from the years prior to 2003. So I believe that this could be something that is possibly existing now without your knowledge. That's because the County paid the jail expenses for all of the municipalities prior to that date.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, for all of the newly-elected officials, I'm going to let you know a little bit more about this subject. I'll give a little bit of history on the County's and the cities' agreement to share the expense for housing prisoners. I know we've got new people on the County Commission as well a lot of new elected representatives from all of the cities here. When Joe Mahany was Chairman of the Chatham County Commission some time before 1996, while negotiating the LOST agreement with all of the municipalities, which is the Local Option Sales Tax, the County decided that they would pay to house all of the city prisoners in exchange for a larger percentage of the sales tax revenues. Prior to the LOST agreement, each city either had their own jail —, I can remember Garden City having its own small jail out there —, or each city paid the Sheriff to house the prisoners for them. After the 2000 Census the time came around for renegotiations of how to split the money for the LOST revenues and we had to renegotiate the split of the SPLOST, the Special Local Option Sales Tax revenues. Again, I'm sorry for the people that's here and the people that know what I'm about to say, but I'm just going to give a little info on both of those. LOST is the fifth penny in our sales tax the State of Georgia allows us to collect and use to offset or lower our property taxes. The LOST money can be used in each of our governments in the M&O portion of the budget for maintenance and operations. It has less restrictions than the SPLOST tax has. The SPLOST tax is the sixth penny that we collect in our County and the State provides pretty strict guidelines as to how the cities and the counties can spend the SPLOST revenues. SPLOST must be used on capital projects for capital improvements only. Unlike LOST, SPLOST revenues can't be spent on annual operating expenses.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, now getting back to the negotiations, some time in —, and I don't have the dates in front of me —, but 2001 or 2002 under Chairman Hair's administration while negotiating with the cities on splitting the LOST revenues, some of the members on the County Commission felt as though the cities abused its previous agreement in that the County would pay to house all the cities' prisoners when the County agreed to pay for all the cities' prisoners. The County felt as if the cost of housing city prisoners by far exceeded the revenues that were previously negotiated during Chairman Mahany's tenure. At that point I stood up you —, you being all of the cities. Because I had worked on your budgets, I knew the pressures put on you as elected officials in a city, I stood up for you. I fought to keep it like it was, perhaps with a little bit of a larger cut going to the County to help defray some of the expenses of the jail costs. Numbers were presented at the time that showed each cities' jail costs steadily rising while the County was paying the bills. This is a poor example, but some Commissioners felt as if the cities would put jaywalkers in jail and leave them for days because they had no financial interest in it. After much talk and many deliberations, it was agreed upon by the cities and the County that both the cities and the County would share in the cost to house the prisoners. At that time I definitely worried that too much attention was being paid on the expense to house criminals rather than the fact that we need to keep criminals in jail and off of our streets. I worried that the cities may start allowing early release of criminals, like the states have done throughout the country, in order to keep their budgets lower, and I just truly believe that that's our number one main duty as elected representatives is to protect the people. And that comes from just, number one, having a little heart, but number two would be personal experience. When something happens near and dear to you, it's nice and comforting to know that the person that harms you or your family members is in prison. So I definitely think that's our number one duty is to keep the criminals behind the bars. But all governments basically agreed in the end that cost-sharing was the best way to go. Since that agreement I've heard from municipal police officers that are really discouraged right now that feel as if they are making arrests, and they've actually stated that they believe that their respective governments are releasing them from the jails early to save money on the jail cost. I've spoken with the Sheriff and asked him some questions and he told me that judges sometimes go to the jail to set the bond right there at jail to get them out quicker. Am I —, is that an accurate quote? Sheriff St. Lawrence said, yes, that's accurate.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, I have actually witnessed firsthand a person recently that has been arrested numerous times for a variety of offenses, including major felonies, and within a matter of days after his arrest for the most recent felony that I know of, he was released from one of the municipalities with a minimum bond and he was actually arrested for two more crimes, not —, including he was out on bond, so I hear, for previous felonies. He had already pled guilty to other misdemeanors and he was out in no time and on the streets and I'm looking at this guy. Near and dear my family, which I've lost a family member once and I don't want to lose another one because we aren't paying to keep people in jail. This prompted me to ask the Sheriff to check into the numbers to see if municipal prisoners were possibly being released much faster than they were during the years when the County paid to house them.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, the requested numbers are in and I'll pass them out for y'all to take back with you in a little bit. For whatever reason, and I don't know the answer, the costs appear to be drastically lower now to house prisoners in each municipality than it was prior to this cost-sharing agreement. In 2002, which is before the cost-sharing took place, I'm going to run through it really quick, the County paid for the City of Savannah \$2,855,000 to house prisoners. In 2003, the cost to house the prisoners in Savannah was \$986,000. It dropped basically \$2,000,000. Two out of the three million. And again I don't know why; that's why I'm bringing this to your attention where y'all can find out why and how. Bloomingdale: \$98,000 in '02, \$28,000 in '03. Port Wentworth: \$106,000 in '02, \$14,000 in '03. Tybee: \$134,000 in '02, \$22,000 in '03. Pooler: \$49,000 in '02, \$18,000 in '03. \$256,000 for Garden City, \$46,000 in '03 —, a \$200,000 reduction there out of \$250,000. Thunderbolt: \$55,000 in '02, \$9,660 in '03. For a total for all municipal costs to house prisoners was \$4,998,000 in '02. Flip it to '03 and it was only \$1,716,000. In fairness to

all involved with this, it should be noted that the jail costs for a prisoner that used to cost \$52 per day prior to the agreement to share the expenses, at that point it shifted to \$44.53 a day. So it now costs \$7.47 less per day to house a prisoner, but the numbers still don't come close to adding up of what's actually taken place here. Again, I don't know if people are actually getting moved to a higher court quicker where the cost will shift to the State or the County, which that's fine with me. You play within the rules, you know, whoever has to pay, let's pay it and keep the people in jail. So I hope that's the conclusion y'all will come out with that that's how the expenses dropped so low. I hope that it's not early bonds just bonding them out immediately to get them out of the jail.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, someone asked me today if I know an individual that has been released early to save money. I know of one that's been released really early, but I don't know the cause of why he was released so early. I told the person the same thing that I'm telling you right now. I'm not accusing anyone of doing anything wrong and this person could testify I said this on the phone when they called. I don't know of anyone specifically that has been released early in order to save money. I have no knowledge of that being the case. I'm simply presenting numbers to everyone here and the respective governments that indicate that we may have a problem. I hope that the information helps each city by showing that a problem may exist. It's my hope that each city will dive deep into the numbers and take it further going to the number of prisoners housed in the past versus now and the days stayed and find out whether or not justice is being served. I feel confident that the County Commission and the Sheriff over here will assist and provide you with any assistance necessary to ensure the safety of the residents throughout Chatham County. And, again, to finish it, I appreciate the jobs you do. I know a lot of times it's thankless. I'm not accusing anyone of anything. I just think that these numbers here indicate that something is going on and I want all of you elected officials to be aware of it and hopefully find out, and I hope that the perception is not a reality and there is an explanation other than releasing criminals early out on our streets. With that I thank all of you and I want to state that something this serious probably wasn't the —, I know it wasn't the Chairman's intention on his first meeting here. It was to show that we're going to work together to solve problems throughout the area and, you know, if we can solve some crime problems together throughout the area, criminals move whether by car or bus, train or whatever, and catching a criminal in one city and keeping in jail is going to keep him out of other cities in the future. So we can all work together and, to borrow a slogan, take a bite out of crime. I appreciate y'all very much.

Chairman Liakakis said, one of the other things I think is really important that affects every city in the County is how the Federal budget is right now. Like for example —.

Mayor Johnson said, I have a question before we leave this. I'm confused because I need someone to explain to me how these cities release people out of jail. Somebody help me understand that because I don't understand how we do that. Commissioner Kicklighter asked, Sheriff, can you answer that?

Sheriff Al St. Lawrence said, they have their judges. Mayor Johnson said, they have their judges. Sheriff St. Lawrence said, and pro tems. The other too is it's a multitude of things involved, but for instance most cities in the County and the City of Savannah I know in particular has a bond schedule. If a person is arrested on a certain type offense, they take and meet that bond schedule and post that bond, there's nothing really anybody can do it. You may want to keep them in there, but you can't. It's up to the judges. Some of the judges of the small municipalities sometime will come to the jail and arraign one and bind him over to higher court. That don't get him out on bond, but what it does do is put the expense back on the County. Like you said, once they're bound over to a higher court it's no longer the City of Savannah's or Garden City's expense any more.

Commissioner Harris Odell said, let me take a shot at that. First of all, Mayor, everyone that a municipality would be responsible for is not a convicted individual. It is an individual accused of a crime, which is substantially different. What most of the municipalities after the cost assignment was returned back, and even with the City of Savannah, I believe that the City of Savannah hired an auditor-like person to go to the jail and to ensure that there were people who were eligible for bond, these were citizens accused. Once you are convicted, then that's the cost of the State. These are citizens who are accused. To try to speed up the process I know Thunderbolt did an incredible thing and even created a drug court to cut the numbers down. These are individuals who are accused who are entitled to bond. I think one of the concerns that Commissioner Kicklighter had was that in a particular case the individual who was already on bond committed a crime and then received a bond for the second crime committed. I can tell you after 25 years of practicing law, primarily in Chatham County, that is an exception as compared to the rule. Most judges in the municipalities as well as State Court and Superior Court, if you commit a crime while you're on bond, you stay there until arraignment so the judge can fully hear the evidence. But occasionally our system —, there are cracks in it and I make no justification, I've got no dog in the fight, but I do know that after we had that LOST negotiation with most of the municipalities, most of the municipalities through their judges and their court administrators said what we need to do is, we need to track a person. If you've got a person in for a bondable crime, it's a grid system. There are only seven crimes that you're not entitled to a bond: rape, aggravated assault, murder, manslaughter, so forth and so on, but if you are a citizen accused of shoplifting from the Piggly Wiggly, you're going to get a bond —, with or without an attorney —, and if you're on probation, then the State's going to become involved. There is going to be a quick petition to revoke your probation so you're still taken off, but the municipalities' cost is what this gets to, but you're now in the State system under a probation revocation hearing. Does that make sense to anybody? Mayor Johnson said, it's helping me. Commissioner Odell said, so technically what happened was when we put the cost back on the people who had the responsibility, you all did a better job than what we were doing in that you cut the cost, which is a good thing. The method you use though, if there are cases that people who should not be bonded, who are receiving bonds, then that's a scary concern that we should all be concerned about and I hope that that is not happening.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Councilman John McKenna.

Councilman John McKenna said, just to elaborate, when this money was put onto the municipalities to pay for the jail, there was no secret about it, we went in and started analyzing the data that Al [St. Lawrence] had given us in Thunderbolt for a number of years and we said this is unacceptable. If the County puts this money in the budget, they're not going to get it from Thunderbolt because we are going to put a program in here that's going to stop it. However, the judges were told and everybody else was told, criminals stay in jail. If somebody can make bond, do what they can, but within 24 hours we want a decision made whether that individual should stay or not stay. That's why those costs dropped like they did. Now the flip side of the deal is if there's that much more "vacancies" in the jail that have been boarded up with something else, now the County's been hit with two things. Somebody else is paying for it and you're not getting the money that you thought you were going to get in the budget. So you've been hit with a double whammy here. I cannot sit here and believe that anybody is going to put somebody that's a hard-nosed criminal and knows it, going to turn them loose on the street. If somebody comes in and they qualify, like Harris [Odell] said just a minute ago, you've got to let them make bond. We make a conscientious effort to see if this person is entitled to it or not. If they're in there, we've got a drug court now and if they violate that probation, they end up in the drug court and they end up staying out there for the time that, you know, three months, four months, or whatever it is that their balance is.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Alderman Clifton Jones.

Alderman Clifton Jones said, during the LOST negotiations I believe that the method that the County and the City of Savannah —, now I can only speak for the City of Savannah —, the City of Savannah cut a deal, and I believe all the other municipalities was involved in this as well, because the fee to house the prisoners at that time was reduced, but at the same time the County received a larger share of the LOST funds that were coming in, and that was the offset. That's the way I remember it.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Alderwoman Mary Osborne.

Alderwoman Mary Osborne said, whoever needs to answer this. I have a question. I've heard over and over again that we have a lot of prisoners that belong to the State. Are we collecting the revenues appropriately and in a timely manner? Chairman Liakakis said, I'm going to let somebody answer that right now because either the Sheriff or the County Attorney, Jonathan [Hart], because he gave us some information the other day to them. They the County in excess of \$4,000,000.

County Attorney Hart said, the State has an obligation to reimburse counties, or the Sheriff I should say, technically it's the constitutional officer in charge of that. The problem is that when the Legislature wrote the statute that required the State to reimburse counties, they put a provision in the law that says we only have to reimburse you to the extent we appropriate funds for reimbursement. Well, guess what goes first time in the budget every time. There's no money in the budget. Now the thing that is most essentially irritating to counties throughout the State is that the Legislature in their infinite wisdom will not allow our Sheriff to get paid for housing prisoners, but they will go out and contract with private facilities or a private jail and pay them more than they're willing to reimburse any county in the State. So they don't even treat their own as good as they treat strangers, and year in and year out it's the same thing. We filed suit against the State about a year and a half ago and they immediately were able to muster a team of lawyers out of the Attorney General's office to respond to that. They may not be able to pay for the prisoners, but they certainly had enough to do that, and they took the position that under that statute that as long as the Legislature doesn't appropriate the money to reimburse us, they have no obligation to reimburse us. We brought an action under about six different theories and they have raise the issue of State sovereign immunity and basically we're down to the one issue. We had hoped that the law suit would embarrass somebody into doing something about it, but obviously that has not occurred.

Alderwoman Osborne asked, I'm not an attorney so I need to ask this. Can that not be appealed to a higher court? County Attorney Hart said, well, we're at the Superior Court level now and eventually when the entire case gets resolved there, yes, you will have an appeal, but the courts are very reluctant to try to write laws. They will say, you know, this is the Legislature's statute and they put the part in there that said we only reimburse you to the extent appropriated, and your redress, County, is to go to the State Legislature and change the law because that's what they do, they make laws. But it's another one of those budget issues.

Commissioner Odell said, we're not going to win that legally. Sheriff St. Lawrence said, I don't know. Commissioner Odell asked, you think we might? Sheriff St. Lawrence said, there's a Kansas case where —. Commissioner Odell said, I know. Sheriff St. Lawrence said, but I don't know about all this, how this fits into the Georgia law, but when I got a State inmate, he's convicted and sentenced, I've got almost 200 ready to go to the State now. Some have been there over 30 days. When they've been there over 30 days, 15 days after receiving the paperwork they want to pay me \$20 a day. It used to be \$15. They've put technical violators of probation in there. They haven't committed no crime. They didn't report on time, they didn't pay their fees. Our housing them costs me \$44.53 a day. That's the actual cost to house them. The same way with parole violators or technical violators of parole. But they least —, parole people who felt sorry for us and started paying us \$5 a day, but that don't near recoup the cost that the taxpayers of Chatham County has.

Mayor Johnson said, I think it is very important for us to phrase this problem in the proper manner, and with all due respect to Commissioner Kicklighter, it can easily be inferred by the press, and I would assume that they're going to infer from the press, that the cities are not carrying their fair burden, and that is absolutely incorrect. And I think we need not leave here tonight with that going out on the news at eleven o'clock and on the front page of the paper in the morning. And so I think we need to get a small group together and discuss this issue and come out with some

kind of understanding of what the problem is. You infer that judges appointed by the city or whatever are releasing people and they're out doing other crimes. That's an unfair assertion. When we appoint a judge, that judge must stand for election and we don't sit down with that judge and say let people out of jail so that our costs can be low. I mean, that would be unethical to the nth degree, and so I think before we leave here tonight somebody needs to say something about the proper framing of this issue. It is probably a problem for the jail, I don't know. I don't have the numbers, so I don't know. I see some people have it, I don't have it, but I think it's a bad statement to leave here tonight saying that the cities are in some way responsible for the crisis in jail costs. And I'm doing that as respectfully as I can.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, Mr. Mayor, I'm not saying that anybody's responsible for anything. I've simply brought something to everyone's attention that could possibly be a problem, and take and do with it what you want. If you believe that —.

Mayor Johnson asked, is this being taped? Because if it's being taped, you need to listen to what you said and then see whether or not we're interpreting because I see the heads shaking and I don't think I misinterpreted a thing. Commissioner Kicklighter said, Mr. Chairman I stated —. Mayor Johnson said, I'm hoping that it is taped so that you go back and see what you said in terms of getting the kind of response that I'm giving you and I am thinking that I am a spokesman for the group right now and they can verify if they interpreted what you said as I did or not, but I'm definitely telling you how I interpret what I heard.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, Mr. Mayor, I purposely wrote down what I said —. Mayor Johnson said, good. Commissioner Kicklighter said, because I knew that this would be a sensitive issue —. Mayor Johnson said, well, type it up and let us see it. Commissioner Kicklighter said, — to someone possibly protecting politics rather than the people and that's why it's wrote down, worded exactly in a non-accusatory manner. Mayor Johnson said, all right, well, I'm finished with it. Commissioner Kicklighter said, and to present information only that you can take back and do with it what you want. I have not accused anyone of anything. I've simply presented numbers here, handed them out. Maybe you'll want to go check and see if felons are getting released early or before they go to trial, maybe you won't. That's it. I've done my duty as an elected representative and presented the findings that I found. I'm not accusing anyone of anything. I've simply brought this to everyone's attention because you were one of the ones I thought of, sir. As a newly-elected official, I wouldn't think that you would have been up to speed yet, which I'm glad you're that well-studied, I knew you were an intelligent man, to be able to figure out all of the LOST agreements and all of that and already know the numbers. There's many, many new people here that are not aware of the numbers, and they would have never known that somehow they dropped, and that's my thing simply is take a look at them and see if there's a problem or not. I hope there's a great explanation like Thunderbolt had. Thunderbolt has done a great job and that easily explains a lot of that.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Alderman Ellis Cook.

Alderman Ellis Cook said, I think John McKenna from Thunderbolt said it right that when the cities were made to share some of the burden of the cost of housing prisoners, that they made sure that either the prisoners got bail right away or they were sent to the courts instead of sitting in jail for two or three weeks waiting for something to come up, and I think that's a good, efficient way to save taxpayers money. I mean, these figures have dropped from a third, half or even more and I think that's a credit to the city for looking after the taxpayers' money. Chairman Liakakis said, well, one of the things, of course, we're not here —. Alderman Cook said, there is a problem but I think it's a County problem. I don't think the cities have a thing to do with it. I really don't.

Commissioner Odell said, I don't think anybody said it was necessarily —. Our financial problem comes from the State not reimbursing us, not from the municipalities. Commissioner Thomas said, that's right. Commissioner Odell said, and I don't think —, if you got any impression that the County said you municipalities are not doing what you're supposed to do, we're not saying that. Okay? We are not saying that. Our problem as far as money comes from the fact that Al [St. Lawrence] will have a State prisoner and they will not pay Al [St. Lawrence] for the State prisoner so we have to take it from our budget. Alderman Cook said, but I don't think the cities could help you out any way, shape or form. Commissioner Odell said, absolutely.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, and I'm not asking for any financial help. I'd gladly pay the whole bill again. That's what I've wanted back when it was —. Commissioner Odell said, we're not going to strip down that way yet, Dean [Kicklighter].

Chairman Liakakis said, Ellis [Cook], one of things —, the reason why nobody on the cities —, might being accusatory on the cities is a matter of us —, the reason why we filed the County filed the suit is for the State to come up and make their payment to the County. Alderman Cook said, that's what I'm saying, it doesn't have a thing to do with the cities. Chairman Liakakis said, no, it has nothing to do with any of the cities or the County money whatsoever. We hope that if we go to a higher court what will happen is that we will get that money from the State if the court rules in our favor. Unfortunately, the way that that legislation, as was mentioned over there, is to make sure that we've got our Legislators to come on board.

Alderman Van Johnson said, Mr. Chairman, just to understand the problem, which I think is a systemic problem, but I don't know [inaudible], but I want to know that mental health plays into this. They may not have committed the seven deadly sins, but they committed crimes that warranted them being arrested by an officer buy yet does not warrant them staying in jail because they were there last Friday and they'll be here next Friday doing the same thing over again. So how does that play into the numbers in terms of they may not be kept that long because, again, they have

been processed. Commissioner Kicklighter said, that's the questions that I was hoping everybody would ask their staffs to find out, and that's it and that's why I brought it to your attention.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Mayor Ben Rozier.

Mayor Ben Rozier said, I was listening to you, Commissioner Kicklighter, and I'm sorry, but I respect you a lot there, but I think Dean [Kicklighter] was a little bit misunderstood. He's just asking the question and, Mr. Odell, when you were explaining it, I was right there along with you a hundred percent, and I have to agree with what Mr. McKenna said as far as the cities —, when we started having to pay the bill, we looked at it a lot harder. And 2002 was one of my first years in office, and I was here and the same argument came up about, well, the State's not paying their fair share and there's nothing that anybody in this room could do about that. But when we started paying our bills, I went to my Chief and I say, look, the people that needs to go to jail, put them in jail, but make sure when you arrest somebody on a felony charge, you get him arraigned as quick as possible and get the charge off of us and put it to where it needs to be. And I do believe that Mr. McKenna was right and the things they started and the things that each individual municipality has tried to enact to create less of a bill, you know, I mean somebody has to pay it, but you can bet your sweet butt there ain't nobody from Bloomingdale and I can probably say for the rest of the community, there ain't nobody said to release anybody early to save money. I'd never say that, and I don't think that was your intention. From what I understood your intention was the numbers have fell drastically, what happened? Commissioner Kicklighter said, right. Alderman David Aldrich said, and I think what he's referring to is are we letting criminals back on the street, and that's the main concern. Were they back on the street when they shouldn't be back on the street? Mayor Rozier said, ours were arraigned and turned over to whatever court was responsible for them.

Chairman Liakakis asked, Walter [Parker], did you have something? Mayor Parker said, no, I agree with what Ben [Rozier] just said. That was what I would say.

Alderman Tony Thomas said, Mr. Chairman, I think we all agree that there's a problem and from what I hear everyone's saying the State, the State, the State, but what can we do about it. I mean, it looks like —, I think the cities are paying their fair share and they're doing what they can to make sure that their costs are in control, but apparently the State is not reimbursing their share and, if they are, it's at such small levels. I know that Jon [Hart] just said that you filed a case in state court, so until that case is heard and ruled on, really what are we doing other than spinning tires here?

Mayor Rozier asked, may I respond to that? You were with us in Jekyll Island in December when a bunch of community leaders got together. Mayor [Johnson], you were there. Separately we can't do a lot, but together we have enough political clout in Atlanta that we can do something now, and we need to get behind Eric [Johnson] or get on top of him or whatever, wherever we've got to get, and make sure that stuff like this gets taken care of. I mean, he's President Pro Tem of the Senate and if he can't do it or he doesn't wield enough political power, then we're in trouble.

Councilwoman Kicklighter said, I'd like to say that some in here have gotten the point and others haven't. My understanding, the whole point of Dean's [Kicklighter] part of tonight was to inform us, which I was not aware of what he told me. He's not talking about the jail is losing money or the State owes us money or the cities need to pay more money. His main concern is let's not let anyone out of jail that needs to be there just because the city's afraid to pay a little bit of money. I for one would be more than glad to increase our budget if it needed to be, and if we find out people are coming out early, then I'll be the first one pushing, and I think this man right here by me will too. He's our Finance Chairman. So I think that was the whole message. I was shocked when Dean [Kicklighter] gave me the information today and he was not talking about oh poor County, we're having to fund this. That's not the point. The point is why is it so low? Is it low because somebody like Thunderbolt has done something to really help or is it because every municipality says let get him out of jail at \$30, get him out, get him out, get him out? That's not what we're about. As Dean [Kicklighter] said, when you've been a victim, you care a little bit more about whether that person stays in jail, and when you have to fight every seven years to keep a murderer in jail, that's just a little bit more torment on you and your family and anybody that's close to you. So for the Mayor of Savannah to say Dean's talking about money, Dean [Kicklighter] is not talking about money. Dean [Kicklighter] is talking about let's keep these people in jail that need to be in jail, and I think everybody in this room would agree with that.

Commissioner Helen Stone said, I just want to ask since all the municipalities are here tonight if the problem really is the State if we couldn't get the support of the municipalities here present tonight to recoup some of this money. I don't know in talking to the County Attorney that we can, but it wouldn't hurt to hear from the other municipalities with support to try to get this money to do our job.

Alderman Kenneth Sadler said, let me ask because I'm not familiar, how many people does our jail hold? I mean, they're letting people out and it might be because we have to let them out because we don't have any place to put them. Sheriff St. Lawrence said, that's the other side of the problem. It's 1224 beds, but actually in classifying people, which you have to, you have mental health, you've got females, you've got disciplinary problems, 1150. I'm over 1400 and I stay over —. Alderman Sadler asked, even if we wanted to keep them in there, we couldn't keep them in there could we really? Sheriff St. Lawrence said, no, but it's really not up to us whether they are. It's up to the judges and the law, what the law says, so we can't do nothing about that, but maybe I can clarify a little bit of it. Under the LOST negotiations the municipalities negotiated a deal, John [McKenna] know this because he was in —, \$30 a day, which is less than what it costs us, for the first 28 days. Now what happens in that 28 days, if say Thunderbolt opts to put somebody in jail and they get him arraigned and get him bound over, then the cost falls back on the County. That's good management on their part. I don't have a problem with that, but that's what —, there's a lot of difference in the way we used to bill and the way we're billing now because of the negotiations that was above

my pay grade that was done. And the only other thing I want to say is they're not paying the Sheriff. I don't get the money, it goes to the County.

Chairman Liakakis said, in other words, what's going on, for some that don't know this, the cities and municipalities pay up to 28 days they'll pay for that person's incarceration. After that, then it's taken over by the County.

Commissioner Odell said, I'm just going to take two minutes and then I'll yield. Everyone that we're talking about here tonight where a municipality would be responsible for that cost is an individual who's not been convicted. It is not letting a convicted person out. So, I know the newspaper would like to be entertained and believe that our municipal judges are letting convicted people out. I'm always amazed that those people who hold the flag the highest often forget we have a Constitution and the Constitution, at least in the State of Georgia, says that if you do not commit one of the seven deadly sins, then you're entitled to a bond. If you believe that a municipal judge has violated their oath, then you can contact a judicial qualification and they will no longer be a judge or an attorney. I practice in the courts every day and all of the courts out there. Here's what happened why the dollars fell, when we were paying for it, everybody was okay with it. Well, we stopped paying for it, I know Michael Brown and his staff looked at it and said what are we going to put in place to ensure that we and these are citizens accused. Judges make the decision and often a Superior Court judge is making the decision. Not your municipal court judge, Superior Court. What they did was, they just expedited the procedure. Rather than taking fifteen days to do something, it was done in three, and the reason is they had to pay and they instituted —, and I'm extremely high on what the Municipal Court of the Town of Thunderbolt did with their drug court. Not only did you all look at what can we do to reduce the time, but what can we do to reduce this person returning? What are the underlying reasons that this person every Friday night likes to go and beat up his wife or go get drunk or do something? We put them in jail but we're not solving the problem and so Thunderbolt took that extra step. Most of the municipalities said we're going to take that step and manage our jail space wisely. Thunderbolt said we're going to try to prevent reoccurrence. We're not saying different things, we're just saying it in different ways. I don't think there's an accusation. I think Dean [Kicklighter] looked at it and said the numbers are dropping, why are the numbers dropping? Are municipalities making financial decisions rather than justice decisions? I don't think it's municipalities making financial decisions because I don't think that most municipal judges really care about —, they hear a case, they make a decision. If they have to set bond, they set bond. And here is one of the guys who was really instrumental for the City of Savannah because under the LOST negotiations we had —, Michael [Brown] instituted a program. We're talking about the jail cost and you got in just on the tail. What we used to do, we had one system. When you all were paying for it afterward, you all instituted a creative system to reduce the cost. Is that a correct statement, Michael [Brown]? If you say no, then it means you're not creative. Mr. Brown said, we do try to minimize the time they spend in jail in the process. I guess that would be [inaudible]. Commissioner Odell said, but your judges don't —. Mayor Rozier said, but you don't let nobody out early that don't need to be out. Mr. Brown said, if they are going to get bound over, we get them bound over. Commissioner Odell said, quickly. Mr. Brown said, right.

Commissioner Kicklighter said, and that is my concern. You hit it on the head. Every felon is entitled to a bond. The man that killed my brother got bond. The man that broke that into my home was bonded out like that and in my face the very —, within a day or two. To speed up of this process to save money puts these people right back on the streets faster and this ain't about money. This whole thing's about letting people serve some time. I don't care if the County has to pay the portion. I wanted us to keep paying it before and, you know, I know they're entitled to it, but they're getting them through that much faster is just getting, as Harris [Odell] pointed out, alleged criminals, they're not convicted. But, you know, when it's someone accused of harming your property or your family and they're right back out in front of you that fast, it's a —, a day early is a day too early.

Chairman Liakakis said, the problem with that is this. As Harris [Odell] was just talking, people can get bonded out because unfortunately what you've had in the past, somebody is doing, they get arrested one time, they get bonded out, they get arrested again, they get bonded out because you have to allow them to get bonded out. I mean, like you said, if somebody's on murder, aggravated assault, and those kinds of things, the judges refuse bonds for them. It's a situation unfortunately that we've got, but the main thing that we can do too is let's come up with programs that we can prevent a lot of this crime and put people like they have with the city, the Savannah Impact Program, so that we can reduce and we can help those so that we can prevent the crime, and those that want to do the right thing, they stay in jail, and do as much as we can to come together to prevent as much crime and to put those programs together like the Savannah Impact Program because it has done a great job. Some of you know about it, but what they do, a lot of people that commit crime, they can't read or write, they don't have an education, they don't have a skill and they don't have job, so consequently they're preying on the public. But the Savannah Impact Program, that's better than the original program up in Boston, what they do is they teach them to read or write, they teach them a skill and they help them to get a job. So instead of preying on the public, they've become productive citizens, and that's important so that we can do things to help. Otis [Johnson] and I have been and Walter [Parker], a number of us have been to some meetings and all about the education in our community, what can we do to help the School Board because we really all need to come together. Not to put money in it, but to put resources in there so that we can see about the dropout in the school, implement programs, whether it's technical training or whatever it is, so that they will entice them to stay in school because 40% of the students that drop out school commit crime. And that's a terrible figure that we've got, but we need to come together and think about what we can do to help the school system instead of staying in the background and not getting involved. And I'm not talking about put your citizen taxpayer money in there, but there are some resources you might be able to do to help that and see how we can solve that.

Commissioner Patrick Shay said, it sounds like to me you're all doing a good job of protecting your taxpayers and I congratulate you for doing that, but let's also remember that every single one of your constituents is also a County taxpayer. So that cost burden still falls on your citizens, it's just paying through a different millage rate than the one

that you vote on as the one that we vote on. For that reason I'd like to call on each of the municipalities and ask politely if you wouldn't be willing to pass a resolution in one of your upcoming meetings calling on the State Legislature to fully fund the reimbursement in their budget when they pass a budget. That's their responsibility and if they know that all of us are together on this issue and that we are looking to them to do the right thing and pay this fair share of what this cost is, then that will reduce the burden on your individual taxpayer, not necessarily through your millage rate that you're voting on as a municipal leader, but certainly help take the pressure off the millage rate at the County level. We're all in it together and I want to thank the Chairman for calling us all together, although this first meeting is already —, we've had a few sparks and a little fur fly, and that's good, but what we want to do is we want to find ways that we can all help each other and tonight is a perfect example. If you will help us —, and we're not asking you to pick up the tab of the lawsuit —, I'm asking you to consider passing a resolution in your city council calling on the State Legislature to pay the fair share of the State's cost for these incarcerations. Unless they do that, we will never have enough money to do any of the good programs that are out there to try and keep these people from coming back. The County is about to become a jail, and it's not a criticism of the Sheriff. The Sheriff is going to be coming forward sometime relatively soon and telling us that we need to build another 500 beds out there so that we can keep 1400 people and 1150 beds, which doesn't add up to me. It's getting crowded over there somehow. If all we ever do is keep building more beds on the jail, then eventually that's all the County will be. That's the only program we will have. Nobody wants to see that and nobody wants anyone to be released before their time, but by the same token if we don't turn the corner on this problem with the State and here locally and together, then shame on all of us. We will lose a whole generation.

Chairman Liakakis recognized Mayor Otis Johnson.

Mayor Johnson said, I appear to have been perhaps the only person in this room that misinterpreted what you were saying, Mr. Kicklighter, so therefore I apologize for that. I don't want us to leave this meeting —, my intent in bringing it up in the first place was that we would leave this meeting with things clear because we're going to see this and I don't know how it's going to be played, but my concern was how was this going to be played. So since I brought it up and everyone who spoke seem to have had a different interpretation, I apologize for my misinterpretation of what you said. I will get with the City Council of Savannah and we will discuss this resolution, and it would even help if a draft could be sent to us so that they might be uniform. I don't know what the other councils are going to do, but I will tell you that I will discuss it with my council and I don't see why we won't be unanimous in passing that resolution and then beginning to discuss with our State delegation this problem. I want to go back to my original recommendation that we get a group together to discuss this so that when our State delegation starts asking questions, we will be informed with the facts and that we can talk intelligently about the problem, and I don't take that back, but since it seems to be almost unanimous that I misinterpreted what you said, I apologize. Commissioner Kicklighter said, thank you, Mayor Johnson.

Chairman Liakakis said, thank you, Otis [Johnson]. Chairman Liakakis recognized Commissioner Thomas.

Commissioner Thomas said, I would just like to first of all just thank everybody and I think that before we leave from here tonight, the opening statement by our Chairman stated that we have come together so that we can perhaps look at some issues, concerns and problems that's germane to each and every one of us in here tonight, and I'm hoping when we leave from here tonight that we will have at least if not two or three things that we could all agree on, which would be a starting point, and then the smaller committee will begin to look at those concerns and then when we come back again, we'll be able to start off, you know, anew in another direction. We're not here to point a finger at anyone and I'm hoping that when we leave from here tonight that we will not walk away with that type of feeling because I feel that we are all one. We're in a partnership. It doesn't matter whether you live in Garden City, whether you live at Thunderbolt, whether you're a member of the City of Savannah, Chatham County, we all serve the same citizens. We all have the same needs. And until we all begin to address those concerns, whether it directly affects you or not, then we're not going to make any progress. So if there's a concern about the beach renourishment at Tybee, I know I've gone to Atlanta and Washington, DC, lobbied up there talking about Tybee, I've talked about Thunderbolt, talked Garden City, you know, because felt that there was a need to do that if we're all together. So we can begin to look at these issues, you know, as a together thing that will help our citizens, I think we will make more progress. Okay?

Chairman Liakakis said, okay. Hold on, let me just ask —, we're talking about a committee right now. Otis [Johnson] would you serve on the committee? Mayor Johnson said, I'd be happy to. Chairman Liakakis said, okay. Anybody else that would like to serve on the committee, would you raise your hand please? Take this down. Helen [Stone] —,

Commissioner Odell asked, what is the committee? Chairman Liakakis said, the committee is to study what we're talking about, this thing about the jail —, the committee to go over what we were discussing, you know, about the jail thing, get all the stats together and then come up with a —, in addition to the resolution to ask the State to do something about it —, to see whatever else we can —. Commissioner Odell said, I think, Mr. Chairman, in that the Commissioner from the Seventh has so eloquently stated, he would be my choice to work with —. Commissioner Kicklighter said, I honestly, Harris [Odell], I don't want to serve on it. I wanted to bring this concern to everyone's attention, and thank you. I'm honored, but I don't want to serve on it. You know, that's something I would like for y'all to get on and come up with that and let any of the other Commissioners because I'm not into micro-managing and trying to tell anybody how to do anything. I just wanted to bring it to your attention and hopefully y'all can solve it.

Chairman Liakakis said, all right. You, sir? Mr. Aldrich said, Garden City. Chairman Liakakis said, okay. The Clerk said, I'm sorry. If you could call out the names. Mr. Aldrich said, David Aldrich. The Clerk said, thank you. Chairman

Liakakis asked, Walter? Mayor Parker said, I'd be glad to, yeah. Chairman Liakakis said, Walter [Parker] on there also. Anybody else? Okay, Mike Lamb from Pooler, and I'll serve on there also, and then we'll set up a meeting.

Chairman Liakakis said, quickly right now because we didn't want to keep everybody here for a long period of time. There's some other things too that really affects each one of your budgets and all is that one of the things that we can do is if you watch what the federal budget, the CDBG funding, those have been cut drastically in this new federal budget, so we need to see about what we can do to, you know, contact our Federal Legislators to see about that because the cities really need that CDBG funding to help in housing and other particular things that they have in their particular cities at this point. Now, one quick thing, is y'all have seen that the Georgia Regional —, what the State of Georgia, the pencil-pusher up there in Atlanta with Human Resources wants to cut the State budget on like regional mental health and those kinds of things. They want to cut it down a little over \$2,000,000 and what they've done with that, they have said, as you read in the paper, \$1,100,000 to close down the adult and the juvenile division over there, and then what they're talking about, put them in group homes, and that's ridiculous because if you go out there, the Georgia Regional, you'll see that they've got some very serious patients out there and you cannot turn them loose. The Sheriff can tell you, he's housing prisoners out there that have mental problems. They don't need to be housed in the jail, but when you shut down this particular unit for children and adolescents, you're causing their families and them a bad situation because there's no group home that has the medical staff that Georgia Regional has that can really treat all of these patients like they should be treated and to help them to be cured as best as they can. Another thing, too, is the cardiovascular center where they have done —, you know, saved a lot of people's lives in our community cutting down the cardiovascular —, want to stop the funding in that area also, and then also the juvenile program that the juvenile judges have where they have a 90-day program that they can work out with juvenile as opposed to just turning them loose on the streets again so that they can continue on a crime area. So what we'll do then is we'll get information to everybody concerning these things and if you will lobby for these, if you will pass resolutions and those kinds of things, because the medical help that these people need in our cities and our county, each one of you have these problems, you know, in your cities and county and we need to address it the best way that we can.

Chairman Liakakis asked, is there anything else that anybody wants to bring up? Mr. Tony Thomas said, one point. Chairman Liakakis said, yeah, Tony [Thomas].

Mr. Thomas said, if we want to get an item on the agenda for future meetings, how do we go —? Do we contact through your office about getting it on there? Chairman Liakakis said, yeah. What you do is just contact Gail [Gordon] here. If I'm in the office, fine. Contact Gail [Gordon], or if she's not there, if you give it to our County Manager. Commissioner Odell said, I thought we promised to tell everybody except Tony Thomas. Mr. Thomas said, that's all right, I'd still find out.

Chairman Liakakis said, but anyway, what we'll do is if you want something on the agenda, the next meeting is Tuesday, April 12th, and at that particular time what we'd like you to do is go back to your city councils and ask them, you know, where you have your Mayor, maybe your County [sic] Administrator and one council person. Now everybody is invited to come to the meeting, but we want you to bring your particular issues to this group so that we can work on it and help you and do the things that are necessary if we can to solve some of those problems, remediate or whatever we can do.

Mr. Thomas said, I'll come up with some Southside projects when I come to the next one. Chairman Liakakis said, yeah, that'll be fine.

Chairman Liakakis asked, anybody else got anything? Again we'd like to thank each and every one of you for coming together. We hope that we can work —, that there's no misunderstandings, that we can work together, that we can accomplish a lot for all of our citizens. Thank you very much.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Liakakis declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.

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APPROVED: THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2005

PETE LIAKAKIS, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

SYBIL E. TILLMAN, COUNTY CLERK