

Commissioners Vote Yes to New Creek Clean-Up Plans

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

After hearing a new plan from District Conservationist Phillip Dixon at their Committee as a Whole meeting on Monday night, commissioners decided to go ahead with continued clean-up of tornado debris from creek beds at seven new locations; or at least to pass the proposal on to their regular meeting on July 21. The cost to the county: \$55,000 or 10% of the estimated \$550,000 that the job will cost.

“I thought you were going to go back to the same sites and go 200 feet further on each side. That’s why I voted against it,” said Commissioner Jerry Ray. “If these are all new areas, I support it. I know what a mess a hard rain can make up against these little bridges, with tree tops and logs.”

The plan, as presented by Dixon, included the clean-up of seven or eight new areas in the tornado’s path. Creek beds will be cleaned out, as well as brush and trees 50 feet to each side of the creek, and the debris burned at the sites. Household materials, such as roofing and insulation, will be cleaned up 200 feet to each side of the creeks, and the materials hauled to the landfill.

“You all won’t have to put in your \$55,000 until the end of the project,” said Dixon. “The money was in the war bill that President Bush signed last week. You have to make a decision soon, or there are other states that want to get this money, with the floods in Iowa and all.”

“Do we have to borrow the money? Have we gotten any FEMA reimbursements?”
Commissioner Billy Bransford asked Mayor Shelvy Linville.

“Yes. We’ll have to borrow it, or take it out of the general fund,” answered Linville. “We haven’t gotten any FEMA reimbursements, yet.”

Commissioner Tony Boles pointed out that this proposal was a whole new ball of wax.

“It was presented to us last time as going 200 feet off existing sites,” said Boles. “I misunderstood it, too.”

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A motion by Vernon Biggs, seconded by Ray, to pass the motion on to the regular meeting was passed unanimously, with an understanding by Dixon that no official action could be taken until then.

“If you pass it on tonight, we can get started on it,” said Dixon. “We can hold this for two weeks. Then if you do change your mind, we can call it off.”

The idea of a Grand National Cross Country Motorcycle Race, to be hosted by Jerry Henderson, was presented to commissioners by Mayor Linville.

“What Mr. Henderson wants is for the county to donate an ambulance and two deputies for the two days of this event, which he says will bring 4,000 to 5,000 people to the county,” explained Linville. “He’ll lay out the track on his farm. There will be no liability on the county’s part.”

Commissioner Ralph Doss, who lives near the 400 acre Henderson farm, told the rest of the commissioners that the races currently being held at Henderson’s farm bring a lot of people into the county.

“An ambulance and two deputies seems like a small price to pay,” said Doss, echoed by several other commissioners.

Sheriff Scott Gammons said that he would be glad to send deputies, at the county’s cost, and that he would write a letter to Mr. Henderson saying so. Commissioners voted, unanimously, yes to passing the idea on to the regular July 21 meeting.

A new, 5% hotel/motel tax will be added by a private act, commissioners decided after hearing the idea presented by Carolyn Whitaker, Chair of the Tourism Committee. Whitaker also requested that the Budget Committee give the Tourism Committee a line of \$20,000 for advertising purposes, to get Macon County and its events into some statewide publications.

“This tax will be added on to the hotel bill when people check out,” explained Whitaker, who estimated that the tax should bring in a minimum of \$18,000 per year. “We want this to be a dedicated tax for tourism. We’d also like to see the hotels and motels receive 2% of the 5% tax back, for their trouble in collecting it.”

Hearthstone Inn owners were at the meeting to support Whitaker’s proposal. Linda McCrary said she had spoken with the owners of the Budget Inn and Long C Trails, and they both supported the idea.

The tax will have to be instituted through a private act, first going before the Tennessee State Legislature in January of 2009. By the time it is sent back and ratified, Whitaker said, it probably won’t go into effect until the end of 2009 or the beginning of 2010. Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the idea and pass it on to their regular meeting.

The county will add the new Senior Citizens Center to their insurance, at a cost of \$500 per year, to be reimbursed by the Center, commissioners decided. A motion by Anna Dean Carter, seconded by Grant Malo, to make the deal effective immediately was passed unanimously.

In other business, commissioners:

- voted to have Mayor Linville send a letter to the Mr. Jent terminating his lease at the race track, which has been abandoned. Linville suggested that terminating the lease will give commissioners more choice about where to build the new dog pound.

“There haven’t been any races out there for a year,” said Linville. “I’m sure he won’t have any objections.”

- heard from Mayor Linville, a suggestion by Keith Adkinson that part of the money from the Jett Williams Concert be used to erect a Tornado Memorial in the courthouse yard.

“There won’t be any names on it, except of the names of those who lost their lives in the tornado,” Linville explained. “It won’t say ‘donated by’ anybody or have any advertising on it. We can’t put the names of everybody that helped or it would reach from here to Hillsdale.”

Commissioners agreed that the county should begin the process of erecting the memorial.

- were made aware of the condition of the courthouse roof, which is holding puddles of water. Commissioners were presented with pictures of the roof, and told not to be surprised if the roof needed to be replaced or repaired within the year.

- reappointed James Ralph Howser, George McCrary, and Obera Morgan to three-year terms on Macon County’s Library Board.

- passed Macon County School’s Federal Project Fund.