

When the Macon County Committee of the Whole met in regular session on Monday October 6th, they had to move past the line of citizens protesting the Cobb-Vantress operation.

Mayor Linville addressed the audience, "Whether you believe it or not the commissioners are limited on what we can do. But what we can do is amend code, we can through the planning commission amend some of these codes, to put stipulations and regulations, requirements and change the codes where if somebody wanted to put up a chicken house out on the farm, they would have to meet before the planning commission. These would have to be approved on a one by one basis and would fall under special exceptions, we could list this as commercial agriculture and these things that a lot of people are concerned with, I feel like we can control."

As requested at the last legislative body as whole meeting, Mayor Linville contacted the State of Tennessee Agricultural department and was referred to John Donaldson.

John Donaldson, from Validus attended the Monday night meeting to speak. Validus is an independent certification company that prepares food companies and producers for changing market demands.

Validus proposed two written options: The first was to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement that could take up to two years involving numerous public meetings, and cost \$225,000.

Option two included preparing a Principles of Water Quality Protection report which would include items to "sitting" a new facility such as soil suitability, state or locally identified sensitive areas, and setback requirements as well as items to consider to avoid discharge from each site. This option also would provide an estimate of acres for the estimated manure production, and details on items to implement for nutrient utilization. Validus offered to deliver this in a month from the signing of a contract for a cost of \$7500 to \$10,000.

"I'm nonbiased," Donaldson said, but it is agriculture and it is protein production, and the first thing you've got to think about is where your food comes from. Everybody in the room has got to eat. Cobb-Vantress is not a broiler operation, they're not anywhere even close. This not a Cagle, Equity, or Keystone group, they are a high bio-security breeder flock. The county is limited in what they can do."

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“There is no air regulation, it were struck down by the court, and no state regulations for setbacks, the only approach is water quality,” Donaldson said.

He advised the group that the Cobb-Vantress operations, “are way farther (greater) than the state regulations by three times.” Concerns were voiced from those gathered, over the ability to purify water that has entered sewer systems. Citizen Bonnie Davis, reminded those attending about the disinfectants and insecticides that would enter the sewer system from the hatchery asking “Who polices this sewer and drinking water?”

“The Tennessee department of Environment and Conservation regulates your sewer system,” replied Donaldson.

Mayor Linville stated that a special exception, categorizing the poultry operations commercial agriculture, could control most of what people are concerned with.

Citizens in the audience expressed specific issues such as their family members having histoplasmosis, and even concerns about avian bird flu. Former Mayor, Glen Harold Donoho, talked about the zoning regulations passed a few years back. “It’s obvious the people in Macon County do not want chicken houses, and said, “If that’s the best that Macon County can get, we’re bad off. Questions continued with, “When they’re done with all their chickens and hens, when they’re done laying, where do they all go?” asked Gail Haggard.

Donaldson replied, “They euthanize all of those and they are run through a dog food deal.”

Citizens asked who owns the land in the industrial park and were told, “The city owns it.”

David Harper, scheduled on the agenda, he too, addressed the commissioners, “It is obvious that most of the people in this room and in this county, DO NOT want this chicken business. Wilson and Sumner County regulate the chicken business out; we can do that!”

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"I just heard that the Upper Cumberland group will do a study finding out what the social, the economic and what the property value situation will be in this county adding, "furthermore with the codes we have passed, we do have to put up with any smells coming into our property that are bad."

"I suggest we get Upper Cumberland started, get this ...thing understood... we can protect our own property...WE WILL STOP IT, if we have to hire lawyers or whatever it takes!" Harper emphasized.

"People in this county by in large do not want this here," said Harper adding, "we sure as this world can regulate more than water sir, I guarantee it." To which the room applauded.

"I believe you heard the county attorney say that this was voted on in 1998 and wasn't incorporated into the planning, into the zoning, that went into effect in 2002, therefore, it wasn't part of it," Mayor Linville said.

"I talked to a very good lawyer, unless it was specifically canceled out of the new zoning," said Harper, "that law is still in effect. The law about 1500 foot setback is still in effect,"

Donaldson told that of all contained animals, that commercial chicken production is the worst of confined animal operations.

A proposal made by Commissioner Scott Gammons was well received by many gathered in opposition to Cobb-Vantress.

However, the resulting vote created a chaotic, heated atmosphere both in the courtroom halls after the vote and later on the grounds outside following the meeting.

Gammons spoke about his commitment when he took office to follow the will of the people, "I don't know if it will do any good or not, but I'm going to make a motion that we write

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Cobb-Vantress and tell them we don't want them in Macon County.”

A roar of applause followed the motion. Seconding the motion was Commissioner Billy West.

The vote was conducted with the following results:

Eight voting yes to send the letter were Commissioners Jeff Hughes, Billy West, Phillip Snow, Scott Gammons, Ralph Doss, Tony Boles, Annette Looper, Phillip Spears.

Four voting no in opposition to sending the letter were Commissioners Billy Bransford, David Crowder, Vernon Biggs, and Mike East

Four commissioners passed on the opportunity to vote: Melburn Cothron, Helen Hesson, Benton Bartley, and Rosetta Driver.

Absent from the meeting were Commisioners Larry Tucker, Anna Dean Carter, and Grant Malo.

Stepped out of the room prior to the vote was Commissioner Jerry Ray.

In other business conducted by the County Commissioners minutes were approved from Court meeting, Planning Commission Meeting, Board of Zoning Appeals. Loss Control meeting, Salary Study Committee Meeting, Joint Economic and Industrial Development Board Meeting

Resolutions and Proclamations reviewed and approved were: Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Alexander Funeral Home recognizing them for 100 years of service, National Physical Therapy Month , Capital Outlay Note - Fairlane Roof Replacement

Annette Looper spoke on behalf of the a resolution to authorize a study to determine the liability associated with allowing members with one year of current membership in the Tennessee

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Consolidated Retirement System to purchase prior service. The base cost of the study is \$328 for up to ten employees and \$656 for a study with more than ten employees. A motion passed asking the study to be delayed, in order to be sure that the county does not have to pay more than they already are committed to.

The budget amendments to Sheriff's Department and Trustee passed.

A motion carried after Trustee Diane Cook, asked the committee to allow overtime to be put back in, to fund overtime during tax season, requesting \$2,053 from the fund balance and offered to add back \$1,000 from travel budget to decrease the expenditures. Cook explained the extra time needed to assist persons with tax relief.

When asked if she could use the money allotted for computers, she advised that the ones she has in use are "sick".

25 signatures from Webbtown were presented to the body, requesting speed limits be lowered and children at play signs placed.

A motion passed unanimously to put up 35 mph signs at both ends of the road.

Randall Kirby, EMS Director, presented the 1st quarter report July-September to the commissioners. In fiscal year 2007, Macon County EMS, responded to 4,385 incidents compared to 5,140 in fiscal year 2008 for an increase of 17.20%.

"The most pressing concern for the operation of the service is still the cost of fuel," Kirby said in his report.

Road Supervisor, Audie Cook, advised the commissioners about the need for a road grader. He presented quotes from various suppliers for discussion with the Committee as a Whole.

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A motion carried for Cook to collect information about the trade-in of the track loader and two old road graders for possible purchase with the information brought back to the body.

Discussion occurred over a gate across a road at Gaulden Hollow affecting the ability to turn vehicles around. A decision was made to check and make sure the road has not been closed and that they do have right-of-way.

Mayor Linville informed the group that a tornado monument unveiling will be October 15 at 10 a.m. on the courthouse lawn.

The regular scheduled meetings of the Committee of the Whole are the first Monday night of each month at 7 p.m. at the county courthouse.