

# General Presentments Of The Liberty County Grand Jury September Term 2006

## Grand Jury Members

Michael W. Arnold	Foreperson
Justin V. McCartney	Asst. Foreperson
Maureen G. Jenkinson	Clerk
Judith L. Denton	Asst. Clerk
Lynn S. Cannon	
Joseph L. Cantor	
John H. Cox	
Thomas E. Cribbs	
Maxine L. Fallin	
George Frasier	
Richard K. Goff	
Marcelyn A. Haberbosch	
Tammy L. Kornegay	
Di Thi McCartney	
Georgia Ann Moody	
James Ochoa Jr.	
Rafael Pagan-Perez	
Lidia Peters Romero	
Willie T. Reddick	
Annette T. Richardson	
Louise Sapp	
Robert H. Wedincamp	

FILED OFFICE OF CLERK  
LIBERTY SUPERIOR, STATE,  
JUV. & MAGISTRATE COURT  
2007 FEB - 6 PM 2: 53

## Business Conducted

- **Cases and Results**
  - 133 Cases Returned as True Bills
  - 6 Cases Returned as No Bills
- In addition to these cases the grand jury was charged to inspect the voting Machines.
- The Grand Jury choose the following agencies to visit County Commission, Probate Court, Liberty County Sheriff's office, Board of Education, Industrial Authority

### **Report from the Voting Office Committee**

On September 21, 2006 six Grand Jury members were greeted at the elections office by Richard E. Braun Sr. We were taken to the staging area of the voting machines and shown the preparation for an election. There were 78 voting machines, they had to be reset to zero, sealed, and stored away. A technician from Diebold was there to reset each machine. Mr. Braun went through the detailed procedure that they follow with each machine: the machines are opened, reset to 0, verified, then sealed with a different colored seal and numbered, then placed ready for each precinct. When the machines get to the precinct on Election Day, the seal is broken and the machine prepared to use. Each polling station has an accumulator machine that tabulates all of the votes for that precinct. The accumulator machine then sends the vote count to the county elections office, which sends the result for the county directly to the state office. The elections office still has paper ballots for absentee and provisional voters.

Ms. Ella Golden led the committee on a tour of the office. She mentioned there were 4 full-time employees who must go through state-mandated training. The office was tight on space, and should get more space as the judicial center free up space in the courthouse. Currently the air-conditioner wasn't working and the need for more space was apparent.

### **Report from the County Commission Committee**

On October 3, 2006 six Grand Jury members met with John McIver, Joey Brown, and Bob Sprinkel to review the county government. Joey Brown led the committee through a power point presentation that detailed the county's budget and activities:

- **Wright Army Airfield use**
  1. Partnership with Liberty County Development Authority, City of Hinesville, and Ft. Stewart
  2. Will allow private planes to land in Liberty Co., which should raise the corporate image of the county
  3. Part of the airfield will be strictly military use, part will be civilian
  4. Most of the funding came from the FAA
  
- **Hinesville Area Metropolitan Planning Transportation Plan**
  1. Looking at the bypass project for HWY 84
  2. Widening of airport road, with designs to be done by the end of the year
  
- **Recreation Building**
  1. Liberty Co. Recreation department has outgrown the old building
  2. New building will be constructed on same grounds, with recreation department running out of the Shuman building in interim
  
- **New Department of Family and Child Services**
  1. New building potentially at the old hospital site, with room for the health department

- Liberty County Community Complex
  1. Multipurpose facility in the old Liberty Elementary site
- Judicial Center
  1. Cost estimated at \$19 million. Will house all courts except for juvenile
  2. Planned for 20 years of growth. Should break ground January 2007
  3. Took \$1.9 million to purchase land for the center, even though estimates from consulting firm was roughly \$800,000.

**Report from the Liberty County Development Authority Committee**

On October 11, 2006 six Grand Jury members met with Mr. Ron Tolley of the Development Authority. He led a power point presentation that went through the budget and focused on the projects they are involved with.

- Role
  1. Acquire property for industry
  2. Assure provision of sufficient water, sewer, electrical, natural gas, and telecommunications to serve the needs of industry
  3. Facilitate financing of new and expanding industries
  4. Facilitate training and education of local labor force
  5. Facilitate tourism development
  6. Market Liberty County to the state, nation, and world
- Budget
  1. \$20 million operating revenue, with less than 10% coming from property taxes
- WAAF
- Hinesville Technology
- Midway Industrial Park
  1. Biggest industrial park in county, with a proposed phase III
  2. Hugo Boss, International Greetings, and Luhrs Mainship
- Tradeport Business Center
  1. Newest park, with Target (1.5 million s.f. distribution center) and Tire Rack already tenants

The committee was able to go to WAAF and Tradeport Center. We were pleasantly surprised to see how the LCDA has helped facilitate these projects and looks to help Liberty County grow.

### **Report of the Liberty County Commissioners Meeting Committee**

A committee of approximately 10 members of the Grand Jury attended the meeting of the County Commissioners on October 3, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. The purpose was for the Grand Jury to express the concerns voiced by employees of the courthouse system, of the potential problems of the new Courthouse building. Mr. Michael Arnold informed the Commissioners of concerns such as, out-growing the courthouse in a very short time, what offices will be placed in the new courthouse and how efficiently will spaced be used. The commissioners responded by telling those attending that the new courthouse and all its particulars were discussed with employees. At this stage of the plans for the new courthouse, it is to late to change. These concerns should have been presented in the very beginning. They felt that all concerns that were presented early on have been rectified.

The County Commissioners commended the Grand Jury for attending the meeting. They commented that the members sitting on the Board could not remember ever being visited by a Grand Jury.

### **Report from the Probate Court Committee**

A committee, consisting of six Grand Jury members, visited the probate Court Office on Tuesday, October 17, 2006. Judge Nancy Aspinwall escorted us into her courtroom to brief us on all aspects of the Probate Court. The judge told the committee all the functions that the Probate Court provides regarding wills, licenses, guardianship, etc., going into detail about each service.

Judge Aspinwall and her four clerks seem to be perfectly organized, efficient, and friendly team that works extremely well together. This office definitely needs more room to operate.

We were shown the office staff working area and the intricate vault file system. Everything was orderly and as neat as possible for this busy, cramped office. This office has maintenance repair issues as well. Not only were repairs needed to ceiling and walls, but also air ventilation problems may be a health concern.

### **Report from the Tax Assessors Committee**

The six members Grand Jury committee went to the Tax Assessors office on October 17, 2006, and met with Ms. Glenda Roberts, Chief Appraiser, and the entire board. Ms. Roberts graciously provided detailed information regarding the working of this office. She informed us of the on-going training that each member of this organization must have to provide them with updated facts in order to perform their duties. New implementation for a 4,000 to 4,200 parcel, per assessor, to be done every three years is being enacted. This office seems to be very excited about this plan. Ms. Roberts along with Mr. Wells and the other board members described how the taxes

are figured and what they were looking for to come up with the final fair market amount that is sent to each property owner. We were also informed of the Homestead Exemption, and new bills regarding tax exemptions available to residents.

Ms. Roberts mentioned that this office has a problem with the timely and accurate notification between the Tax Assessors Office and the Board of Equalization. Additionally, this office is very crowded. There is not adequate space to perform daily duties, filing, etc.

#### **Report from the Liberty County Sheriff's Committee**

On October 25, 2006, a seven-person committee observed daily operations of the Liberty County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Don Martin informed the committee of the number of deputies required and their duties to maintain the high level of law and order in the county. He described the details of operating the jail, which is currently full, and the need for jail expansion. Also a new interstate team is being set up to maintain I-95. Sheriff Martin's main concern is the requirement for an additional four to eight more deputies and the need for vehicle upkeep.

#### **Report from the Liberty County Records Retention Center Committee**

A seven member committee of the Grand Jury met on October 25, 2006 with Mr. Sampie Smith at the Liberty County Records Retention Center. Mr. Smith gave detailed information regarding the history of the building, which is the old post office on Memorial Dr. He informed the committee of the daily operations he and his two employees do to ensure that all county records are retained. An excellent system has been set up, with everything labeled and stored neatly and for easy future retrieval when necessary. Mr. Smith has procured a very clever shredding plan with the local paper company, which he uses when documents no longer need to be retained.

Mr. Smith's immediate main concern is the need for mobile shelving which will provide a short-term solution to the Retention Center's ability to continue to perform with the high quality of operation that they currently maintain. Eventually a larger building will be required.

#### **Report from the Board of Education Committee**

On October 30, 2006, eight members of the Grand Jury committee met with Drs. Steve Wilmoth and Cheryl Conley at the Board of Education office. Dr. Wilmoth informed the committee of the current status of all renovations ongoing to the various schools, including phase III of the Bradwell construction. One hundred new busses have been purchased, new specialists have been hired, changes in the curriculum, the new transportation facility, and the new technology department.

The intention for the future is to add two new schools and new Bradwell Institute and Liberty County High School football stadiums, also too become more involved with the performance arts are.

Twelve of thirteen specialized disabilities are now educationally provided. We were given detailed information regarding the 3 new Ombudsmen programs, which seems to be very successful with an 86% graduation rate. SAT points are up 10 points. Liberty County education was awarded "most improved" by the state.

The wearing of uniforms will start in 2007 in grades K-12. Additional cameras are being installed inside and outside for the protection at the schools.

The committee visited the new Pre-K Center. Dr. Bush escorted us on a tour of the facility with all new technology and conveniences they feel the children attending will have many advantages to succeed. The staff is very proud of the Pre-K facility, but has a waiting list and are adding new teachers and rooms.

The committee then visited the soon to be completed new Board of Education building. All of the divisions will be housed in one building, making it more efficient. The building was completely funded by SPLOST. Projected occupancy is to be January 2007.

The bus barn was also inspected. This is a first-class operation which repairs and maintains 180 buses for the district. The eastside bus barn is still operational to support schools on the east side of Liberty County.

Current problems that the Board of Education is facing are with teacher retention, and safety at the schools. Dr. Wilmoth suggested the recommendation by the Grand Jury for a public relations person for the school system.

#### **Report from the Hospital Authority Committee**

On January 29, 2007 a group of members from the Grand Jury met with the Liberty Regional Medical Center hospital administrator and the Hospital Authority board. The board provided information regarding their responsibility to the hospital and Liberty County. The board seems to have a genuine desire to make the hospital a top-notch facility, and work closely with the hospital administrator, who has been at Liberty Regional for 10 years.

The administrator provided information regarding staff members, how incoming funds are generated, current services provided, and future plans for expansion and additional services. It was of interest to find out that many physicians are contracted. A question arose regarding EMS and equipment issues, also the various uses of EMS vehicles and replacement vehicles.

We recommend that an authority member meet with employees of the EMS staff to find out what problems and needs they have to operate more efficiently. We also suggest more information be publicly Printed (newspaper, etc.), to promote a positive image to the community. We also recommend that financial statements be provided to the future Grand Jury prior to their visit.

#### **General Recommendations**

1. New appointment to Board of Equalization- Mr. Otis Amason.
2. Proposed pay increases for Jury and Bailiffs:

Jury and Grand Jury	\$30.00 per session (increase of \$5.00)
Bailiffs	\$60.00 per day (increase of \$ 5.00)

The Liberty County Grand Jury, September 2006 term, wishes to thank all individuals and offices that assisted in carrying out its duties. Special thanks to Mr. Barry Wilkes and his staff in the Office of the Clerk Of Superior Court, Mr. Tom Durden, Richard Braun SR., Ms. Ella Golden, Judge Nancy Aspinwall, Ms. Glenda Roberts, Sheriff Don Martin, Mr. Sampie Smith, Mr. Ron Tolley, Mr. John McIver, Mr. Joey Brown, Mr. Bob Sprinkel, Dr. Steve Wimoth and Dr. Cheryl Conley.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Michael W. Arnold, Foreperson