

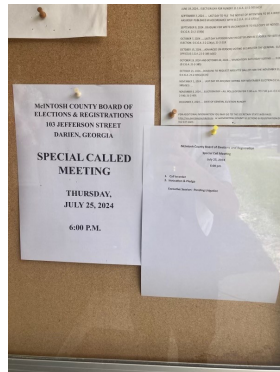
THE CURRENT

In-Depth Journalism for Coastal Georgia

Sunday Solutions -- July 28, 2024

Good morning! Between the rainstorms, we've had a bit of news on the McIntosh County-Hogg Hummock zoning fight, some officials skirting open government and another chapter in the bizarre state of fire protection in Liberty County. There's always more. And, it's nearly August...how did that happen?

NEWS: COURTS



Meeting notice posted at McIntosh County Board of Elections

Sapelo vote sparks secrecy, recusals

It's been a newsy week if you're following the [lawsuits and efforts for a referendum over Sapelo Island rezoning](#). Early this week, the McIntosh County probate judge certified the [petitions](#) for a referendum and [ordered an Oct. 1 county vote](#) that could nullify the county commission's decision to allow larger homes in Hogg Hummock. **On Tuesday, the county filed a [request to stop](#)**

the election, challenging its own probate judge and citizens.

But this next move was of note, **when it comes to governing and transparency:** On Thursday, the McIntosh County Board of Elections met in a special called meeting, which was immediately voted to a closed session. The board lawyer, Jason Nix, said the closed-to-the-public meeting was regarding litigation, one of three reasons Georgia law allows a public meeting to be closed for discussion. Nix told *The Current*: "This does relate to the pending litigation between the county and the probate judge." The rub: **Closed meetings are allowed - but not required -- in Georgia to discuss litigation, and that's usually invoked when a body is a party to the lawsuit -- not adjacent to it.** It's unclear what the 5-member board discussed while behind closed doors for about an hour.

The meeting reopened to take a vote -- **under state law, votes must be made in the open so citizens can see their work being done.** However, the motion, made by member Mary Fly and receiving unanimous support, gave no clue to what the topic may have been: "I would like to make a motion to adopt the attorney's recommendation on the issue and direct him to proceed as agreed in the executive session."

And as we write this: **Late Friday, all 5 judges from the Atlantic Judicial Circuit, which serves McIntosh County and 4 neighboring counties, recused themselves from hearing any of the judicial filings on the zoning matter.** Watch TheCurrentGA.org for more twists and turns this week.