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ONE DOLLAR

## RV not allowed on county land in Hog Hammock

In a three to one vote, the McIntosh County Commissioners voted on May 13 not to allow an RV on the county property in Hog Hammock, where the property is being leased to operate a restaurant.

The Minnow Trap Bar & Grill (Sapelo Bar & Grill, LLC) opened last year in the former community center. It is being leased by Tony Thaw, who had been given permission by a commissioner to bring the RV to the property to provide housing for an employee. Restaurant hours and ferry hours make it difficult for off-island employees to work, and there is a scarcity of island residents to work in the restaurant.

Upon receiving concern from island residents and others about allowing an RV on the property, the County met with Thaw about the situation.

Thaw proposed an amendment

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# County

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to his lease contract, which was presented to the Commission last week by County Manager Patrick Zoucks.

His proposed amendment was to allow a recreational vehicle to be located behind the bar and grill, which is located on the county's property, being leased by Thaw.

The amendment proposed annual lease payment for Year 2 to be reduced from \$6,000/year to \$3,000 a year; Years 3 and 4 be reduced from \$9,000/year to \$4,000 a year; and Year 5 from \$9,000/year to \$5,000/year.

The amendment proposed instead of the county being responsible for landscaping on the property, the tenant would be responsible.

And, the amendment proposed the county be responsible for the power bill, instead of the tenant.

There was plenty of discussion by the Commissioners concerning the amendment proposals.

Commissioner for Hog Hammock, Roger Lotson, stated, "I have some concerns about the placement of the RV at the site. It is my understanding that unless an RV is in a RV park, you cannot have an RV in any other area of the county, where someone is living on a long-term basis. So to grant this will be a variation from our rules that I don't find acceptable, especially when we're currently issuing out citations to others who are living in RVs."

"I have heard it stated that the county is not required to follow the rule, if it is on county property. I will submit that once we leased this property to an individual, the intent of the law is being violated. It is no longer being used for county purposes. The county gets no real benefit out of that restaurant and bar."

Commissioner Davis Poole said, "It is my understanding the reason the individual brought an RV into Hog Hammock and put it behind the building was taken basically a sheet out of the state of Georgia's DNR playbook. They use RVs on Sapelo Island today, in at least two cases, maybe three, to augment the labor, because they can't find anybody to work on the island. And, the intent of the operator was just that. He couldn't find anybody to work on the island, and with the schedule, the way it works com-

ing on and off the island, it is almost impossible to run a restaurant without having additional labor.

Commissioner Henderson Hope said, "We already knew that RJ Reynolds (mansion) and some of those facilities were already having hiring problems, keeping people. So, we knew we were handicapped in the beginning when we started this venture with this bar and grill. So, how many people will this camper house? Is this camper going to be something that stays there and just the people transfer out?"

Poole answered, "I understand this is privately owned by one individual, a lady that came out of the restaurant business. It's basically temporary housing. It goes off the island, when she leaves, when the season is over."

Lotson said that while the state rules may allow an RV in its property that right does not necessarily transfer as the same right to the property of McIntosh County.

"If the state wishes to move that RV to their property, I find that wholly acceptable, but for it to remain on county property under the guise that the facility is fulfilling a function of the county government is a violation of our rules," Lotson said.

Commissioner Chris Jarriel asked County Attorney Ad Poppell for clarification about the county's property falling under its zoning rules. Poppell said, "You can do whatever you wish as a county unit with your property without being hindered by your own zoning rules."

Lotson discussed the difficulty of operating a restaurant, stating, "Under normal circumstances, a restaurant is one of the most difficult businesses to start, and you put it on the isolated island with restricted access, then



McIntosh County Commissioners discuss the proposed amendment to allow a RV to be located on county property in Hog Hammock. From left are Davis Poole, Kate Karwacki, Chris Jarriel, Roger Lotson and Henderson Hope.

it is going to be a Herculean task to make that a profitable business in the first three to five years. I understand why he is asking for these concessions. But again, we have to be mindful that is a private business. And this is taxpayers' dollars and we have to know where the line is. We want to support business and I would like to see that business thrive on the island, because it can possibly open up other doors. But my concern is what may happen tomorrow. Always take on establishing precedence that when you open the door, how do you keep other people from walking in?"

Chair Kate Karwacki called for a vote.

Lotson made a motion not to approve the amendment allowing the RV on the county's property and not to approve the county paying for the power for the restaurant. His motion approved the tenant taking over the maintenance of the yards and landscaping and included the reduction of the lease payment for Year 2 to \$3,000 and for Year 3 to \$4,000. Then, the County would consider the lease payment for Year 4 upon reviewing the restaurant's financials for the year.

Hope seconded the motion. Lotson, Hope and Jarriel voted to approve the motion. Poole voted no.

Following the meeting, Thaw did not respond for comments on the action taken by the Commissioners.

The County had a long agenda.

- Approved were the following:

- Superior Court Public Defender budget of \$81,968 from McIntosh County. Zoucks said this is an increase of \$10,602 over last year's request, due to increased personnel costs.

- Superior Court Judges' budget request of \$27,781 from McIntosh County, which is the same amount budgeted last year.

- Superior Court Staff Attorney budget of \$9,435 from McIntosh County, an increase of \$1,524. The increase is due to personnel costs.

- Personnel Policy, including prohibiting vaping to places where smoking is prohibited.

- Request for Proposals for the county-wide curbside municipal solid waste and recycling pick-up. Zoucks said during the planning retreat, the Commissioners discussed the subject. "Our current contract requires a 180 days notice if we wish to discontinue our contract with Waste Management and the letter was sent last month. The RFP provides a scope of work and asks to give details on the various services that are currently provided by Waste Management. The successful bidder

will be awarded a four-year contract with a provision to extend the contract for two one-year periods.

- Roberts Civil Engineering contract for consulting engineering and project management on the Year 4 TSPLST and 2025 LMIG projects. Project consulting and management will be six percent of the construction cost and engineering is based on hourly rates. It is the standard engineering services contract that has been used over the last several paving projects.

- Contract with Coastal Regional Commission for its GIS services for the county for one year, in the amount of \$48,000, the same as last year. Zoucks explained, "Over the last several years we have worked on our GIS needs and now have a central point where staff and citizens can research different maps, such as a parcel map, zoning map, road map, flood plain map and other on the county's website. This agreement will help to keep these services up to date."
- Amended the deed to clear up property line boundaries for the acreage the county purchased from Rayonier Forest Resources LP to build the new lined landfill adjacent to the old landfill.

Awarded a paving con-

tract for Year 4 TSPLST to Georgia Asphalt Producers in the amount of \$1,696,078.51.

Zoucks said, "This is for the resurfacing of Blue N Hall Road; paving of Parnell Road, Trout Street, Jane Lane, Casey Road; resurfacing of West Place Road and LeCounte Road; construction of a cul-de-sac on Popple Farms Road; paving of Animal Shelter Drive. The contractor will have 180 days from the notice to proceed to complete the projects. Funding for the projects comes from TSPLST, 2025 LMIG funding and additional LRA monies from the State as part of the supplemental budget."

McIntosh County offices will be closed on Monday, May 26, for Memorial Day.

Zoucks gave an update of the renovations at Barrington Park. "The contractor has hit the ground running. The slab has been poured for the bathroom and the block walls are currently being installed. The pump house for the new well system is almost complete and the Public Works crew has completed the waterlines to all the campsites."

It is anticipated work will be completed by October.

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