A Work Session of the Baldwin County Commissioners was held Tuesday, June 20, 2017, at 5:15 p.m., Baldwin County Courthouse, Suite 319, 121 North Wilkinson Street, Milledgeville, Georgia with Chair Sammy Hall presiding.

Members Present:  Emily C. Davis  
Tommy French  
Sammy Hall  
Henry Craig  
John Westmoreland  

Also Present:  Ralph McMullen  
Cindy Cunningham  
Dawn Hudson  

Call to Order  

Chair Sammy Hall called the Work Session to order at 5:15 p.m.  

Property Maintenance Ordinance  

Chair Hall stated the County has discussed property maintenance issues many times over the years. He stated a Safe Property Standards Ordinance was adopted by Commissioners in 2014 to address vacant, dilapidated, uninhabitable and unsafe structures as well as swimming pools. However, property maintenance issues continue in Baldwin County. He stated tonight’s Work Session will afford Commissioners the opportunity to again discuss this issue during a presentation by Code Enforcement Officer Nathan Arp.  

Mr. Arp stated Commissioners have been given an opportunity to review the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) which is intended to establish provisions consistent with the scope of a property maintenance code that protects public health, safety and welfare. The IPMC contains clear and specific property maintenance requirements that are fully compatible with all international code and is available for adoption and use by local governments. This code is accepted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and has been adopted by a number of jurisdictions throughout the State.  

He stated the adoption of the IPMC would be beneficial to Baldwin County by providing an enforceable set of standards to deal residential and non-residential property maintenance issues. Mr. Arp stressed that the adoption of the IPMC would not change the County’s direction in dealing with property maintenance, i.e. the County would not seek out violators. The County would be the second contact on issues, and the investigation would be as a complaint follow-up.  

Commissioner John Westmoreland referenced a group of citizens in the audience that are here because of the lack of property maintenance standards which deal with trash and dilapidated structures such as those located in their area of the County. They feel the County must take some action to eliminate these situations throughout the County.  

Chair Sammy Hall stated a Property Standards Committee, comprised of Commissioners Craig and French along with members of the community, developed the Safe Property Standards Ordinance which was actually adopted in 2014; however, it could not be enforced through the court system. He stated there must be judicial
support for such a policy to be effective. He has discussed the IPMC with Solicitor General Blackwell, and she agreed that she could enforce this code if adopted by Commissioners. She said the IPMC has a proven track record for enforcement.

Mr. Arp stated the main goal of the Code Enforcement Office through the adoption of the IPMC is overall general compliance. Code violations, prosecutions and resulting fines would not be viewed as a revenue source of the County.

Commissioner Emily Davis stated there are some people who cannot afford to tear down structures and clean up their properties.

Various citizens in the audience expressed their concerns of situations throughout the County which definitely need to be cleaned up and questioned how the County could be of assistance. Commissioners discussed volunteer groups that could be utilized to assist.

Commissioner Craig stated the Property Maintenance Committee spent many hours developing the Property Standards Ordinance that was adopted in 2014 but to no avail because of the lack of enforcement power. He stated Commissioners must have citizen support throughout the stages of adoption of a code which can be enforced through the courts.

Adjournment

Commissioner Emily C. Davis made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Henry Craig seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sammy Hall
Chair

Cynthia K. Cunningham
County Clerk