

97-0294

COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS - DISCUSSION OF WELFARE REFORM AND JOB TRAINING (HELD 2/19/97) (HIGHTOWER) DISCUSSED AND HEARD WITH ITEM 97-0356 (LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE, EMS BILL) (APPROVE THE APPROACH OFFERED BY DHR)

Mr. Regus - "I would like to ask Claire McLeveighn to come forward. This goes with items that we added to the agenda on the Legislative Update."

Ms. McLeveighn - "I'm the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. An update of the status of the County Legislative Package is included in your folders. I would like to call your attention to several items. House Bill 606 which is a Library Bill was passed by the Fulton County House Delegation on February 28, 1997, and the next step will be consideration of the full House of Representatives, House Bill 721."

Commissioner Boxill - "Will you at the next meeting, let us know if there are financial implications for us?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "Yes."

Commissioner Joyner - "I wonder, Madam Chair, if we could in addition to hearing these other ones, if we could hear about the Welfare Reform Bill first?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "On a monthly basis our Staff has provided you with an update and informed you of our activities to advance the Board's position on Welfare Reform. Since the last meeting a number of things have taken place. We've met with legislators including Senator Donzella James, Representative Billy McKinney, Representative Georgianna Sinkfield, and Members of the House Children and Youth Committee. On March 3, 1997, which was Monday, at the direction of the Board, the County Manager testified at the House Children and Youth Committee on Senate Bill 104. We have a meeting also scheduled with Representative Sinkfield and Members of her Committee to discuss a number of amendments which we will be proposing to Senate Bill 104."

Commissioner Boxill - "When is that meeting?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "Tomorrow. I have Kaye Young here and she would like to"

Commissioner Boxill - "What time? Give me some specifics so I won't have to ask"

Ms. McLeveighn - "We're hoping for 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning."

Commissioner Boxill - "I thought you said you did have one scheduled."

Ms. McLeveighn - "She wants to meet with us tomorrow morning. She did say that."

Ms. Young - "We have drafted some amendments that we want to present to Representatives Sinkfield and the Committee on Children and Youth and the House, and these are amendments that are consistent with the proposals and the resolutions that the Board has adopted pertaining to child care, inclusion of illegal immigrants, and the issue of whether or not felons can be eligible for ... benefits in the like. So, we do have those amendments. If you would like additional information about it I can certainly give that to you, but we have them prepared and we're going to be talking to Representative Sinkfield about them."

Commissioner Hightower - "Ms. Sinkfield, she seems to think that we were okay with child care support and child care monies. Have you been able to close a gap on that? Who can answer that question? At the hearing last week it was 'we're okay.' That does not jive with the figures that I've seen as far as Ralph is concerned."

Commissioner Boxill - "Are you asking them to tell you whether or not Representative Georgianna now understands the problem differently?"

Commissioner Hightower - "Yes."

Commissioner Boxill - "I don't know whether Ralph can answer that?"

Mr. Mitchell - "The two components that we're looking at in our meeting with our Representative Sinkfield ... and also is being a Member of the Fulton County Delegation would work to our benefit. She's not only Chairman of the Children Youth Committee, which is handling Senate Bill 104, the Welfare Reform Bill, she is also Chairman on the budget issue which will address the welfare needs. As we discussed with her the specific items that would affect Senate Bill 104... We will also be able to talk to her as we get a better feel for the actual dollars that it represents to the County, the budget issues that will affect the 1997 and 1998 budget. So, to the extent that she will have a better understanding of our concerns..."

Commissioner Boxill - "I think the question that was on the floor is that last week Representative Sinkfield expressed one opinion based on a set of facts. I think Commissioner Hightower is asking and I know I'm asking -- does Representative Sinkfield today have a different understanding of the facts and understanding that matches more with the understanding this Board has? She either has it, because we provided it to her, or no."

Mr. Mitchell - "Yes, she does."

Commissioner Hightower - "Does she agree with the facts that you presented to her?"

Mr. Mitchell - "While she understands ... and whether or not from a budget reality can we accommodate, or can she accommodate, or can the State? Our concern is that we're not at that point. But, I think she certainly appreciates the concerns that we expressed."

Commissioner Hightower - "My question to him was does she concur or agree with the facts. You're saying -- I heard you say rather that maybe she does and maybe she doesn't depending upon if she can get the political ... to get things on, was that the answer?"

Mr. Mitchell - "I think that was, yes, sir. What I'm trying to tell you is while she certainly appreciates the concerns of Fulton County and as a member of the Delegation is very sensitive to those concerns to say that we can move all those concerns forward at this point in the full Legislature environment. That's what we're continuing to work on. My sense is she's committed to work with us in trying to do that."

Vice Chair Boxill - "I think what we're really looking for is that Representative Sinkfield made a statement saying there is enough money in the day care fund."

Commissioner Hightower - "Exactly."

Vice Chair Boxill - "Commissioner Hightower and Boxill thought that was absolutely not the case. What we want to know is did we provide information to Representative Sinkfield that enabled her to say, 'oh, there isn't enough money in the day care fund?'"

Commissioner Hightower - "That's the point."

Mr. Mitchell - "I would answer that yes. I think she certainly has an appreciation that there is not enough there, but how much more we need -- that's what we're still trying to come up with those exact figures."

Commissioner Hightower - "What I'm trying to make sure that we're clear about is -- does she disagree with the figures, Ms. Sinkfield? Does she agree on the figures that we -- not what she thought we were last week?"

Mr. Mitchell - "That is my understanding -- that she understands that there is a difference in the figures that she thought she would cover versus what we say are not adequate."

Commissioner Hightower - "Do you think she knows the difference in (a) and (b)?"

Mr. Mitchell - "Yes, sir, I do think she knows that."

Commissioner Hightower - "Does anyone disagree with ... assessment?"

Vice Chair Boxill - "The problem is that you and I are not attorneys. I feel like we have to turn this over to Gordon and Commissioner Darnell. You know what we're after. This Board believes that we are up against the wall to date from the last time we met. Have you all been able to change anything? Are there any more people in the delegation who see the situation the same way that ... have? We can call it an update on the Library Bill, if we want to. That's not really the intent of this -- all of the dollars that we're spending. I've been having this

conversation for two years now. Every time we ask for updates we get everything but how many more votes are in our column, none, two, seven? Am I on the right track?"

Mr. Mitchell - "I could not give you a vote count just out of the delegation. Of course, outside of the delegation a number of other members are just on that subcommittee of the budget. I can't give you a vote count today."

Commissioner Hightower - "I guess where I'm going is that ... at least allow Ms. Sinkfield and other friends of ours who serve in the Legislative to at least have the facts. Now whether or not, Commissioner Boxill, they have the political muscle to change that -- issue (b). Issue (a) is that we have a shortfall of (x), agree, yes or no. Issue (b) is that the political ... to influence from (a) to (b)? I think what you're saying is that she is sensitive, and according to what you're saying, she understands. That may not be in mix as it relates to where SB104 is going on the House side. Is that a correct assessment?"

Mr. Mitchell - "I think that is a correct assessment. Certainly, what we're going to be trying to do is complete section A as you described and also provide whatever assistance we can to her and the rest of the Delegation to get to (b), which is a better understanding with the full legislature to hopefully address that shortfall that we see is there."

Commissioner Hightower - "I want us to characterize this, Commissioner Boxill, Joyner, Darnell, and Tom. It's not something we're asking them to do us a favor on. This whole thing is being characterized as we're asking them and we're not asking them. We're joining them in partnership to help the people that all of us serve so it's not a combat nor is it a beg. We're not begging nor are we being combative. I think we're saying let's be partners as we help those people that they are serving and we're serving. I would say it should be a partnership."

Mr. Mitchell - "It would be my hope that we can provide what you're saying. I support not only for this Commission, but also for members of the Delegation to move a joint agenda forward."

Vice Chair Boxill - "Did all of our legislative affairs' people of which I can only count at least six now... Who coordinates the team?"

Mr. Regus - "Claire McLeveighn, who reports to me, Commissioner."

Commissioner Darnell - "On Welfare Reform, there was mentioned, I believe by Ms. Young that we have prepared amendments to the existing legislation that if adopted would reflect Fulton County's substantive position as it pertains to this legislation. Do we have any Members of the Delegation identified who would be willing to introduce those amendments for us? What are our plans for the amendments? How do we plan to handle those?"

Ms. Young - "Well, I have spoken with the chairperson of the Housing Delegation and the Fulton County Delegation, Representative McKinney who sits on that Committee and he may very well be interested. Representative Sinkfield herself is going to be wanting some changes

and so that's part of what we're going to be discussing at the meeting. She has some additional changes that she's interested in. So we may want to talk to her about introducing a substitute Bill as well which would include these amendments."

Commissioner Hightower - "There is one other question on her point. Ms. Darnell's question was that on your amendments that you have helped put together for us. Now are those the same amendments that Ms. Sinkfield wants to make changes on? Are those the same?"

Ms. Young - "They are consistent with some of them. Now she may want to have an amendment that says extend the time limit from four years to five years. That's not part of Fulton County's position."

Commissioner Hightower - "Back on Commissioner Darnell's point, Ms. Darnell's point is these amendments that we have prepared (a) we have persons who are going to carry that out for us; (b) who are they? Either Ms. Sinkfield is going to carry those or she is not, or others will carry those or they're not. Let's go back to the narrow focus of her question, if that's possible."

Ms. Young - "That is possible. One of the reasons we're going to meet with Representative Sinkfield tomorrow is to talk to her about it to see which one of these she feels comfortable in carrying and adding to her set of amendments. Based on that conversation we will have a sense of what are the remaining amendments that we need to seek sponsorship for."

Commissioner Darnell - "I just want to emphasize the importance of that second step."

Ms. Young - "I agree."

Commissioner Darnell - "The importance of the second step is to find sponsors for the amendments. If Representative Sinkfield is not so inclined we need to move on. If Members of this Board can help in that regard you need to let us know. Bob, what we're interested in is the policy that we have adopted. We can't spend a whole lot of time trying to persuade Representative Sinkfield. We might have already spent enough since she thought the day care funding was adequate. I've been a little shaky about her understanding from that point on. So, I just want to emphasize that what we want to see and the clock is ticking. We want to see some sponsors lined up who are going to be pushing our amendments."

Mr. Mitchell - "As opposed to trying to offer each amendment separately is to have the language we want included in a complete substitute and then if there are components left out from the Fulton County Agenda, let's find individual handlers of those amendments."

Commissioner Darnell - "Where are we on that process, that is developing a substitute that reflects the policy of this Board?"

Mr. Mitchell - "That would be a critical -- that's the major part of the reason for that meeting in the morning with Ms. Sinkfield to see what we can get into any substitute language as opposed to separate amendments."

Commissioner Darnell - "Do you mean her substitute?"

Mr. Mitchell - "Yes. As she prepares a likely substitute, yes."

Commissioner Darnell - "I'm going to say speaking as one Commissioner, my recommendation is you better start finding folks to introduce our amendments. That's all I have on Welfare Reform. I will have some comments on some other items that are in our Legislature Package."

Commissioner Joyner - "Commissioner Hightower made a point earlier about what should be the perspective in terms of our relationship to the Delegation on these issues. Whereas I agree that on some other issues the Delegation may actually be providing the leadership and on some other issues we should be in partnership with the Delegation. However, on this issue I think we are in the leadership, and the Delegation is to serve us because they're going home and these Welfare Reform impacts are going to start hitting. We're going to be the ones responsible for implementing, covering, and establishing and they don't have a vested interest one way or the other in how much money is in this particular arena. They are our representatives in getting the money we say we want. They don't have an interest in whether it's enough or not enough. That's our call. To me ... we communicate that to them, it's our program, our responsibility under law. We communicate that to them and we find some leadership and sponsors and we tell them that this is what we need. It is now March 5. When does the Legislature close?"

Mr. Mitchell - "I think there are 12 legislative days left counting tomorrow."

Commissioner Joyner - "So, there are 12 legislative days left."

Mr. Mitchell - "... of the 40 days."

Commissioner Joyner - "And, we don't have a committed sponsor for our package yet? We don't have anyone even in our Delegation?"

Commissioner Hightower - "Is that a yes or a no answer?"

Commissioner Joyner - "It was no for the record. Is that correct?"

Mr. Mitchell - "That's correct."

Commissioner Joyner - "There are 12 legislative days to go and we don't even have a sponsor committed to our Welfare Reform Legislative Package. I don't claim to have any expertise on legislative lobbying at all, but just on the face of it that causes me concern. Sir, what is your name?"

Mr. Martin - "Tripp Martin."

Commissioner Joyner - "What is your own assessment? Do you feel comfortable with where things are?"

Mr. Martin - "Certainly, I can tell you in a normal situation with most of our clients we deal with we're engaged in a summer, fall, time frame. We work on a legislative package with them. We work on a strategy with those folks, and then we try to work with them during the legislative session to implement that package. We begin active work with"

Commissioner Joyner - "Are you comfortable with where this is right now?"

Mr. Martin - "In a normal situation, no, sir. I would like to have had a much earlier head start."

Commissioner Joyner - "So, in your opinion, our concern that you hear expressed, this is not out of line. We're not missing something?"

Mr. Martin - "I think you are reasonably concerned."

Commissioner Joyner - "We have reason to be concerned. Ms. McLeveighn, from your perspective, do you think we have reason to be concerned with where things are right now with approximately 12 legislative days to go?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "I think we have reason for concern. I agree 100 percent with what Mr. Martin said that an earlier start would have been much more helpful, but I am optimistic about Representative Sinkfield in terms of her accepting our views."

Commissioner Joyner - "When the legislature closes, when that last gavel comes down on this, what is your prediction as to what will have been accomplished in the area of Welfare Reform for Fulton County?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "Well, I think that we can probably achieve at least some of what we're asking for through our amendments."

Commissioner Joyner - "Give me some specifics as to in your capacity what is it that you are telling this Board, each of you will get a chance. What is it that you are telling this Board that you reasonably anticipate are going to be the positive results of your work in our behalf? Is there anything that you feel comfortable with at this point in saying?"

Ms. McLeveigh - "--probably the provision for legal immigrants. There is a lot of support for that from other groups as well as from ours. I hope that we will be able to get also a provision that would require a pilot study of 10 counties which would look at the impact that Welfare Reform has on County Governments, because obviously that's going to affect other counties in addition to Fulton, and we're probably getting some support on that."

Commissioner Joyner - "So we have a study and something about immigrants? At this point and time do you feel that those are achievable?"

Ms. McLeveigh - "At this point and time I would say that."

Commissioner Joyner - "I know you're very new in your position, so I'm going to allow your colleagues to have an opportunity to speak to this also. Would you introduce yourself again?"

Ms. Young - "I am Kay Young and I'm not a lobbyist, obviously, I'm not an employee but I am a lobbyist in private business."

Commissioner Joyner - "So, you're not with this ...?"

Ms. Young - "I have a contract with Contortion, but I'm not an employee of the Contortion."

Commissioner Joyner - "What is your assessment? What do you feel comfortable in saying will be achieved in every Welfare Reform ... by the time the gavel comes down for Fulton County?"

Ms. Young - "It's hard to predict what the General Assembly is going to do."

Commissioner Joyner - "But, that's exactly what I'm asking you to do. In your professional judgement, which you're being paid to render as a lobbyist for our interest in Fulton County, I'm asking you to tell me what you predict based on what you see right now."

Ms. Young - "Based on what I see right now I believe there will be some support and perhaps even passing some amendments to the Bill to allow legal immigrants to be covered in the same way as others. I believe there is going to be an amendment to the Bill that would allow for some tracking, because there is a lot of concern among legislators, primarily the Chairperson of the Children and Youth Committee about what is going to happen to people on the new ... program. The Department of Human Resources has been very vague about their projections as to who is going to be eligible, how many numbers, how many people are not going to be able to get the benefits, and what is that going to mean for child care and what is that going to mean for the safety."

Commissioner Joyner - "All I'm asking right now is for the what. What it is you're predicting is going to be accomplished out of our legislative package, and you're saying protection for legal immigrants in Fulton County?"

Ms. Young - "For legal immigrants, there is going to be some tracking, and I think there is going to be some effort to make sure that people are not sanctioned trivial kinds of things and that there is a conciliation process and a way for them to resolve problems before they're actually sanctioned."

Commissioner Joyner - "None of that is money in the bank. What we're talking is money in the bank issues. We're going to have to provide some services and studies are not needed anymore. I'm certainly concerned about immigrants, legal immigrants, illegal immigrants, but there are other priorities in our Legislative Package that I'm going to give the other gentlemen an opportunity to speak on this, too. This Board is interested in some vote counting kind of answers. We talked to all of these Representatives and all of these Senators in the Fulton Delegation. These are the ones who are going to support it. These are the ones who are on the fence. These are the ones who are not. So in these last 12 or 13 days you will know where your emphasis will have to be so that when we come back ... and I guess we're talking about just possibly the Recess Meeting or soon after that the session is going to be over. This Board of Commissioners is going to ask this question, and I guarantee you that somebody on this Board of Commissioners is going to ask this question. It may come from me. The question is going to be, well, we spent \$125,000 on lobbyists for this one session of the Legislature. What did we get for it? Ladies and gentlemen, that's going to be the question, and if the answer is going to be we were able to achieve in this area or priority for you, we were able to achieve a study group and a provision for legal immigrants. You're not going to want to stand out there telling us that."

Ms. Young - "I do understand that we do have some time left. We don't have a lot of time left, but frankly, a lot happens in the last five to 10 days of the session. A whole lot happens, I'm sure you know that. I'm very hopeful that the money, the \$3.4 million that the Governor's budget recommended for a cut in the Health Departments, is going to be restored. I feel pretty hopeful about that. But, frankly, the whole Welfare Reform issue and the budget side of it are going to put counties in a bad way. There, frankly, is not the political will and from the Governor and the people on the various appropriations committees ... they're not willing to put the kind of money into the counties that needs to be put in to protect people who are not going to be on that program. I mean that's just the bottom line. Fulton County and a lot of the counties... I mean everyone who is in the human service community down at the General Assembly is concerned about.... I'm just telling you that we're working on that."

Commissioner Joyner - "But don't be optimistic."

Ms. Young - "Don't be particularly optimistic, because the money is not there."

Commissioner Joyner - "Quite honestly, I appreciate that input more than anything else I've heard, because everything else indicated to me or suggested to me is that we're working on it and we think it's likely to happen, we might be able to pull this together, we're going to have breakfast with Georgianna Sinkfield tomorrow morning and that's going to be the crack in the dam, maybe. That's going to open the doors."

Ms. Young - "We're working on two sides of Welfare Reform. There is the Bill itself, and then there is the budget issue. The budget is very difficult right now because the figures that are coming from the Department of Human Resources are not matching some of the other figures and the needs coming from the County."

Commissioner Joyner - "I want you to know that that is very helpful information to this Commissioner -- to let me know that not much is likely going to be accomplished. Sir, I said I would give you the same opportunity. You said that you haven't been counting any votes, and I presume you're speaking on behalf of the entire group. So, my question to you as lobbyists is how do you all approach this without seeing where the votes are?"

Mr. Martin - "Let me first state where we are in the process, the budget process, even though there are only 12 days of the 40 days left. Just yesterday afternoon is when the conferees on the supplemental budget, the supplemental budget from 1997 signed an agreement on the supplemental budget. So, now the eyes and the energies are really focused or turned to the full budget for 1997 and 1998. So, the timing is good at least, even though we got a late start in terms of focusing truly on this year's budget, and Senate Bill 104 even though it passes and it's in the House. The timing is at least good to be very focused on that so that vote counting process that you suggest and I think indicates that you may be better versed than the legislative process than you might want to allow. That is very much what we will be doing and are very focused on doing, especially on the Welfare issue as well as some of the other issues, but certainly on the Welfare issues to specifically address your question of where I think we should have some optimism and where I think we might not have as much success in getting attentions addressed. I would agree that maybe the child care component we will at least have the opportunity to have some substantive discussion and hopefully some success there. I'm not as hopeful in the area of the convicted felons concerns that we have. I don't think that is generally observed or appreciated in the State Legislature as much as it may be within Fulton County. So, that may be a very difficult issue. The illegal immigrant issue, even though there was an effort by the Senate unsuccessfully to do that to address that issue, that may be very difficult, too. I think there is a billing sentiment within the legislature that may end up being a court case and may be resolved in court cases. Sometimes that's a way, legislatively, for folks elected in the legislature to say we will let the courts handle it, but hopefully we can try to address that and we will try to address that in this budget process and in this Senate Bill process."

Commissioner Darnell - "I don't know whether or not this is appropriate or not but I would like to ask you for your recommendations with respect to a strategy for developing very quickly a sponsorship of legislation adopted with respect to this matter. You can be as general or as specific as you are comfortable with since I know that you have been in communication and conversation with Members of the General Assembly with respect to our concerns about this perhaps longer than anybody else. I would be interested in your recommendations."

Mr. Mitchell - "There have been a couple of things I have not been able to report to Bob. These things happened prior to me coming here. I came straight from Southwest over here."

A couple of things have happened that are good. Commissioner Hightower has taken the leadership, Sheila, Anthony, and the crowd have worked diligently not through necessarily legislature, but the homeless issue has been revisited by the State, Atlanta."

Commissioner Darnell - "-- just Welfare Reform right now."

Mr. Mitchell - "Atlanta has been recognized as a surplus city which means that the homeless will be exempt from work requirements. They will receive their food stamps. The second thing is that ... and I think that pressure from Fulton County actually made that change, however, I think there is a lot of work that has got to be worked out in terms of the implementation of this waiver and those nine yards. The second thing the Committee needs to know is that this group that Georgianna Sinkfield brought -- nine people from her Committee over to one of our offices just to walk through to see what Welfare Reform is all about, they asked questions to get the information that they need to know in terms of what are the problems, where do we go from here and those kind of things."

Commissioner Darnell - "In the interest of time, is it your opinion that Representative Sinkfield would be willing to sponsor a substitute which is made up of the concerns that we have here at Fulton County?"

Mr. Mitchell - "Yes."

Commissioner Darnell - "While you're here as a Department Head, what is your understanding of how you proceed in terms of any kind of lobbying activity that you might do with legislators? Do you coordinate that through Bob?"

Mr. Mitchell - "Yes, I'm prohibited from lobbying at all."

Commissioner Darnell - "Bob, you might need to emphasize that to your Department Heads. Representative Stanley was extremely upset by communication she received from a Department Head regarding the -- she's chair of the House Community Affairs Committee, and I was present last week when a Department Head was lobbying heavily on a position that was in direct contradiction to the position that had been taken by this Board, and I would certainly encourage Department Heads to coordinate your lobbying through the County Manager's Office. I think I'm going to have to make some suggestions in terms of strategy. We need to identify an alternate sponsor for this Bill, we're not as encouraged by Representative Sinkfield's movement in this area as you all are. The tour was good, but now that the tour is over we want some substitutes introduced, and the second thing I want to say is along the lines of my colleague Commissioner Joyner. When I think about what kind of work we're doing over there right now, I'm not looking as much at what the General Assembly does in its final vote as I am what did we do to aggressively push our agenda. What did we do?"

As Commissioner Joyner said on this particular issue there are members of the General Assembly that expect counties like Fulton to take the lead. They expect us to take the lead.

I disagree a little bit though, Commissioner Joyner, that they don't have an interest in whether not we get hurt or not. Because the same people that I represent, Lanette Stanley represents, Billy McKinney represents, and the same thing they're saying to me they will be saying to them as well. Namely, they expect State Government to do their share and we don't want to see thousands of children going hungry in this County because of somebody's political agenda. The bottom line on Fulton County's position is we are not willing to threaten folks into hunger and say you're on your own. That's good on the campaign trail but when it comes down to meeting your legal responsibilities for the health and safety of people we have to change that tune.

I'm going to be looking to see, as Commissioner Boxill said at the last meeting, what did we do to push it, and in that regard all seven of us are available, but I don't see my role as going contrary to what this Board has voted on. There are some issues over there we haven't voted on. Now I can express an opinion on those, but when it comes to Welfare Reform this Board has adopted a point of view and I would just like to see you aggressively push it to the point where everybody says I hate to see them coming because I know what it is they're trying to do. Like Nancy said we really can monitor the status and incidently this one is kind of behind. The one we have in our folders today ... there have been a few changes since this one was published. We can kind of track it, we have some excellent tracking, but we can't go over there like you all can and pull them over and sit down and talk with them. If we can help we will. Now we're having too many members of our Delegation complaining that they're being ignored and they're not being consulted and that sort of thing. Bob, I wish everybody would get together and work out their own plan on who is going to cover what meeting. I was at a meeting for another purpose the other day and some legislation came down that was inconsistent with positions taken by this Board because the subcommittee chairman said there was no one there from Fulton County to say anything one way or the other. So, let's try to cover these key meetings and subcommittee meetings. You all know about that if you're a professional lobbyist. Don't let them have a meeting about our agenda at any time when we aren't there to speak up forcefully, but respectfully, and be able to as we know this lobbying business is about giving people information. If they don't know they're going to roll on, and I'm telling you our friends over there said, 'Emma we didn't know.' So, let's cover all of these meetings, the ones that pertain to our agenda. You all be there to answer the questions not just for our Delegation, but anybody else that...but right now, Bob, we need an alternate plan, depending upon Representative Sinkfield. We just do, and I'm just telling you. I'm not going to say everything I know about that. I've been advised by our colleagues over there that we need to get moving doing something different."

Commissioner Joyner - "Madam Chair, if we could move on to the second part of this same report, update on the Legislative Package to the EMS Bill, that will not take as long."

Vice Chair Boxill - "I do think that and I will speak to the Department Heads. I do want to see at the conclusion of this session a very detailed report that tells me how many people were working to promote the legislative agenda approved by this Board of Commissioners. I want to know the number, I want to know how many dollars we spent, and what did we get for that."

We will not always be able to have success, but what did the energy, how was the energy used. We're feeling very frustrated, Mr. Manager, because we've been having these conversations for I don't know how long and your response has been, 'we need some help, let's do this.' The adding is about to translate into I don't know what. So, the Board is very frustrated. How long have you been with us?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "I've been here one week and two days. I thank you for your suggestions, that's very helpful to me as a new person in the position."

Vice Chair Boxill - "I'm disappointed that two months into the legislative session we would hire a new Department Head. I don't even know what that means to do that at this point in the session. How in the world is that Department Head going to coordinate with all the other folks we've got over there? It's discouraging and it's extremely frustrating."

Commissioner Hightower - "I think it might be helpful, maybe by Friday, back on Ms. Darnell's question if in fact you and Bob, if there are some items you need this Board to do regarding getting personally involved and I'm quite sure they will be regarding a person's response to certain parts of the Bill. Obviously, you need to let the Board know there are some things on the political side that we need to do."

Vice Chair Boxill - "I think Commissioner Darnell and you have been saying that for the last hour. If there are three telephone calls we need to make tell us. No one up here is shy of picking up the telephone and supporting something."

Commissioner Joyner - "Ms. McLeveighn, are you going to be speaking to the EMS Bill?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "Yes. We have received information from the EMS Board regarding a proposal from the Department of Human Resources along with recommendations which is included in your folder to accept DHR's plan and to withdraw"

Commissioner Joyner - "Let me interrupt just to let the Board know what this is all about. Our proposed legislation was to take Fulton County out of the District 3 EMS section and establish Fulton County as a stand alone EMS District. That's where we started. Now, you mentioned a Department of Human Resources substitute proposal?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "Yes, the recommendation from the EMS Board is that we accept DHR's substitute and withdraw the Bill, and Mr. Sykes is here to answer any questions about that."

Commissioner Joyner - "While Mr. Sykes is coming up.... Part of the recommendation for withdrawing the Bill is that it wasn't going to pass. Is that right?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "I believe that is true."

Vice Chair Boxill - "Before I hear from Mr. Sykes let me make sure. You said that the DHR Board made a recommendation that we as Fulton County withdraw our Bill?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "The recommendation came from the EMS Board."

Vice Chair Boxill - "-- made a recommendation of what?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "That we accept"

Vice Chair Boxill - "Who is the we?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "Fulton County to accept the proposal from the Department of Human Resources."

Vice Chair Boxill - "What has been done since that recommendation was made and now what?"

Ms. McLeveighn - "It remains to be done. We're going to present the information to you today."

Vice Chair Boxill - "For action?"

Commissioner Joyner - "I should have stated that this will be an action item on one or two matters. One matter is going to be about whether or not this Board accepts the recommendation to withdraw that part of our legislative package seeking to establish a stand alone EMS District for Fulton County and instead adopts and approach which has been offered by DHR which Mr. Sykes is going to tell us about right now."

Mr. Sykes - "What DHR has offered us is a structure and a system of procedures to appoint members to the District 3 EMS Council. They had offered us a District Council that would be composed of members that would be appointed by the Board of Commissioners of the counties that compose the District. In our District alone would be proportional appointments so that Fulton County would have 25 percent of membership of the District Council. The Council could at anytime propose that we modify the system that's in place in Fulton County and any subcommittee that reviewed that application would have to include a member of the County in question."

Commissioner Joyner - "Mr. Sykes, what was the origin of this approach? Where did this come from?"

Mr. Sykes - "It originated two years ago when the County introduced legislation to create its own, which is called the Emergency Services District. At that time DHR asked that we give them an opportunity to come up with some administrative remedies to our problems. So, in

the interim of two years nothing really emerged from DHR so again this year we introduced new and, we thought, improved legislation."

Commissioner Joyner - "Did our consumer representative on District 3 EMS Board, Linda Hamby, have any role in this?"

Mr. Sykes - "She was very instrumental in this in proposing that Fulton County certainly needs to move on to its own."

Commissioner Joyner - "Mr. Manager, does this recommended solution...from DHR has your support? Are you recommending approval by the Board?"

Mr. Regus - "Yes, Commissioner."

Commissioner Joyner - "So, Madam Chair at this point I do move that we approve this approach."

Commissioner Hightower - "Second."

Vice Chairman Boxill - "So, that recommendation is approved. Is there something else?"

Commissioner Joyner - "Yes, and I think this is durable. I think that even though it gets us the whole loaf so to speak that our legislative proposal would have ... I think this gets us a long way down the line to Fulton County having much more control over its EMS Program. The second matter and this is also brief -- this is to the Manager and to Mr. Sykes. There is an EMS Board or committee for Fulton County. Is that right, Mr. Regus?"

Mr. Regus - "Yes, Commissioner."

Commissioner Joyner - "Tell us what the membership of that committee is, and how large is it?"

Mr. Sykes - "It has eight members. The County Manager, the Police Chief, our Chief, and the Director of Emergency Medical Services, Arthur Yancey, who is appointed by the Board of Commissioners as a Board Certified Emergency Physician, a representative of the Mayor of Atlanta, and the Director of the 911 Communication Center."

Commissioner Joyner - "Has this Board ever been formerly designated by the Board of Commissioners as the Advisory Board under the official code of Georgia Annotated Section 46-5-136?"

Mr. Sykes - "No, that Board was constituted by a resolution of the Board of Commissioners to advise it with respect to Emergency Medical Services."

Commissioner Joyner - "For that reason, and Members of the Board I have passed out to you a copy of this short and important State Statute 46-5-136, which is entitled Authority of local government to create an advisory board. If I could just have a minute to run through this. This statute provides as follows: (a) The governing authority of a local government shall create, and that word is important by amendment to the State law which was effective on July 1, 1992 this code provision which initially was enacted in 1981 and was amended in 1990 had the word 'may' in terms of appointing an advisory board, but on July 1, 1992, this statute changed the word 'may' to 'shall' was adopted and became effective so now we're under a State statutory duty to appoint and create an Advisory Board for our EMS System or 911 System. The Advisory Board to consist of the Sheriff, Representative from other Public Safety agencies which responds to emergency calls under the system and other individuals knowledgeable of emergency 911 Systems and the emergency needs of the citizens of the local government provided that such advisory board shall not exceed 13 members. The Advisory Board shall assist the local government in reviewing and analyzing the progress by Public Safety agencies in developing 911 system requirements. That's critically important to us right now. Number 2) recommending steps of action to effect the necessary coordination, regulation, and development of a 911 system. We certainly are aware of that need right now to identify mutual aid agreements necessary to effect the "911" system. Assisting in the promulgation of necessary rules, regulations operating procedures, schedules, and other such policy and administrative devices as shall be deemed necessary and appropriate; and 5) providing other services as may be deemed appropriate by the local government. The members of the Advisory Board shall not be compensated from monies deposited into the Emergency Telephone System Fund. Those are the funds that support the 911 system. That's the entirety of the statute. Members of the Board, it is past time actually for us to formerly create a 911 Advisory Board for Fulton County pursuant to the statute with a membership of 13. Some of these will be designated, such as the Sheriff, and other representatives of our Public Safety agencies. The Board of Commissioners ... the remaining ones to be made up of those Public Safety personnel or our consumer representative to the District 3 EMS Board and other citizens with an interest in this matter. At this time I formerly move for the creation of the establishment of this Board."

Commissioner Hightower - "Second."

Commissioner Joyner - "I would get a request out to each of you as a reminder to make your appointment and what the appointment is supposed to represent, because this is something that we need to move on quickly. Finally, Madam Chair, we have as a Board discussed from time to time and I presented to you as my initiative as a further initiative in improving our 911 system that the time has come. This is not a commentary on anything which has happened to this point and the administration and the implementation of the 911 program, consistent with the priority which this Board has given and which it continues to give to the 911 system. The time has come for us to give policy direction to the County Manager to establish the 911 Communication Center as a stand alone office of the County Government reporting directly to the County Manager. It is only ... but we certainly see reports in the media almost on a regular basis now for one reason or another there is a delay in response time and we hear

horror stories which have occurred because of it. Those things certainly have existed, but that is not the reason that we need to establish it as a stand alone body. It needs to be a stand alone body for purposes of direct accountability, direct assessment, direct responsibility, and be able to get questions answered directly as we move along to spend million of dollars which this Board has allocated for improvement and technology, staffing and training. It is my strong feeling as the one who provided the initiative with the support of the Board in prioritizing improvements in our 911 system that's consistent with our establishment of this Advisory Board that we need to establish as a stand alone body in the County Government. The County Manager and I have discussed this extensively and he concurred entirely and on a separate track which is going in the same direction. I've indicated to the Board in the past that this is where I thought we needed to go and at this time I make the motion that we establish a matter of policy for the County Manager to pursue that the 911 Communication System be established as a separate entity within the County Government reportable directly to the County Manager."

Vice Chair Boxill - "That item was not on the Agenda, and I do think we might want to have some extended conversation about it. Would you be willing to perhaps couch it in a way that asks the Manager to come back to us with such a plan for approval?"

Commissioner Joyner - "Certainly, I will accept that language as a part of the motion."

Vice Chair Boxill - "What we're really dealing with is the legislative report and others may want to say something."

Commissioner Joyner - "I accept that."

Commissioner Hightower - "Did your action include any date for an implementation?"

Commissioner Joyner - "It's really establishing a policy direction for the County Manager and I certainly accept the Chair's suggestion that that policy direction include and entail the County Manager coming back with a specific plan to the Board. I would request at the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners -- it's a Recess Meeting for the purposes of accomplishing the policy."

Vice Chair Boxill - "I guess I'm just trying to get clear on the motion. Does the motion ask us to adopt a policy that there shall be this separate department, or does the motion ask us to have the Manager to come back with a plan that contemplates that which we may or may not approve?"

Commissioner Joyner - "Well, my preference would be having track this very closely. I'm seeing how this operates most effectively in some other jurisdictions. My preference would be that we establish as a policy that the 911 Communication Center be established as a separate entity and that the County Manager present a proposed plan to the Board to

accomplish that policy, and I think at that time any concerns that we have about the implementation of that policy and how it's exactly set up still would be allowed to be addressed."

Vice Chair Boxill - "That doesn't fairly ... issue isn't on the Agenda, but the will of the colleagues is what I'm supposed to execute. Commissioner Hightower, it would be interesting to me to know if we can even do that today."

Commissioner Joyner - "The County Attorney said that it is properly before us."

Commissioner Joyner - "If it makes the Chair feel procedurally more comfortable for me to make a motion to add it formerly to the Agenda at this time...."

Vice Chair Boxill - "I'm not saying that it's improper, I'm not trying to make that ruling, if the will of the body is to proceed in that direction then I'm okay with it."

Commissioner Hightower - "I was going to suggest that we could do a ... that it be placed on the Agenda. I support the motion. There has been a lot of dialogue about the 911 system in terms of where the construction will be. Does this relate to that, or should I ask this question to Mr. Regus."

Commissioner Joyner - "Ultimately, for example, if this was already in place, if we already had our Advisory Board and already had the 911 system serving as a stand alone entity of direct accountability then it would be appropriate to raise that question now. I think it would be more appropriate to the County Manager at this point."

Commissioner Hightower - "Mr. Regus, I want to make sure that -- I support the motion. Also as we look in a broader confine -- I was just talking to Chief Graham earlier -- maybe this is not germane to this question, but at some point I want to know where we stand with that. I know you talked to me briefly last week, but I've been hearing a lot of different interpretations regarding where we are in relation to space the construction."

Mr. Regus - "The telephone changes that the Board approved late last fall are being implemented and BellSouth the vendor is here. They're running wire, they're installing a telephone or two and they're practicing on that system. I believe all of that equipment is due in mid March. Then there will be a training period from mid March until the first week of April for all of the Staff so that when we change over I believe on April 7 everyone would be fully trained and in place and tested and the bugs worked out."

Commissioner Hightower - "I just want to make sure that you're responsible for this as a Manager's item. We don't have employees being wrongfully criticized if they're doing their jobs in this whole construction process.... a bunch of mixed messages. Tell us how it's going and tell us if there is a problem."

Mr. Regus - "As we add 40 people and add these improvements we had to have more room to really make this a first class 911 Emergency Communication Center. We're expanding on the third floor of the Public Safety building to include actually the third floor of the 911 center. To do that we have study how the ... move because of the nature of this equipment. It uses a lot of electricity, we have to look at the capacity of the systems that will support the 911 center. It's a little different from the way it is now."

Commissioner Lowe - "Madam Chair, it's a pretty important thing and we're minus two Commissioners. I think they have the right to look at it. I have some problems with adding different departments to report directly to Bob. I think he's got too many people reporting directly to him now. I think you need interim managers regardless who it is. Now, I would encourage you to give it two weeks. Act on it in two weeks instead of today. I think it's not asking too much for something as this important. I think if one of you were absent and I knew you had a interesting something and I thought it was too big for the rest of us to act on I would speak the same way. As the good Lord is my witness, you know I would. I just think it's a little bit too important to do it with a light vote. I suggest that you hold the thing until we have a full Board."

Commissioner Boxill - "Let's hear the motion so everyone is clear on what we're voting on."

Ms. Boyd - "The motion is to approve a policy that the County Manager establish the 911 system as a stand alone system and that will report directly to the County Manager, with a friendly amendment from Commissioner Hightower that the County Manager bring back to the Board specifics and proposed plans for this system for approval on the next meeting which will be March 19."

Commissioner Joyner - "That was Commissioner Boxill's..."

Vice Chair Boxill - "Gordon, if we change the motion to say that the County Manager bring back the plan for adoption, then I think we have achieved what you want which is getting us busy in that direction, and we've achieved the opportunity for others to speak to it."

Commissioner Joyner - "That's fine, but I will say first of all, the County Manager wants this to be done. He wants the reporting to come directly to him. I'm acceptable to that, but I don't see any reason not to take action on it now. We've always approached the EMS system as if it was a true emergency matter rather than delaying it unnecessarily. This is not a proposal that has not been presented to this entire Board before we've had it in a Work Session discussion and I think for what we're asking to be done at this time there is no reason to hold it."

Commissioner Darnell - "Madam Chair, I want to support the motion with the understanding that I'm not directly or indirectly offering any criticism with respect to the matter in which the renovations are being carried out or the way in which the system is being operated."

Commissioner Lowe - "The motion is to go ahead and adopt it today or bring it back for adoption in two weeks?"

Commissioner Joyner - "The specific plan would come back two weeks from today and there will be an opportunity for discussion at that time. But the policy is being established today."

Commissioner Lowe - "I'm going to have to vote against it. The only way to ... is not to approve the plan and that's not right."

Commissioner Joyner made the **motion to approve the approach offered by Department of Human Resources (DHR)**, which was seconded by Commissioner Hightower and carried by a vote of 4-0-0. Commissioners Darnell and Fulton did not vote. Chairman Skandalakis was not present.

Commissioner Joyner made the **motion to formerly create and EMS/911 Advisory Board**, which was seconded by Commissioner Hightower and carried by a vote of 5-0-0. Commissioner Fulton did not vote. Chairman Skandalakis was not present.

Commissioner Joyner made the **motion to approve as a matter of policy that the County Manager established the 911 Communication System as a separate entity within the County Government which will report directly to the County Manager with a friendly amendment from Vice Chair Boxill that by the next Recess Meeting (3/19/97) the County Manager come back with a specific plan for the purpose of accomplishing that policy**, which was seconded by Commissioner Hightower and carried by a vote of 4-1-0. Commissioner Lowe voted no. Commissioner Fulton did not vote. Chairman Skandalakis was not present.

97-0296 COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS - REQUEST APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION CALLING FOR CREDIT FROM THE FULTON-DEKALB HOSPITAL AUTHORITY (HELD 2/19/97) (SKANDALAKIS) (HELD)

This item was held.

97-0001 BOARD APPOINTMENTS - FULTON COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL HEARING BOARD (CROSS-REFERENCE 96-0001) (HELD)

Term = three (3) years