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County studies road names

by By Joel Martin Senior writer

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Road names, misconceptions and plastic bags topped the agenda at Friday's Troup County Commission meeting.

Scott Turk, the county's special projects coordinator, said confusing road names came into sharper focus with the recent implementation of a digital mapping system for 911 dispatching and property appraisals.

Turk noted that Ga. Spur 14 goes by eight other names: Davis Road, North Davis Road, South Davis Road, LaGrange Bypass, Davis Bypass, Davis Road Bypass, Davis Bypass Extension and Davis Road Bypass Extension.

"These multiple names ... at best create bewilderment among the driving public and cause dangerous confusion for emergency 911 dispatchers and public safety responders," Turk said in a memo to County Manager Mike Dobbs.

As an interim measure, the county has manipulated its 911 digital mapping to guard against pitfalls, but Turk suggested city and county officials work on a more comprehensive solution as the Spur 14 loop expands to the north and southwest.

He said coordination also is needed to avoid duplicate names such as Hale Drive and Hale Road, and reduce the number of sound-alike names such as Wynnwood and Windwood.

In other matters Friday, the commission learned that filling a vacant position that's already in the budget doesn't constitute a lifting of the county's hiring freeze.

The board had been scheduled to consider Probate Judge Donald Boyd's request to fill a vacancy that was created when Amy Hyatt left in June to become chief registrar, succeeding Donna Williams, who resigned in March. But county attorney Jerry Willis said it's the county manager's role to approve filling a vacancy and no board action was needed.

"It's semantics, but we're not lifting the hiring freeze," Commission Chairman Ricky Wolfe said. "We're replacing a position that was budgeted."

He pointed out that the commission only hires the county manager and the county attorney.

Commissioner Richard English said he often hears people say, "Why are you lifting the hiring freeze?" when the county merely fills a vacancy.

The board has voted previously to "lift the hiring freeze" when department heads filled vacancies that were already in the budget, such as a nutrition supervisor at the county Senior Center and four positions in the road department. Dobbs said

the commissioners had wanted to scrutinize such hiring so they could decide whether the position was really needed.

“The way the economy’s going, it may be several years before we consider lifting the hiring freeze,” Dobbs said.

On another topic, Commissioner Ken Smith addressed the county’s supposed \$10,000 donation to DASH (Dependable, Affordable, Sustainable Housing). He said some people have asked why the county would give money to DASH and turn down funding requests from other deserving community service organizations.

DASH would receive the money to administer a potential \$300,000 grant for housing rehabilitation in the unincorporated area. DASH was chosen because of its experience with housing and meeting federal and state requirements.

The grant would help nine low-income or elderly residents who don’t have indoor plumbing or who are at risk of losing homeowner’s insurance. Smith said it’s the first time he’s heard of such a grant in the unincorporated area.

The grant would have an estimated economic impact of more than \$1 million and help people that really need help, Smith said.

“Sometimes facts get in the way of a good rumor,” he said. “... Some of those people need to get a life.”

Meanwhile, Dobbs recently sent a memo to LaGrange City Manager Tom Hall to get his thoughts on how to quell the use of plastic bags at grocery stores and other retail establishments. The bags aren’t bio-degradable and they’re lying along roadways, and getting tangled up in trees, Dobbs said.

“It’s a very, very serious issue” and something needs to be done, Wolfe said.

Communities around the country have dealt with plastic bags in various ways: by banning them; taxing them; requiring the use of cornstarch-based plastic bags that are biodegradable; recycling them, although recycling is difficult; or launching information and education programs.

Dobbs said a ban appears to work, although several cities now face lawsuits because of the ban. Reusable bags have to be kept clean and meat has to be wrapped securely to avoid bacterial contamination.

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