

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Workshop Minutes

July 6th, 2018

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:05 a.m. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Heiney, Commissioner Horton and Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Zellner and County Clerk Davidson.

County Administrator Zellner addressed the board and stated that a facility committee was formed at the request of the Board of Commissioners and that they had been working on this for the last three to four years. In 2015, the Board of Commissioners held a retreat at Gordon State College reviewing the growth of Lamar County and the dependency of the Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) which means we are operating on last year's money. The goal is to be able to operate on the current years money. Other topics discussed in the meeting were Animal Control, Public Facilities, a list of projects for the facilities in Lamar County, the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), the Recreation Master Plan, and the Fire and Ambulance services. He said that a facility committee was formed to identify what buildings needed to be remodeled or if they wanted to build new facilities. County Administrator Zellner showed the buildings that the committee reviewed including the square footage of each one, the year they were built, the materials and their condition. The top facility that the facility committee felt like that needed to be built was the jail. The jail was built in 1994 and the square foot is 22,000 square feet and it is in terrible shape. The board heard from County Administrator Zellner that the facilities committee had been reviewing other buildings beside the jail which includes the Courthouse, the Administration Building, the Tax Commissioners Office, the Senior Center, and the Lamar County Extension Office. Lamar County was awarded a \$750,000.00 Community Block Grant (CDBG) from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) based on facts that the building has mold, a leaking roof, faulty weather stripping, and an infiltration of rodents and snakes. County Administrator Zellner stated that an Engineering bid was held on June 26th, 2018 but that the lowest bidder did not have a bid-bond and the next lowest was higher than the construction project budget. There will have to be a re-bid done and the next bid date is August 3rd, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.

County Administrator Zellner stated that in 2015 the estimates for the jail included heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) replacements, roof repairs, copper plumbing, and water heater issues. Mallory and Evans conducted an Energy Audit showing that it would cost around \$250,000.00 just for repairs and replacements. In 2017, the Grand Jury conducted an investigation of the jail and they made a recommendation to empower the County to develop a plan to build a new jail facility or to utilize the Detention Center which, at that time, was not being utilized by the State of Georgia.

County Administrator Zellner stated that the new jail will be next to the old jail on the west side going towards the school bus barn, where the arena is located now, and on the east side of the wetlands and the nature trail. County Administrator Zellner reported that the construction budget for the project is 14.7 million dollars. This includes surveys, geotechnical reports, architect and engineering fees. County Administrator Zellner also reported that Goodwyn, Cawood and Mills (GMC) had been working on the construction plans for the Administration building and that there would be some furnishing cost, construction testing, printing and travel cost.

Commissioner Thrash stated that if they put this on a referendum they need to make sure that they bond enough money necessary for the project. County Administrator Zellner agreed and said that this is based on a 10 million project and stated that each year that the project is put off it adds to the cost. County Administrator Zellner stated that each year they put it off it will cost one million dollars more. An energy audit was conducted by Mallory and Evans and the results showed that that it would cost the County 3 million dollars to fix all the facilities including the Jail and the Courthouse and the facility committee felt like that this was just too much to pour money into old buildings. County Administrator Zellner reported that GMC are doing all of the engineering and architectural work for the Jail and the Courthouse. County Administrator Zellner said that with the age, size, and conditions of the buildings and future financing for construction they felt like it was best to build a new Jail and a Courthouse. County Administrator Zellner explained that is best to do this now rather than to wait and do this later. The Federal Courts could come in and said that the jail is not in good enough shape for the prisoners and then the County will be forced to build a new jail the way they want it built and also built to their standards. County Administrator Zellner reported that it would cost over \$150,000.00 to fix the air conditioners in the courthouse. County Administrator Zellner said that it will cost about 2.089 to 3.134 million dollars just to bring the Courthouse up to code. County Administrator Zellner said that the Courthouse would need to be re-wired, there is not enough parking space, and the storage of office space is inadequate. There are also security issues at the Courthouse. County Administrator Zellner said that the interest rate is the lowest it will be and since construction cost continue to rise due to inflation the recommendation from the facility committee is to build a new Jail and a new Courthouse. County Administrator Zellner reported that he, Sheriff White and Commissioner Thrash had toured the jail in Watkinsville, Georgia where they have pods for individual cells in their jail building.

Sheriff White who attended the meeting stated that he would like to see a jail built to last for the next 30 years. He stated that over 1500 inmates come in and out of the jail per month and they currently do not have enough space and resources to accommodate the inmates. Sheriff White stated that he met with the design team of GMC and they put together what was best for them but they felt a little pressured. Sheriff White requested that the Board of Commissioners wait until March of 2019 to put the referendum on the ballot instead of in November. Sheriff White said that the new jail building will need to last for the next 25 to 30 years. Chairman Glass said that the process needs to be slowed down because you have to have a bond to pay for it. They would have to approve a referendum to get it on the ballot in November and the schedule for this is too tight. Sheriff White agreed that none of them want to tell their constituents or tax payers that they are looking at 15 million dollars to pay for a new jail. Sheriff White said he knows that steel and construction cost have gone up. Sheriff White said that they need adequate space. County Administrator Zellner said that he forgot to mention that you have prisoners in there with nothing to do and their main purpose is to tear up the jail. Sheriff White said that the inmates have been tearing out glass and kicking in doors since 1994 and that the overall design of the jail is poor. They rely on technology from the jail supervisor to look after the inmates. The new design of the jail would be pod system. The pods are elevated amongst all the cells in an octagon shape and they can see down into the cells so they aren't relying on technology. Sheriff White said that if they re-do the jail they will end up spending the same amount of money. He said that the investigators are located in another building because there is not enough office space and for the patrol division they had to build an office in the lobby to make them an office. Commissioner Thrash said that one of the things that is good about the pod system is that inmates can no longer flush things down

the toilet. The new toilets will have water sensors and when they try to flush something down the toilet it shuts the water system down. The electrical and plumbing will be on the backside of the building and there will be a hallway where the inmates can't access it. Sheriff White said that thanks to him and the former Sheriff they have been able to structurally and visibly maintain the building. The new pod system will allow them to house 96 inmates at one time and they may be able to add more pods twenty years down the road. With the pod system, there will be two inmates per cell and they can add more beds in the pods. A pod is 10,000 square feet. County Administrator Zellner said that with the pod system there will be two floors and one jailer who will have a complete view of all of the cells and the locations of the cells. This cuts back on the inmates you have to look after.

Charles Welch "Corky" with GMC stated that this will also keep prisoners from tearing up the jail cells. Everything in the pod system is made out of steel except the mattress and there is a 10-year warranty on the paint. Mr. Welch said that this is a good product.

Chairman Glass inquired about the operating cost and County Administrator said that there could be less personnel. Commissioner Thrash said that there will be a savings with the water and electricity and the flushing system. Amy with GMC said that they can run projects based on utility rates and based on current numbers. Sheriff White stated that there would be controls on the number of times the toilets could be flushed. Commissioner Thrash said that with this system they should see substantial savings for the county.

Sheriff White said that 1275 inmates went through the booking process and there have been 732 inmates so far this year.

Chairman Glass inquired about what would be done with the old facility once all of this is done and County Administrator Zellner replied that it could be the future site for the Courthouse. Commissioner Thrash said that they also talked about it being the location for the potential Animal Shelter.

Chairman Glass said that if they bond this next year and then get a contract by the end of the year to build it and then they order these pods, would there be a backlog on the pods. County Administrator said that if they ordered them today it would be next October before he could start on them. This would be about 15 months. Chairman Glass said it would be mid 2020 at the earliest.

Walter Geiger from the Herald Gazette inquired about what would happen to the Lamar County Agriculture Arena. County Administrator Zeller stated that the Agricultural Center was dissolved and the City of Barnesville got all of the property on the South side of the Road and with the sales the City and the County both got half of the proceeds. All of the property on the northside, the County acquired. The County was supposed to have moved the arena within 24 months but County Administrator Zellner said that he hasn't had a place to move it and you can't put it under power lines so he is still looking for a place to put it.

Chairman Glass requested that County Administrator Zellner and the facility committee get the utility numbers projections together and do some comparisons looking at the repair costs and the water and the sewer rates.

Amy Bell with GMC was introduced and stated that she is the project architect.

Chairman Glass stated that if they are going to pursue this and try to get a referendum together, the next Special Election date is in March which gives them 4 months to get everything together. Chairman Glass requested that they think towards those deadlines. They have 90 to 120 days to put it on the agenda if they decide they want to have a referendum to put it on the ballot.

Chairman Glass thanked everyone for coming and invited everyone to stay for the rest of the meeting, He recessed the meeting at 10:38 a.m. Chairman Glass called the meeting back to order at 10:48 a.m.

County Administrator Zellner reported that the County would be receiving an Emergency Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) for \$22,600.00 for pipe repairs on Country Kitchen Road and that a letter was received stating that the portion that the County will receive for the LMIG money for 2019 is \$394,609.37. The LMIG application will need to be turned in by December 31st, 2018. County Administrator Zellner requested that he receive a priority list of roads from the Board of Commissioners by the end of August.

Chairman Glass reported that there will be a blood drive on August 26th, 2018 at the First Methodist Church and that there is a shortage of type A, B and O blood types.

The board reviewed a mid-year budget review that Finance Director Townsend put together which gives them a gage for 2018 to see if the County will be in the black or red by the end of the year. Chairman Glass told the board to not confuse the review with next years budget because it was for 2018 and shows 6 months of actuals and projections for 2018.

Chairman Glass reported on the Towaliga Circuit budget and said that Butts County is still asking about how cases are county. He said that both Monroe and Lamar County are done with their budgets and that there will be no changes. They will look at the budget again in April of 2019. The Towaliga runs on a fiscal year from June to July.

Chairman Glass requested that they review the agenda for the July Regular Business Meeting.

- The Board reviewed the Special Exceptions for two Solar Farms. Special Exception App# 2018-01 by Dwight J. Huffstetler and Special Exception 2018-01 by Alex Brian Abernathy.
- The Board reviewed the June Minutes.
- The Board acknowledged that Sherry Farr, Nurse Manager for the Lamar County Health Department will give her annual presentation.
- The Board reviewed 2 policies that will need to be approved so that the County is in compliance with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation dealing with the Beer and Wine Applications and the handling of fingerprints and background checks. The policies are a Media Policy and a Man-Made Natural Disaster Policy.
- The Board reviewed a board appointment for the Board of Appeals. Gerald Thompson has agreed to be re-appointed.

Chairman Glass and the board reviewed the updated numbers for 2019 presented by Financial Director Townsend. The revenues are 9.525 million and the expenses are 9.86 leaving a \$331,000.00 difference. Chairman Glass said that on the expense side they added some for the Board of Elections and cut some back for the Courts. Chairman Glass explained that there is an increase for the Public Works department and the 911 operations. He said that the Sheriff's biggest increase is the salaries but that there is still an issue with losing people. Sheriff White is starting jailers and 911 employees at \$15.00 an hour. The Fire Department increase is for three additional firemen. This also includes the tankers. Financial Director Townsend stated that for the Fire Department his recommendation was no increase in salaries and only one new tanker truck. The board discussed the service on the Northside of the County. Commissioner Thrash stated that they need extra coverage on the Northside of the County. Financial Director Townsend worked with the board individually on questions that they had about the budget for the Fire Department. Vice-Chairman Heiney stated that with Rock Springs Church being on the Northside of the County the service is needed and his issue is with the response time. He said that having a truck on the Northside of the County will reduce response times. Vice-Chairman Heiney stated that it would be good if there was a truck at the Parker Branch Fire Station. Commissioner Thrash stated that her concern is with the growth of the County and said this is a needed service. Commissioner Horton wanted to know if they could get by with one person at the fire station and Chairman Glass stated that it depends on the shifts. He said that they need three people to cover 24 hours and if they take a vacation they have to bring in part time employees. Chairman Glass stated that if they go with that is recommended it will leave them short by \$337,000.00. Commissioner Thrash said that next year the revenues should be more because of the commercial property re-evaluations. Financial Director Townsend said that on the PT32 the business re-evaluations for the real property went up by 10 million dollars but on the net digest it shows less than that because of the drop in other revenues. These revenues include Motor Vehicles, Mobile Homes, Timber and Heavy-Duty Equipment. Chairman Glass said that the evaluation for PGP will go from \$103,000.00 to \$78,000.00 in personal property value.

Chairman Glass said that Tax Assessor Haddock still has until the end of the month for appeals. Chairman Glass stated that the adjusted net digest is \$452,148,182 and the rollback is 11.825. This will keep the current millage rate the same. County Administrator Zellner said that the 2017 millage rate is 12.095 and this will bring in the same amount of money as it did last year. Financial Director Townsend stated that they lost \$280,000 in revenue because of the inmate housing. The board discussed the fact that they could have a \$215,000.00 deficit which means no raises for the Sheriff's Office, E911 or the Fireman. County Administrator Zellner stated that the State deadline for the Tax Assessor to turn in the digest is September 1st, 2018. The board continued reviewing the current budget expenses and revenues. The current budget is \$ 10,979,289.00 and the 2018 amendments to the 2018 budget is \$ 10,303,012. This is a \$676,187.21 difference.

The board reviewed the Sheriff's Office inmate actuals and Chairman Glass was concerned with why the inmates/other cities and inmates/state were down. Sheriff White said that they have to have 2 jailers at all time no matter how many inmates. Sheriff White said that the water usage is lower and the cost of the meals is the biggest issue because they have fewer inmates to feed. Sheriff White said that the Medicare rates are down since they went to the contracted nurses service. They

eliminated a \$52,000.00 salary for nurses and the savings in the long run will pay off because they are not having to pay benefits.

Financial Director Townsend stated that the cleaning supplies budget has been adjusted according to what the departments are spending. Commissioner Thrash stated that the criminal justice reform is also affecting the budget. Chairman Glass stated that if they add additional items requested to the budget it will be a tenth of a mill increase. The 2019 budget is not realistic. This would be a 2 and a quarter mill increase. Chairman Glass requested that Financial Director Townsend put in some 2017 and 2018 history to show where the numbers are coming from. He requested that he add columns to show the detailed history. He requested a 2017 and 2018 year to date history and 2017 and 2018 projected budget number. Chairman Glass also requested that he add a column for the millage rate of each item so that they can get a better feel for the adjustments. Chairman Glass also requested for an updated mid-year status of the budget. Financial Director Townsend stated that the net digest went up by 3 million dollars from last year to this year. The expenditures as of May 31st, 2018 is \$4,480,510.02. Financial Director Townsend stated that there was an increase in the group insurance and that it is costing \$611.00 more for each employee. The total cost is \$56,823.00. Financial Director Townsend stated that \$650,000 will be taken out of the contingency line item in the Administration budget. These monies will be moved into the capital project fund. Financial Director Townsend went over each department that will benefit from the contingency fund. He said that the Courthouse needs 3 air conditioner units. It will cost \$5,000 for each unit and they already have \$5,000.00 slated in the budget for this. He reported that the Senior Center needs a new roof and it will cost about \$35,000.00 to repair the roof. \$570,000.00 is budgeted for fuel for the Public Works Department as In-Kind work. \$10,000.00 is slated for the Recreation Department. Financial Director Townsend forecasted a total of \$5,199,762,78 for expenses for the rest of 2018. The board then reviewed the actual 2017 expenses versus the 2018 projected expenditures from January to May and then a forecasted amount from June to December. The actual total expenses for 2017 was \$4,001,142.50 and the forecasted amount for 2018 is \$4,466,582.85. The difference is \$23,461.81. The board reviewed the forecasted revenue. The current budget for General Property is \$4,256,436.00 and the amended budget for 2018 is \$3,738,256.00. Chairman Glass stated that this is a collection rate of 87 percent and Financial Director Townsend explained that the collection rate is low because the property owner has 90 days to pay which means they have until March to pay their property taxes without penalty. Financial Director Townsend stated that the 99.5 collection rate that the Tax Commissioner reported to have collected is based on 2017 numbers and the collection rate for Lamar County is really good. Financial Director Townsend said that the goal is to have a surplus of \$500,000.00 so that the County doesn't have to use the Tax Anticipation Note (TAN). Financial Director Townsend stated that he has budgeted for the in-kind work for the new Health Department. Financial Director Townsend reported that he starts working with the department heads in February and March to see what they will need for next year. The board discussed the inmates' budget again and Chairman Glass noted that they didn't forecast this big of a hit. \$151,000 was forecasted for 2018 and only \$52,500.00 has been collected thus far. The board discussed the reduction from \$192,624.00 to \$133,927.00 for the motor vehicle line item and the fact that the Tax Ad Valorem Taxes (TAVT) line item increased from \$465,000.00 to \$490,00.00 which offset the motor vehicle collections. The board reviewed the inmates telephone line item and discussed that the decrease from \$31,000 to \$25,250.00 is a timing issue with the forecasted numbers.

Commissioner Thrash stated that at the next Legislative Leadership conference that she will lobby against the criminal justice reform.

Chairman Glass inquired about the commercial property evaluations and how this is forecasted in the budget on the revenue side. Financial Director Townsend said that he based this on trends for 2018.

Chairman Glass inquired about the reason that the Building Inspection budget are increasing from \$17,500 to \$23,000.00 and the Building Permits are decreasing from \$60,000.00 to \$45,000.00. Chairman Glass requested to see more details regarding the activity of these accounts.

The board all agreed that the goal is to eliminate the TAN. Financial Director Townsend reported that they will need to advertise for three Public Hearings and that they must be at least 2 weeks apart if they are going to go with the rollback rate with expense adjustments. Chairman Glass requested that Finance Director send them an updated sheet with the other years of data and the details.

Public Comments

Jeffery Stephens of 133 Stafford Avenue, Barnesville addressed the board and inquired about what they will do with the Courthouse. County Administrator Zellner responded by saying that the facility committee has discussed asking the City of Barnesville to buy it. The plan is to keep the facade in the front part of the building. There are parking requirements that will need to be met for the new building and currently there isn't enough parking. County Administrator Zellner said that they could possible build a parking deck that could take care of this issue but you still have issues with security. There are a lot of possibilities for the Courthouse and they know that the Courthouse is the face of Lamar County. County Administrator Zellner went on to say that they have discussed using it as a Welcome Center or a Museum. Mr. Stephens said that there is concern amongst the citizens that they are going to lose the look of the building. County Administrator Zellner stated that they could leave the old part intact and add an addition to the back of the building. They want to keep the integrity of the inside as much as possible but the walls are made of stone and wireless networks and power cables can't through stone. They also need to protect the historic aspect of the building but they still need to consider the fire sprinkler system and the fire alarms in the building.

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m. and Commissioner Heiney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Bennie Horton, Vice-Chairman

Robert Heiney, Commissioner

Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____
Carlette Davidson, County Clerk