

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Budget Workshop Minutes

October 31st, 2019

9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Traylor, Commissioner Horton Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend and County Clerk Davidson. Commissioner Heiney was absent for the meeting.

The board meet with allotted departments to discuss the proposed 2020 budget based on the actuals line items. The proposed budget for 2020 either increased, decreased or remained the same.

Building and Grounds

Maintenance Director Beverly stated that this has been a good year. He said that they had replaced the things in need of replacement. He said that he and County Administrator Townsend created a five-year plan to for air conditioners and other things that need to be repaired and said they have stretched it out so it doesn't hit the County all at one time. County Administrator Townsend said that there is currently a contract in his budget for Lawn Care Maintenance but that they are working on a plan for this to be handled in house. The amount budgeted for Lawn Care Maintenance is \$2,100.00. Commissioner Thrash inquired about the Exterminating line item. County Administrator Townsend explained that the contract is with Prime Pest Control and it covers certain buildings that have food. They use this service as an as need basis unless the building needs it every month. County Administrator Townsend explained that the salary line item for the Regular Employee line item has increased from \$94,590.00 to \$139,448.00 in the Courthouse budget because of recent hires including a new Maintenance Specialist. Maintenance Director Beverly stated that there has been a reduction in air condition units that need to be replaced and the new Maintenance Specialist is certified to work on and replace the old units. He said that the plan is to replace 2 units per year. County Administrator Townsend explained that the Maintenance Department has an employee that was shared part time with the Public Works Department but is now under the Courthouse budget. Maintenance Director Beverly stated that he has five employees including one part time employee that assists him and the Public Works Department. Maintenance Director Beverly stated that the heating and air units that are being replaced for the Sheriff's Office comes out of their budget but the other units come out of the individual buildings budget. Maintenance Director Beverly stated that one of the issues with the air conditioners is the purchasing of Freon because you eventually won't be able to purchase Air Conditioner freon R22 any longer. He said that they have an enough freon to carry over into the next year and they are buying 2.30 lb. jugs each month to put in storage. He said that it is cheaper to replace freon than it is replace units.

Maintenance Director Beverly stated that they are working on the buildings including the Courthouse replacing windows, siding, roofs, air conditioner units and painting. He said that plumbing is the biggest issue. County Administrator Townsend stated that the Service Center still has issues and that the new Health Department building is still under the Service Center budget. Chairman Glass pointed out that it needs to be separated out since they are two structures. County

Administrator Townsend explained that the cost for utilities goes into his budget and then is invoiced to the Health Department. This is charged under the Rent line item on the revenue side of the budget. On the expense side of the budget it is shown under the Service Center building under the Maintenance and Repairs line item which offsets the revenue side. Chairman Glass said that because the Health Department is in a new building, the expenses should go down in the Maintenance and Repairs line item. Maintenance Director Beverly stated that his supplies have increased and is requesting that the Supplies/Tools/Etc. line item be increased from \$500.00 to \$1000.00 based on the actual numbers. Maintenance Director Beverly stated that they have been cleaning carpet, fixing broken furniture, and painting and fixing air conditioners in all of the buildings. He said that there are 100 units in the County and about 80 air conditioner units that need to be replaced. The plan is to replace 20 units a year within the five-year service plan and the Fire Stations are included in this number. Commissioner Thrash inquired about the Communications line item. County Administrator Townsend explained that the Communication line item includes Charter and the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) and this also comes under the building budget. Commissioner Thrash inquired about the Utilities/Natural Gas line item under the Tag Office building showing a proposed amount of \$5,105.00 when the actual amount shown is zero. County Administrator Townsend explained that this was a typo and would need to be brought down into the Utilities/Water/Electrical line item which has an actual amount of \$5,105.00.

The board discussed the Fire Headquarters building budget. County Administrator Townsend stated that the M&R/Other Equipment projection of \$5,500.00 needs to be removed because this was for a generator that was purchased out of SPLOST III. He said that the M&R/Building line item needs to be increased to \$5,000.00 based on the actual expenses.

Commissioner Thrash inquired about the future needs of the District Attorney's office. County Administrator Townsend stated that the emergency panic buttons are not working. County Clerk Davidson stated that Chris Webster with the Sheriff's Office is in charge of this and a test was supposed to have been done on those that are not working. County Administrator Townsend suggested that the IT contractor take a look at them and Commissioner Thrash stated that her son, who is in this business, could also take a look at them.

Tax Assessors

Tax Assessor Haddock stated that the Contract line item went down from \$144,250.00 to \$108,250.00 because of the Tinker and Associates Contract. She stated that they brought in around thirty million dollars in 2019 but they ended up losing thirty million dollars on the digest because of the power plant. She said that with the re-evaluation of the City of Barnesville they ended up increasing the digest by thirty million dollars. They are going to keep the amount for Tinker and Associates at \$29,000.00 for audit purposes. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that there were 9241 parcels in the County but there has been an increase of 226 parcel in the County because of new houses and new subdivisions that are being built. There are now 9467 parcels in the County.

Commissioner Thrash noticed that in the Medicare line item it is showing \$21,943.00 but County Administrator Townsend stated that this was a typo and should actually be changed to \$2,194.00.

County Administrator Townsend stated that they are also adding \$42,373.80.00 to the Tax Assessor's budget for the Flight service which will take aerial pictures of the parcels in the County. Over a period of three years, the County will pay a monthly amount of \$14,124.60. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that Commissioner Heiney had issues with privacy and Tax Assessor Haddock stated that the images are not an invasion of privacy. The direct pictures will be on the Lamar County QPublic page and the 3-D images will only be accessible to the Tax Assessors Office, the Sheriff's Office and the Fire Department. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that the citizens will not be able to look into their next-door neighbors' backyard. The contractor for the Flight service is willing to compare the 2014 data to the 2020 data and if there are buildings that were not captured then they will be able to get a clearer image of those. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that they were running into issues with locked gates and now with the 3-D images, they will be able to look around the entire building. Also, if there is a tornado, they can get a flight up within 24 to 48 hours. Chairman Glass suggested that Tax Assessor Haddock get with Butts, Pike and Monroe regarding sharing the wealth of the using the Flight service. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that it was suggested that this be done every three to four years. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that with the new growth in the County, over the last 5 years, this needs to be done. Chairman Glass stated that the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) states that the City of Barnesville is supposed to provide Geographic Information System (GIS) services.

Tax Assessor Haddock stated that Brock Lanier with the Tax Assessors office is working hard because of new houses and new subdivisions that are being built. County Administrator Townsend stated that their salary increase is included in the 2 percent across the board. She stated that she would like to have Tanya Bradford's salary increased because she is now a Certified Level 1 Appraiser and is going to training to get her Level 2 certification. Brock Lanier is also going to get is Level 2 certification. She said that there are appraisers in other counties that make \$12.00 an hour and she is only receiving \$10.71 an hour.

Commissioner Horton inquired about the Advertising/Legal Ads line item being increased from \$2,245.00 to \$1,500.00 when the actual expenses are showing zero dollars. County Administrator Townsend stated that this should be changed from \$1,500.00 to \$150.00 because of a typo.

County Administrator Townsend stated that he is working on a Wage Study with steps and grades. and said that the appraisers' salaries are including in this study. He reported that the Appraiser I starting salary is around \$12.00 an hour and an Appraiser II starting salary is from \$16.00 to \$18.00 an hour. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that Holly Patel only makes \$15.00 an hour and she has been with the County for almost twenty years; she is an appraiser II. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that they all do a good job and she has a good staff. Commissioner Thrash asked if there is something in place where if an employee gets a certificate, such as in the Public Works Department and someone goes and gets their CDL, do they get an automatic raise? County Administrator Townsend stated that an employee gets a 5 percent increase on any type of certification. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that she thought that it was only .50 and said that both of her employees that completed the Level 1 Certificate and they only received a .50 raise. She said that she was not aware of a 5 percent increase. Chairman Glass noted that Tax Assessor Haddock had only requested about a one dollar increase for Ms. Bradford and about a .45 increase for Mr. Lanier. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that they are required to go to school for training in order to be an appraiser.

County Administrator Townsend announced that Baleigh Burkett had received her Level 1 Certificate in Finance, based on training she had received from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and also online training classes, within the 6 months that she been with the County and said that she would be receiving a 5 percent increase for her Level 1 Certificate and another 5 percent increase for being with the County for six months. Tax Assessor Haddock again stated that she was not aware of the 5 percent increase for earning certificates.

Chairman Glass noted that the budgeted request of \$360,159.40 should decrease with the changes and so far, there is about \$21,000.00 worth of savings. Commissioner Thrash requested that County Administrator Townsend make a note to reflect the changes in next years budget.

Vice Chairman Traylor brought several students to the meeting from his Economics class at Gordon State College. The students were Colin Hadley, Drew Collins, and Garret Parker. Chairman Glass explained to the students that the population growth is an issue in Lamar County. He said that the Sheriff's Office only has two people on patrol during the day or night. There is one on the North end of the County and one on the South end of the County. Because of the population growth, more deputies may be needed. He said that they have to think about this now rather than when crime gets bad. He said that they need to get ahead of this before it becomes a problem. Chairman Glass stated that there had been recent discussion on how to add deputies to the Sheriff's Office staff. He said that things that go along with this, are salaries, uniforms and a vehicle for them to drive. They have to be post certified so the County has to pay for their training. He said that there is also specialized training that has to be provided for things like Mental Health, Discrimination and Ethics. Chairman Glass stated that when hiring a deputy all of these costs have to be considered. He said that the Administration staff keeps us with the record keeping and the analysis of all of these costs.

Commissioner Thrash explained that in basic Economics you learn that the revenue forecasts are a swinging pendulum. She said that for many years, the Commissioners never focused on actual expenses. She said that one of the things they that had been discussing was doing a Special Transportation Special Local Option Sales Tax which is called a T-SPLOST. She said that this is a one cent sales tax which would raise Lamar County to an 8 percent sales tax that is collected from everyone who purchases goods in Lamar County. She said that if the County gets a T-SPLOST it will go directly for paying for roads. She said this is one of the ways that they have narrowed things down so that they make sure that money is going towards that particular expenditure. County Administrator Townsend reported that the projected collection for a T-SPLOST would be around \$950,000.00 per year and that it cost about a million dollars to pave one mile of dirt roads. This includes building up the base and leveling it out.

Vice-Chairman Traylor stated that they are simulating a business as a part of their class project. Mr. Hadley explained that their project is a Mechanic and Auto Repair Shop. He said his role is marketing, Mr. Parker stated that his is financial and Mr. Collins stated that he is the head of the mechanics shop.

Magistrate Court

Magistrate Court Judge Jackson stated that she would like to increase the full time Clerk of Court from \$16.83 to \$ 17.83 an hour. Her name is Jennifer Sewell and she has 18 years of service with the County. Magistrate Judge Jackson said that Ms. Sewell also has a part time job and it would be very bad if they lose her; based on the experience she brings to the Magistrate Court. Magistrate Judge Jackson said she doesn't want her to go job hunting because she handles the job seamlessly. She would also like to increase the Part Time Deputy Clerk from \$13.50 an hour to \$14.00 an hour. Magistrate Court Judge Jackson stated again that Ms. Sewell does an excellent job and she didn't know what she would do without her. Commissioner Thrash noticed that the Medicare line item was lower than the current budgeted amount of \$16,772.00. County Administrator Townsend stated that it needed to be changed to \$17,828.00. County Administrator Townsend stated that the insurance for next year will be a \$89.14 increase per person and a 10 percent increase across the board.

Chairman Glass inquired about the new copiers and how it effects the budget. County Administrator Townsend stated that it will depend on how many copies will be made. Chairman Glass noted that they aren't paying rent on the copiers so everything is based on toner and paper. County Administrator Townsend stated that it will take a couple of months of invoices before he will know anything and he will make adjustment from there. County Administrator Townsend stated that the machines are purchased and installed but there are some bugs with the copiers in various departments that will need to be fixed.

Chairman Glass inquired about the long-term radar for the Magistrate Court and Magistrate Judge Jackson stated that she doesn't have anything. She said that this is a very simple budget and the courts haven't asked for anything long term. She said that the main extra expense that they have had was an amendment to the budget to add an electronic criminal search warrant system. It includes an encrypted signature pad for the officers. They are in the process of getting everyone in law enforcement, that uses the system, registered and setup as new users. This should be completed by the end of the year. Commissioner Thrash inquired about approving the warrants electronically instead of waking her up during the middle of the night. She said that this will be for urgent and after hours and weekend matters. Magistrate Judge Jackson stated that they will try to do everything during regular business hours. She said that there will be a computer terminal at the Sheriff's Office that will be available 24-7. This is an online program where they can login to the system from anywhere. With this online program, they can complete the warrant application, the affidavit and then submit it all to her for approval electronically. Magistrate Judge Jackson stated that using electronic signatures is within the law. She said that the incidents where she has to be called in during after hours or weekends are very rare. Magistrate Judge Jackson said that a recent crisis with the electronic search warrants related to DUI and blood draws was over blown. County Administrator stated that there was an increase with a law books (WestLaw Next Legal Subscription) from \$106.16 to \$111.47. She said that in the future, if there are other Courts in the County that have some sort of legal subscription then she would be willing to share the subscription to save the cost to the County. She said that she will never go back to using books again after having an online program to do legal research.

Magistrate Judge Jackson inquired about a backup system for the Court data. She said that she is requesting that they purchase the Carbonite Cloud Backup system because if they lost their court data it would cripple them. She said that every court that was connected to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) was affected by a recent hacker. She said that counties that were affected had to buy new Court software. Many of them lost all of their data and the AOC lost all of their data. They are even asking Lamar County to report case load data to them for prior year. Magistrate Judge Jackson said that the Carbonite Cloud Backup is unique because it is connected to the networks. The backup is daily and is very cost effective. Magistrate Judge Jackson said that she checked with the counties IT contractor and he quoted \$150.00 per computer per month. The Carbonite Cloud Backup system is \$60.00 per month total and includes 4 additional computers and is for 600 gigabytes. She said that other Courts in other counties are very happy with the carbonite cloud backup system. She said that some backups for their data is being done by their computer programmer for their court software system so that they don't lose anything. Magistrate Judge Jackson said that she looked at the carbonite cloud backup system and she agreed that this would be sufficient. Magistrate Judge Jackson said that the price goes up based on additional gigabytes.

Magistrate Judge Jackson stated that she has done a lot of re-organizing with their storage and said that they will be fine for at least three years. She said they made need additional filing cabinets in the future. She said their office space is fine but if she had to have another full-time judge, she wouldn't have a place for them but she doesn't see that happening in the next five years. Magistrate Judge Jackson stated that she loves being in the Sheriff's Office because of having the security for the Courtroom. She further stated that Constable Keadle is amazing to have him as a face for the Court.

Chairman Glass stated that the data outside the hosting packages such as with the Financial Software System, Tyler Tech, the Website and the Email system with Network Solutions or the Work Order system, Facility Dude is not so much affected as the documents or letters that are on individual computers. He said that this is an area of concern when it comes to security. Chairman Glass addressed decryption and encryption issues with backups as another area of concern.

EMA

County Administrator Townsend stated that the proposed budget is an increase of \$13,000.00 and the total proposed budget request is \$113,853.00. The PPA Grant line item is being put back to zero because in the past it was split between salaries and supplies. This amount will now be in the Personal Service & Benefits line item under the Supplement-PPA. The amount received from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) is being increased to \$7874.00. This money is used to supplement the EMA Director's salary by \$2,001.00 and the EMA Assistant's salary by \$5,873.00. County Administrator Townsend stated that the EMA's office is considered part time regarding the PPA grant. In the past, raises weren't given to part time employees. County Clerk Davidson explained that back in 2012 part time employees were included in an across the board raise. Chairman Glass asked if the board wanted to include part time employees in the 2 percent increase in salaries and requested that County Administrator Townsend provide them data including the part time employees with the 2 percent increase in salaries.

EMA Director Campbell stated that they increased the M&R Other Equipment line item from \$5,200.00 to \$6,250.00 (there was a typo showing the request was for \$10,250 that will need to be changed) for an increase of \$625.00 to cover the maintenance on the 10 warning sirens. The line item for the Stamps/Postage is being decrease by \$50.00 due to unused funds. The CERT Training Grant line item is being increased by \$1,200.00 to even out the budget. They are requesting that a new line item be added for weather siren batteries for a cost of \$1,200.00 and for fencing around the last two sirens they received. EMA Director Campbell stated that they don't actually know when they will receive the sirens but they have been applied for and approved by GEMA. GEMA is on a fiscal calendar year so they may not be received until 2021. Commissioner Thrash suggested that they make a note in their budget if the sirens are not expensed in the 2020 budget.

EMA Director Campbell stated that the generators to run the Courthouse will be considered in the next grant cycle but the cost will be around \$200,000.00. The County's portion is 25 percent. EMA Director Campbell stated that due to the grant period being uncertain, he is not placing any money in the 2020 budget. EMA Director Campbell stated that the Mobile Command Post that they have needs repair work. The tires are dry rotted and it cost about \$150.00 per tire.

EMA Director Campbell stated that they raised the Communications line item from \$1,800 to \$3,000.00 due to actual expenses. This includes the phone and the internet services. Charter internet was added at the EMA office and is the reason for the increase. EMA Director Campbell stated that there is one more meeting with the Hazard Mitigation committee and that will be on December 19th and includes a Public Hearing. EMA Director Campbell stated that there are new people that have jointed the CERT team. He said that the Recreation Department handles the grass cutting and the weeding. He reported that Commissioner Heiney and Fire Chief Matthews did a program for the CERT team. He said that a training will be held on December 8th for the CERT team and Fire Chief Matthews will be doing this training. He said that they are having a car show to raise money in the parking lot across from the City Park on November 11th.

EMA Director Campbell reported that their facilities have some issues. The water is on the floor and is coming from the air conditioner unit. The outside downspouts are clogged up and need to be cleaned out. Chairman Glass requested that they put a work order in for these issues. He said that the Health Department wants the first two rooms of the Service Center building for their storage. He said that the Board of Elections also store their equipment in this building. EMA Director Campbell stated that they need another bathroom for the CERT meetings. County Administrator Townsend said that he and Baleigh will be coming to take an inventory of all of the items that are storage. He said that they may can surplus and sale the items that are not used or needed. Chairman Glass stated that there are still plans for the McIntosh Trail Mental Health Organization to build a new building but it may be 2021 before this can be done. Once this building is built, the EMA Offices can move in there along with anything that they need to have stored.

IT DEPARTMENT

Jantzen Shivers with Wired Technology addressed the board. Chairman Glass stated that they were looking at the Carbonite Cloud Backup system with the Magistrate Court Judge and he asked if there was a way to go back further, if the data was ransomed, other than the allotted 24-hour backup cycle. He also wanted to know about the data, other than the hosted systems in the County, that

could be compromised if the County is ransomed. Chairman Glass asked if the County could use the Carbonite Cloud Backup system or was there another vendor that Mr. Shivers could recommend. Mr. Shivers stated that he had not seen the Magistrate Judges infrastructure but he knew that she had some access type databases. He said that the Carbonite Cloud Backup system would be good but asked how much backup they wanted to pay for. He inquired about being governed with policies from the State of Georgia where you are required to have so many days' worth of data. Chairman Glass stated that for ransomware they don't have anything but the County has an insurance policy with ACCG for \$50,000.00 worth of coverage. Mr. Shivers stated that this is not enough. Chairman Glass stated that the City of Atlanta spent around 18 million dollars when they were ransomed. Chairman Glass stated that the first \$50,000.00 could be used for recovery. Mr. Shivers stated that you are better off spending the money up front and preventing anything from happening than you are trying to recover from a ransom. Mr. Shivers said that Carbonite Cloud Backup system is okay for a single type person that is managed individually. It doesn't give a broad management so they could actually see what is going on with any type of ransom attacks. Mr. Shivers explained that ransomware is an application that someone runs and they usually get it through an email. A person clicks on the link and they don't see anything. But a few days later they begin clicking on buttons and they no longer have access. They lose their control. Once everything completes, the newer ransomware goes into the backups and it begins encrypting the backups as well. Then there will be a message that pops up that says you have so many hours to decrypt this data because they put an encryption key on everything. Then you have to pay money to get access to the key. Mr. Shivers said if they have already seen the data and know the value that it has, then an organization such as Lamar County will cost \$100,000.00 to \$250,000.00. Mr. Shivers said you could pinpoint the central point of contact and stop that first action through threat prevention and training. Mr. Shivers stated that also it could be prevented through Admin Control and said that not everyone needs Admin Control; such as installing software. He said if you can control passwords through a central domain this would also help. He said that there is still more work to be done up front versus afterwards. He said that he would rather do it on the frontside rather than on the backside. County Administrator Townsend stated that they had discussed having Mr. Shivers provide a flyer for the employees to be handed out during the Thanksgiving County wide breakfast. Mr. Shivers stated that they had to complete the GCIC Security Awareness training with the Sheriff's Office and suggested that everyone in the County who touches a computer take this training. Mr. Shivers stated that in order to touch the data at the Sheriff's Office he and his team was required to take the GCIC Security Awareness training. Mr. Shivers stated that Lamar County is listed as an organization that can take this training and highly suggested that everyone takes this free training. Mr. Shivers stated that they could do follow up lunch and learn type sessions. Mr. Shivers stated that ransomware is nothing to play with and there is a lot of preventive steps that they can be taken. He said that he is still learning the environment in Lamar County. He said that for the most part he would not run his business like this place, as far as computers are concerned. Mr. Shivers stated that there is a lot of openness. There is not much security behind this or a domain that governs the County. He said the only domain is in the Tax Assessors Office and the passwords are controlled through the server. He said the downfall to this is that the server is not the right size. He said that everyone has domain administrative rights. Commissioner Thrash stated that this means a disgruntled employee would have access to the system. Chairman Glass inquired about the IT budget and County Administrator Townsend stated that there had been discussion on this before. Mr. Shivers stated that he has figured out the black box and said that he has access to it and is working on a way to fix it.

County Administrator Townsend stated that at one point they had discussed expanding the towers and improving the structure for IT. He said that there is around \$95,000.00 in SPLOST III allotted for this but it may not be enough. He said that for next year there are plans for three computers. One is slated for the Magistrate Court, one server for the Tax Assessors Office and one computer for the Fire Department. County Administrator Townsend stated that the Tax Assessor's server was not the right size. Mr. Shivers stated that it is more like a maxed out Personal Computer (PC). Mr. Shivers stated that he would need to work with WinGap on this issue and it would probably take a couple of hours to do this. He said that he would also talk to them about security as well.

Mr. Shivers inquired about investing in technology and providing internet service to the businesses in Lamar County. He said that Spalding County provides fiber to some of their businesses. Chairman Glass responded that Lamar County doesn't have the capital start up cost. He said that several years ago they were talking to fiber companies about running a loop to link the Sheriff's Office and the Tax Commissioner Office. They ended up with the Mesh Network System. He said that fiber was five times more expensive but they know that it is more reliable. He said that at the time, they didn't have any other options. Chairman Glass said that he heard it cost \$20,000.00 a mile to install fiber. Mr. Shivers stated that they might could go with less fiber. He said that you are also paying for the strands but it depends on the type of fiber and strands. Mr. Shivers stated that Lamar County has towers and the County is paying at least \$450.00 a month for the fiber and the internet at the Tax Commissioners Office for this. County Administrator Townsend stated that they are actually paying \$621.00 a month. Mr. Shivers stated that they are sharing fiber with the Fire Department and when they tested it the Tax Commissioners Office was getting 10 megabytes and the Fire Department had 2 megabytes worth of service. Since then, they have upgraded to 20 megabytes. Mr. Shivers stated that they are suggesting fiber because there are no distance requirements. Mr. Shivers stated that there may some cost savings in the phone systems. Mr. Shivers stated that there may some cost savings with the phone system. He said at the Sheriff's Office there are a lot of plain ordinary telephone service (POTS) lines. They are not even digital circuit lines. He said that the County is probably paying \$70.00 a line for this. County Administrator Townsend stated that they were discussing at one time doing Voice Over IP (VoIP) but he knows that they can't do this for E911 but for the rest of the system they could. He said that they could keep this as a stand-alone system for the Sheriff's Office and all of the other phone lines could be VoIP. County Administrator Townsend stated that in Meriwether County they were paying around \$52,000.00 a year in phone systems and when they switched to VoIP, they reduced the cost down to \$14,000.00. He said that the only phone lines that they didn't change was the E911 phone system. Mr. Shivers stated that sometimes there are discounts for phones. You can get a phone for \$19.00 that originally cost \$250.00 because they are trying to get people to sign up. Commissioner Thrash asked if they are risking doing that with having spotted internet service. Mr. Shivers stated that he didn't know what the cable line service would max out in Lamar County and he would have to do some investigation on this. He said that most of the time cable lines can get a gigabyte. He said that this is like \$470.00 a month and this is over copper. He said fiber cost more. He said that the response time is better when it comes to internet service. Lamar County currently has Charter. Mr. Shivers stated that there are other options when it comes to fiber and you don't have to have Charter. You can use AT&T or other partners such as Nettl or Airstream that is powered by AT&T. He said that he would like to empty out the black box and put everyone on the same network. He said there is a lot of traffic going across this black box. Mr. Shivers stated that

for now, as a problem comes up, they fix the individual problems. Mr. Shivers stated that there is a lot of room for improvements with technology. He said that technology saves money but there is always up-front cost that have to be spent but there is always a return in investment.

FIRE CHIEF

Chairman Glass stated that he sees that the biggest increase was with his salaries. Fire Chief Matthews stated that one increase is for hiring a new part-time Secretary for the Fire Department in the amount of \$11,534.40. Fire Chief Matthews said that the part-time position was eliminated in order to hire a full time Fire Chief. County Administrator Townsend stated that he presented several options for salaries and that he and Fire Chief Matthews had looked at studies from other counties with the same population. He said that other counties have really started helping the Fire Departments by paying them more money. Some of them have been big increases in salaries. Fire Chief Matthews stated that the increases in the salaries is 3 percent and is based on school and rank and levels of certification for EMT, Fire Fighters, Paramedics, Inspectors, and all of the other things that go with this. He said that his requests are all lower than the other counties with the same population but it is still a huge jump in salary. The Fire Chief salary request is from \$45,462.00 to \$56,160.00. The Captains salary request is from \$32,548.36 to \$40,099.00. The Lieutenant's salary request is from \$31,363.28 to \$35,828.00. The Fire Fighter salary request is from \$30,316.00 to \$32,584.36. He said salaries should increase by a percentage based on training and certification. Fire Chief Matthews stated that currently a new hire makes the same as someone who has been here 15 years.

Fire Chief Matthews requested that several other options be considered for the needed growth of the Fire Service to parallel the growing needs in the community. He said that they need to hire three additional Firefighter/EMTs, to man Fire Station 6 at Parker Branch just to handle the emergency responses in the North-East half of the County. The current response time from the South end of town, at Country Kitchen Road, is not adequate and takes 16-20 minutes to respond. Fire Chief Matthews requested an increase for uniforms from \$3,500.00 to \$2,000.00 which will cover the 7 paid members but said that the line item will only need to be increased if they hire three more employees.

Vice-Chairman Traylor said that the Sheriff's Office changed their initial starting salary for new hires and Fire Chief Matthews agreed that this is the same problem that they are having. He said that they currently have no structure. Fire Chief Matthews explained that the Captain of the Fire Department has more training and knowledge than a Lieutenant and that he is the backup to the Fire Chief when he is out. Fire Chief Matthews stated that he increased his pay and that he has over 600 hours in compensation time. He is averaging 80 hours a week and he said that he doesn't take it. He said that it rolls over and goes away. He said that he keeps up with his compensation time but he doesn't take it. He said that he keeps up with the number because this is how much he actually works. He said he does take his two weeks of vacation time. Vice-Chairman Traylor asked if there something in place where he doesn't have to work so much because this is dangerous for him and his family. He said that it is noble but he needs to get to the place where he only works 50 hours a week. Commissioner Thrash stated that one of the things that Fire Chief Matthews has done has been to come to the Board of Commissioners and requested that they hire more employees. Fire Chief Matthews said that he has three employees and this is one employee per day

not three employees per day. He said that one employee can't do anything by themselves. He said that they can do small things but they can't even move a County truck to Public Works by themselves. He said that there are things that have to be done every day. Fire Chief Matthews said that the calls are 24-7 so his workday is 24-7. Fire Chiefs Matthews stated that he does not go to every call; he goes to the important ones. He said that yesterday he was going to go hunting and a call came in for Morgan Dairy Road and Hwy 41 with a bad car crash and no other information was given. So, he turned around and went to the car crash. He said that if they had to cut people out of the car, they couldn't do it by themselves. He said that even though they had volunteers to respond, you still have to manage the scene. Fire Chief Matthews stated that he is working on cutting his hours and he plans on taking some Friday's off so that he can have a day to himself but there is still a lot to be done. Fire Chief Matthews stated that there is more now than ever. He said that he now has his Arson Inspector and his Field Inspector license. He is checking buildings to make sure that extinguishers are up to date and that they are clutter free. He said that there was a kitchen system in the County that has been updated because it hadn't been serviced for the last seven years. He said that there is more work like this that has to be done and more buildings to inspect. Fire Chief Matthews stated that the only way he gets to take off is if he leaves town, but even that doesn't always work. He said that he was out of town last Thanksgiving at his Uncle's when the guys got stuck on the river. He said that he worked for 4 and a half hours on the phone with them

Commissioner Horton inquired about the volunteer Fire Fighters for the City of Barnesville, and asked if they were able to assist them with emergencies. Fire Chief Matthews responded that if they have a major fire, they typically call them. He said that the day time is the worst because volunteers have a day job. He said that this is only for fire. He said that this isn't for wrecks. He said that they ran over 500 EMS medical calls in the City of Barnesville last year. He said that they only run gas leaks, alarms and fire but no wrecks. He said that they help each other with work and structure fires. Chairman Glass stated that the ambulance service is a separate service and they have a responsibility for all of the ambulance services based on the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS).

Commissioner Thrash inquired about the future plans for the Fire Department. Fire Chief Matthews stated that they need more people especially for the North end of the County. He said that they had a recent logging accident and it took 16 minutes to get to the person that was hurt. Then they had to walk 500 yards into the woods to get him. They had to then load him up, pull him out by hand to a truck, and then move him to an ambulance. They had to use their people because he only had three people. He said that he had to send the guy on the fire truck back to the fire truck so that they could setup the helicopter for the landing zone. He said that the North end of the County is killing them. He said that the City of Milner has 250 new homes and that the subdivision on Liberty Park is a fire waiting to happen. He said that on the right day, and if the right wind blows, the whole block could catch on fire because they are 20 feet apart. He said that for the future, the County is going to have to lean towards paying people. He said getting volunteers is extremely hard. He said that he has someone at Gordon State College that is interested in joining the volunteers but he is only going to be here for four years. Fire Chief Matthews said that means he has to spend \$3,000.00 for his six months of training and then he could leave in four years. He said that he knows that this is a chance that you take with anyone but he actually knows that this person will leave. Fire Chief Matthews said that the law states that volunteers have to be trained

within a year after they sign the application. Fire Chief Matthews stated that the CERT team wants to be utilized so there could possibly be some more help from them. He said that he has to figure out how to merge them with the volunteers.

County Administrator Townsend stated that he has been working with Fire Chief Matthews about doing things in steps and said that increasing the salaries is step one. The new fire station on the North end of the County is step two. He said that two tankers are included in the debt service which includes one for the South and one for the North end of the County. Fire Chief Matthews stated that he understands that it is expensive and that is why he is not trying to ask for a lot. He said that these are bare minimum things, but they are big ticket requests. He said that he has just learned, since they put the new fire truck in service, that he needs to ask for another \$1,000.00 for the Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF). He said that they are going through two and a half gallons per week. He said that it cost \$13.00 for two and a half gallons. He is asking to increase his Gasoline/Diesel line item because currently he is pulling this out of the M&R Other Equipment line item. He is also asking to increase the Schools/Meeting and Training line item from \$1,709.00 to \$2,550.00 because they pay for the volunteers training. County Administrator Townsend stated that the Gasoline/Diesel line item is where they buy fuel from Walthall Oil Company and they need to keep this in the M&R Other Equipment Line item. This will raise the projected budget for the M&R Equipment line item from \$8,740 to \$9,740.00.

Commissioner Thrash inquired about the fire protection on the North end of the County, she said that they discussed that they would use the money to upgrade the Parker Branch Fire station and it would come out of SPLOST. Fire Chief Matthews stated that they took \$8,000.00 from SPLOST that was allotted and used it at the Milner Fire Station for improvements. He agreed that the improvements were needed. Fire Chief Matthews stated that he was going to use the allotted funds to purchase a thermal imager. Commissioner Thrash and Fire Chief Matthews both agreed that the renovations at the Milner Fire Station are really nice. Fire Chief Matthews stated that the Milner Fire Station is too small for any type of growth that comes to the North end of the County. He said that it needs another bay because they had to move bedrooms into the bays to expand. He said that there are only two bays there instead of three therefore there is no where to keep a tanker there. Fire Chief Matthews stated that there is going to have to be one at that location at some point. County Administrator Townsend said that in the future there is going to be a need for a new Fire Station in that area.

Fire Chief Matthews stated that he had a lady who lives on Ramah Church Road confront him about her insurance rating being raised. He said that he explained to her that he didn't raise her insurance rating from a 3 to a 9. Fire Chief Matthews said she told him she is now paying \$2,200.00 for insurance. He said that her insurance agency must have quoted her an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 3 and then they realized she didn't have a fire hydrant and quoted her with a 9 ISO rating. Her insurance rate increase was \$1,500.00. Fire Chief Matthews said that he explained to her that this has nothing to do with the Fire Department. Fire Chief Matthews stated that the last Fire they had was on Community House Road and they had to shuttle 1000 gallons of water at a time from Brent Road. He said that they lost this house because it was already 80 percent burned but with the house fire on Van Buren Road, they almost had it under control but they lost it because they had to wait on water from other trucks. Fire Chief Matthews said that this comes with people, he said if they have two paid firemen, that gives them 2000 gallons of water initially because both

of those trucks are running the same call. Then you have the tankers with water, with the volunteers, and that timing works out better because they have a very good group of volunteers. There are currently 34 volunteer firefighters in Lamar County.

Commissioner Thrash suggested that they look at having the volunteers live at the fire station. Fire Chief Matthews stated that you have to find the right person to live there and they have to have a driver license and be able to drive the truck. He said that he doesn't have anyone that fits that role. Commissioner Thrash stated that this could be a benefit that they live at the fire station and this could be equivalent to having another full-time person. Fire Chief Matthews stated that this wouldn't work during the day, because they have a day job. He said that they could use them at night. He said that it has it's benefits but it doesn't solve the issues.

Fire Chief Matthews requested a new 4,000-gallon tanker with pump from Diversified Fabricators, Inc. in Griffin Georgia. The cost is \$136,053.14. The new equipment will cost \$5,000.00. He stated that this is replacing the 1998 Volvo gallon semi-truck. County Administrator Townsend stated that this will come out of debt service.

Probate

Probate Judge Martin stated that her proposed budget includes an increase in the Salaries, Travel and the Schools/Meeting/Training line items. The increase for the Travel and Training is based on the cost. She said that in the past she has roomed with a judge friend of hers that is retiring so she will not be splitting this cost any longer. Commissioner Thrash stated that Administration is working on an increase in the meal allowances known as Per Diem. Probate Judge Martin stated that the total collections, year to date, are \$388,000.00 and about 63 percent of these collections go to the County. She said that the County has received, year to date, \$247,445.00. She said that \$23,000.00 went to the jail fund, \$3,400.00 to the Drug Abuse Treatment and Education (DATE) fund also known as the drug fund and \$11,600.00 went to the Victims Assistance fund along with the other agencies that they have to pay. Probate Judge Martin stated that she had spoken to County Administrator Townsend about the Communications line item being close to the actual current budgeted amount. She said that she didn't know what she was being charged for because she doesn't see these bills. She said that she asks for a salary increase for the employees in her office every year and prays that the board does the right thing. She said that her employees deserve it. Probate Judge Martin said that in the 27 years that she has been in office, she has had one glitch and that was taken care of. She said that they took care of that problem and she has paid the City of Milner back. Probate Judge Martin stated that she couldn't run the office without Machele Penn. She said that she needs to get a raise. She said the other two employees also need a raise but her Chief Clerk really needs to get a raise. Chairman Glass noted that the request, including the 2 percent, is for \$10,000.00. Probate Judge Martin said that she turns in her money to the County very quickly and they probably will receive the funds for October tomorrow. Probate Judge Martin said that she wants to see that they appreciate this. Chairman Glass stated that they look at how much interest it cost them and Probate Judge Martin stated that there is no sense in it whatsoever.

Judge Martin stated that she was aware of the conversation with the salary bill increase for the Constitutional Officers and she has never spoken to a representative about this. She said that she did one-time years ago and told them that she was against it. She said that her Judges came down

on her so from then on, she decided not to say anything about it. She said that she has never asked for a raise from anyone. She said that she had nothing to do with this. Probate Judge Martin again requested that the board look at her request for the salary increases for the employees in her office because it is not fair that Clerk of Superior Court Tyson's employees make what they make and hers don't. Chairman Glass stated that whatever changes are made or not, she will see them before they hold the budget Public Hearings.

Chairman Glass stated that he knows that there are a lot of problems with the Courthouse. Priority wise for the next three years, he asked Probate Judge Martin what she thinks needs to be done for her portion of the Courthouse. She responded that she is still has leaks on the front wall and there are two windows need to be replaced. She said on the backside of the Courthouse the Community is seeing rotten windows. She said that there could be problems with wiring. She said that there are drop cords everywhere. She said that the wiring in the Courthouse has never been updated since it was built in 1931. She said they need to show the public that they are taking care of their property by replacing those back windows because the seals are rotten. She said that one window in the Board of Commissioners/Grand Jury room is busted. She said that this is taking care of your house and its general maintenance. She said that when the voters said no to a Jail, they didn't say no to a Courthouse too. She said that they have to live with what they have and keep it up. Probate Judge Martin stated that she is concerned with the metal detector coming in and out of the Courthouse. She said that she has had people come in with a gun and lay it on the desk because they thought that is where they were supposed to get a gun permit. She said that they have a person that they are dealing with that they are all concerned about.

Executive Session and Adjournment

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to go into executive session at approximately 11:57 a.m. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The board came out of executive session. Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the budget meeting at approximately 12:10 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Robert Heiney, Vice-Chairman

Bennie Horton, Commissioner

Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____

Carlette Davidson, County Clerk