

## **LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Budget Workshop Minutes  
November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
9:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:30 a.m. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Thrash, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Heiney, Commissioner Traylor, County Administrator Townsend and County Clerk Davidson.

The board met with allotted departments to discuss the proposed 2021 budget based on their request.

### **Sheriff's Office**

Sheriff White addressed the board. He stated that he had received complaints about no thru trucks on Parker Branch Road regarding the Rock Quarry opening back up. It is currently not in the County Code book but the board did approve this road to be on the no thru truck list. Sheriff White inquired about Crawford Road to Johnstoneville Road. Vice-Chair Thrash stated that this road was not on the list. Sheriff White said that he sent Public Safety to stop a truck and the truck driver told him that they only allowed weight up to 56,000 lbs. on Crawford Road but the ones that he stopped and getting complaints about are not loaded and are under 56,000 lbs. Chairman Glass stated that the code does not reflect this. Sheriff White stated that there had been some complaints. Chairman Glass stated that if Crawford Road is not a no thru truck road then they probably will need to make it one. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the routes that the trucks may take if the Rock Quarry opens may be an issue that the board will need to address.

Sheriff White stated that he does not see any changes for his budget. Vice-Chair Thrash asked the Sheriff what his long-term plans were for the next five years. Sheriff White said that they are going to have to request more money for his staff. He said that Pike County's starting pay is \$17.00 an hour. He said that he has been losing employees because of the pay scale and family coverage. He said that they cannot compare to Monroe County's tax base but said that their insurance supplement is \$300.00 a month. Sheriff White said that every surrounding County's starting pay is \$16.90 to \$17.00 an hour and Lamar County's starting pay for the Sheriff's Office is \$15.00 an hour. He said that compared to Pike County, Lamar County has more employees. He said that Pike County has the same budget as Lamar County but they do not have the jail or the investigation division. Sheriff White said that he understands that Personnel takes up most of their budget. He said that the turnover rate in Pike County is higher than in Lamar County. Sheriff White said that he was pleased with the wage study that County Administrator Townsend had done on all of his employees. Sheriff White said that Lamar County is growing at a rapid pace and with that will come crime. Chairman Glass said that for populations over \$20,000.00 Constitutional Officers will go into a new pay category. He said that this would mean a five percent pay raise for Sheriff White and also for the other Constitutional Officers in the year 2022. He said that the Census results will not come out until next year.

Commissioner Horton inquired about the state of the jail. Sheriff White replied that they did get the pipes fixed. He said that there were still issues with the locks and the wiring. Sheriff White said that they need a new jail now but believes that this will be in the 10-year plan.

Sheriff White reported that the School Resource Officer got a new Dodge Challenger that they were able to purchase out of drug funds. Vice-Chair Thrash inquired about the Drug Task Force team on the interstate. He said that he has the Drug Task Force Deputies on the interstate and one of them has a new canine and he is currently in canine school which is 14 weeks. He said that the other one is helping the narcotics officer.

Sheriff White said that Rock Springs Church still needs a School Resource Officer. He said that they need to get a private company to pay for 100 percent of their salary. He said that they were paying 100 percent when a deputy was there before the school was closed due to COVID-19. Sheriff White said that Upson County's School Resource Officer's contract pays for the car for the School's resource officer. He said that the Upson County Sheriff is purchasing white trucks for the deputies that are working and the school has to buy those vehicles every three years. He said that when the School Resource Officer is done with the trucks, every three years, they turn them into the school and they can strip them down and the school can use them for maintenance vehicles. Sheriff White said that they do not have a deputy to put at Rock Springs Church. He said that surrounding counties do not either and it is hard to get someone to sit around unless they are retired.

Vice-Chair Thrash inquired about the Local Victim Assistance Program (VOCA) line item being reduced by \$2,000.00. Sheriff White reported that the grant decreased. County Administrator Townsend said that these funds are split between the Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney. Sheriff White said that they did cut some of the budget for VOCA that was being spent on printer cartridges and other things.

Commissioner Traylor inquired about growth percentages such as 2017 compared to 2019 and suggested that they take that percentage and put it towards the Sheriff's Office. County Administrator Townsend said that he had not done anything like this but said that they could do this through impact fees. He said that this would help fund the Sheriff's Office for capital improvements. Commissioner Traylor said that he thought that it would be good if they could apply this same type of percentage for the Recreation Department. County Administrator Townsend said that Pike County uses impact fees for Roads, Recreation, Water, and the Library.

Sheriff White reported that they were going to keep the same medical contractor. He said that if they change medical contractors it would be another \$60,000.00 a year. He said that the last quotes received were from \$180,000.00 to \$200,000.00. He said that they are currently paying \$140,000.00 for their medical contractor. Sheriff White said that three different medical companies submitted a bid. He said that they had a doctor from Griffin that was doing Spalding County's jail. He never submitted a quote but the last time he quoted it was a little over \$200,000.00. He said that their medical contract is for 7 days a week coverage. He said that the coverage is broken down by days such as 5 days a week with 8 hours a day, 5 days a week with 12 hours a day, 7 days a week with 8 hours or 12 hours a day, and/ or 24-hour coverage. Sheriff White said that their current medical contractor has either changed or broken their contract agreement at least three times but

said that their price is still within the Sheriff's Office budget. He said that they are doing a good job. He said that there have been two lawsuits filed against the contractor but said that they have all been thrown out. Sheriff White said that the contract renews on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. Sheriff White said that next year he would like to look at both the medical contract and a contract for the kitchen.

Commissioner Heiney said that the budget for the Sheriff's Office is \$2,275,604 and this appears to be about a \$41,000.00 decrease. He said that if they took \$2.00 an hour from \$15.00 to \$17.00 and multiply that \$2.00 an hour by 40 hours that would be \$80.00 a week. Then multiply the \$80.00 a week by 52 weeks this comes out to be about \$4100.00 per employee. Commissioner Heiney said that you could probably add 10 employees at \$17.00 an hour which would be about \$41,000.00. He said that then he would not have to reduce his budget. Sheriff White said that with the wage study, County Administrator Townsend has already put in some pay scale increases. He said that he has a lot of deputies that are already at the \$16.00 to \$17.00 an hour pay rate because of their rank and with the new wage study this will get them where they need to be. Sheriff White said that the jail staff is still at \$12.00 an hour and they need to have their starting pay increased. Commissioner Heiney said that he heard that Sheriff White's concern was being able to hire deputies at \$17.00 an hour. Sheriff White said that they can hire deputies but being able to retain experience deputies is the issue. He said that the turnover rate is still low because people work for more than money. He said that the command staff is good and that keeps them there. He said that they look after their employees but said that they still need to get competitive. Commissioner Heiney said that he appreciated Sheriff White keeping his budget low and affordable to the taxpayers. Commissioner Heiney said that the best value for the taxpayers is law enforcement, fire department, and roads and everything else is fluff. Commissioner Heiney said that he supports the Sheriff's Office maintaining or not going above their budget. Chairman Glass noted that the Sheriff's Office salaries are going up by \$48,000.00 and the jail is going up by \$43,000.00. Sheriff White said that this is based on the wage study. County Administrator Townsend said that the numbers in the wage study are from 2019 so he did the one step up which is 2.5 percent on top of the study.

Vice-Chair Thrash inquired about performance evaluations. County Administrator Townsend said that they should be in place by the end of the year. He said that he is going to try and do some training with the Department heads. Sheriff White said that he already does his own performance evaluations and he is not turning those into the County. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she feels that it is not fair if someone uses all of their sick time or if someone doesn't perform in their job and they get the same evaluation as someone who goes above and beyond to perform. Sheriff White said that he very seldom sees performance evaluations work because the supervisor will not be honest because they think that they will hurt someone's feelings. Sheriff White said that he gives his pay raises based on performance. Commissioner Traylor said that you put the ownership on the Department Heads so if they have a top-performing employee then they should be making the adjustments to increase their salary. He said if you give that top-performing person a 3.5 percent raise and then give another person who is not performing a four percent raise then you will lose that top-performing person. He said that you then grade that supervisors' evaluations based on their ability to retain that employee. Commissioner Traylor said that if they manage that evaluation process correctly then they will be able to maintain the employees better. County Administrator Townsend said that it opens up the communication between the employee and the supervisor so that they will at least know if there are issues and it gets addressed in that evaluation and also so

that they can set goals for the next year. Vice-Chair Thrash said that from a manager's perspective if you are copying and pasting their evaluation every time, they do not know they are not performing. Sheriff White said that this is 95 percent of evaluations and he has seen very little success with performance evaluations. Vice-Chair Thrash thanked Sheriff White for all he does in Law Enforcement.

Sheriff White said he read an article where they passed hard drugs in Portland, Oregon. He said that they are rioting and those people do not care who gets elected President and they do not care about America. He said that we are going to have a long 5 to 10 years ahead of us. Commissioner Traylor said that the work that the Sheriff's Office does in the school system is commendable and he believes that when you take a generation that can question a deputy it is because of the relationship that they have with the Sheriff. Commissioner Traylor said his generation was afraid rather than forming a relationship. He said some kids get to be decision-makers in their household and those kids will have that same type of relationship. Commissioner Traylor thanked Sheriff White for programs such as the Choosing Healthy Activities and Methods Promoting Safety (Champs) Program. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the youth of today need to have some type of fear with law enforcement. Commissioner Horton said that on the other side, the respect that Sheriff White brings to this County, especially from the younger males, is the level of respect that the Sheriff's Office shows them. He said that this is the problem nationwide because you have to be firm, but you also have to be fair. Commissioner Horton said that he hears this a lot. He said that he knows that if they do wrong the Sheriff will get them and he wanted to thank Sheriff White for what he does. Commissioner Traylor inquired about the funding of the Champs Program. Sheriff White said that the Golf Tournament funds the Champ Program.

Sheriff White said that their 911 system is outdated and AT&T has stopped supporting it. He said that they use the 911 fees to fund the software or anything that they need. He said that they used the 911 fees to purchase the new Radio system. He said that the CAD system parts are obsolete so they have to swap out parts with equipment that they own. He said that they have a cabinet with new parts that AT&T uses. He said that Pike County got a new 911 system so they are going to allow them to use their repair parts from their other system. Sheriff White said that they will be okay for a couple of years with repair parts but the 911 system will need to be replaced. He said that Pike County paid \$139,640.00 for their new 911 system and they have the same number of stations. Sheriff White said that they have not had a 911 board meeting in a long time. He said that at one time the City of Barnesville Police Chief was the chairman. Sheriff White stated that they need to start over with the 911 committee.

Sheriff White reported that there are 22 teams for the Golf Tournament but they do not have the prizes and giveaways like they have had in the past because COVID-19 shut them down. He said that they will play this tournament in November and then another one in April of 2021. Sheriff White said that the tournament takes a lot of time and effort and said that the Kiwanis Club does a good job. Commissioner Traylor said that he appreciates Sheriff White being able to supplement his budget and said that the Board of Commissioners need to be prepared to support his Champs Program if the Golf Tournament does not. Sheriff White said that they have some drug fund money that they can request that comes through the court system. County Administrator Townsend said that the Sheriff's Office has been getting around \$5,000.00. Sheriff White said that he is very conscious that the Sheriff's Office has a large piece of the pie.

Sheriff White said that trash on Community House Road is coming from the workers near a house where the Church is located. He said that he has been in a vehicle with no blue lights and could not do anything about it. He said that he does have tag numbers and as soon as he gets back in his vehicle, he is going to go introduce himself to them. Commissioner Heiney said that he would like to see them on the news and in court with about a \$1,000.00 fine.

Sheriff White said that they purchased two drones from Gresco Utility Supply in Forsyth, Georgia. He said that they have \$10,000.00 worth of Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) cameras. He said that Truman Boyle has one that he will let them use and the Fire Department also uses it for missing persons, children, cars, and foot chases. He said that Mr. Boyle has worked with the FAA on their licensing. He said that they had to get their part 107 pilot license which is a test that they have to take in Newnan, Georgia. Sheriff White said that they can still fly them under their current registration but they are working on a policy. Sheriff White said that the FLIR cameras are good for working in the pitch-black dark and said that the Board of Commissioners are welcome to use them if necessary. Sheriff White said that the drones were bought with drug money and they also received a donation of \$7,500.00 from a local citizen.

### **Public Works**

Public Works Director Rigdon addressed the board and stated that during the first round of the Mowing and Trash Pickup contract it was not good but now they are doing good. He said that he has not had any more legitimate complaints. County Administrator Townsend reported that having a Mowing and Trash pickup contract has saved them some money on fuel and maintenance on the tractors. Public Works Director Rigdon reported that keeping employees has been an issue because they are finding jobs elsewhere. County Administrator Townsend said that the wage study includes all of the Public Works employees and that may help him keep employees. He said that he moved four of his employees over to the Maintenance and Recreation Department and overall this has been a good saving to his budget.

Public Works Director Rigdon reported that his dump trucks are covered through the Special Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST). He said as far as equipment, he is good on light trucks for the next five to six years. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he has been watching Michael's Asphalt and the single lane paver that they have for doing patches. He said that if they bought one, they could come in and put two inches of asphalt to keep the constituents happy. He said that you could overlay two inches. Public Works Director Rigdon said that asphalt is \$70.00 a ton and Michael's Asphalt charged \$19,000.00 for six hours' worth of work and the asphalt cost him \$3,000.00. Public Works Director Rigdon said that when you own the equipment you can charge what you want to. He said that they have two men who run the paving operation; one man on the paver and the other on the roller and in six hours they were done. He said that Lanett Circle and McKenzie Road needs to be patched. He said that he got with Michael's Asphalt about Silver Dollar Road. They said that because there is a spring in the road, that runs continuously, it will be a problem. They told him that they could dig it out 12 to 14 inches deep, fill it full of rock, and pave it and it may last 10 years but if you get heavy trucks it is going to be right back the way it was. Public Works Director Rigdon said that they told him that without doing a Full-Depth Reclamation (FDR), where you can put cement in it, the shoulders will never hold up because there is moisture running continuously beside it. Public Works Director Rigdon said that they told him that they

could put two inches of topping on that lane and get seven to eight years out of it. Public Works Director Rigdon said that they told him if you put heavy equipment and log trucks on that road and without FDR it will not fix it. Public Works Director Rigdon said that if they buy the equipment, they will need three people to operate the equipment. Commissioner Heiney inquired about the qualifications that they would need to run the equipment. Public Works Director Rigdon said that they had two guys that were running the machinery for Michael's Asphalt. He said that you set the machine up on a 2 x 4, that is what they topped it with, they set a two-inch board down and leveled it and backed it up and dumped the asphalt in it. He said now and then you have to widen it to keep it straight. Public Works Director Rigdon said that it would be an easy process but the first time they do it may not be the quality that C.W. Matthews could do and he is not trying to say that they need to pave roads. He said that the \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00 that they are having to spend a year on patching roads could be done by the County and in three years it may pay for itself and then they could go larger. Public Works Director Rigdon said that Caterpillar wants \$150,000.00 for a brand-new machine with a five-year warranty. He said that at the end of the five years you give them a dollar and it belongs to the County or they buy it back from you. Commissioner Heiney asked where he would buy the asphalt. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he would get it from the Rock Quarry in Griffin or Bolingbroke, Georgia, and if the Lamar County Rock Quarry opens back up then they will get it from them. Public Works Director Rigdon said that another major expense is rock and it is going up at both rock quarries by \$1.80 a ton on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Commissioner Heiney asked if they had the trucks to haul the asphalt. Public Works Director Rigdon said that they will when he gets a new dump truck. County Administrator Townsend said that the new dump truck is on the Workshop agenda to be discussed. Public Works Director Rigdon said that all of the rock comes from SPLOST. He said that including labor, pipe, and gravel they spent \$56,000.00 on McKenzie Road and they still have two days of hauling dirt. Public Works Director Rigdon said that by the time they finish paving it will cost around \$80,000.00. He said that two local Public Work Directors told him that he was crazy for attempting this job but if they had hired it out it would have cost \$350,000.00. He said that the concrete pipes on Industrial Road were \$150,000.00.

Vice-Chair Thrash said that she was watching Public Works employees lay the pipe on McKenzie Road and said that they have a lot of skill. Public Works Director Rigdon said that Habakkuk Weeks is good at what he does. He said that he is slow but he gets the job done. He said that if anyone deserves a raise it is Mr. Weeks. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he has skilled employees but said if he lost Mr. Weeks it would be devastating. He said that Pike County has 24 employees and Lamar County has 12 employees. He said that Pike County's Public Worker Director said that their Board of Commissioners do not care if they can push a broom, they just want bodies because he said that they believe that this is what makes them look good. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he told him that his Commissioners want results and not people just standing around.

Commissioner Traylor asked about Supervisors at the Public Works Department. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he has Crew Leaders. He said that he has someone over the patching machine and someone that is over culverts. Public Works Director Rigdon said that Mr. Weeks is the third man in line next to Steve Perdue and himself. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he has different people with different titles based on the upcoming wage study. Chairman Glass asked if they needed to spend time on an organizational discussion for the Public Works Department.

Commissioner Traylor said that they needed to look at the organizational chart to see if there was something that needed to be done. Public Works Director Rigdon said that at the moment he did not have an issue because his employees knew who was in charge of the various work crews and they did not have any arguments with each other and they all hang in there together.

Vice-Chair Thrash asked about where the funds come from when she request work to be done on Silver Dollar Road. Public Works Director Rigdon said that it comes out of SPLOST. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he has no repair money in his budget for roads, streets, and bridges. He said his budget includes labor, salaries, and repairs to equipment and fuel. Vice-Chair Thrash inquired about his long-term goals for the next three years in the Public Works Department. Public Works Director Rigdon said that in the next three years the mini excavator will have to be replaced. He said tires will need to be replaced on the motor grader for around \$4,000.00. He said that he will need a new blade on the mini excavator. He said that he will need to buy a bobcat bucket that will cost around \$1,500.00. He said that the slick bucket is also about worn out. Public Works Director Rigdon said that all of these items will come out of the Public Works budget and not SPLOST. There is currently \$48,000.00 allotted for vehicle materials. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he uses tractors to cut the watershed which is about 80 acres every three months.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Fire Chief Matthews addressed the board. He said that he has two volunteers that will move over as a paid fireman. He said that he has another gentleman that lives on the Pike County line. He said that it will take three of the volunteers to fill one position. Fire Chief Matthews said that they will swap out that shift and work part-time. He said that one of the issues that he currently has is having enough gear for the firemen. Fire Chief Matthews said that it takes 120 days to receive a new set of gear and it has to be sized for that person. Fire Chief Matthews said that there is an option of renting gear but it is \$300.00 a month.

Fire Chief Matthews said that they are ready to bring on the new fireman and their start date will be November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. He said that they have set up a calendar until the end of January with their work shifts. He says that it is the same shift and it does not rotate. Fire Chief Matthews said that they are bringing two volunteers up to full-time status. He said that two of them will swap out and one of them will work some weekends. He said he has volunteers that can work full time as far as the schedule. Fire Chief Matthews said that they have issues when the paid fireman gets sick, such as with COVID-19, and they have to come off their shift. He said that no one can put that in their schedule to work that fireman's shift. Fire Chief Matthews said that if a fireman has an ankle injury then they have to regroup. He said that if they have to, they will shut down one truck. Fire Chief Matthews said that there is an issue with one of the new volunteers that he is hiring. He said that it is a timing issue for him because they live above Hwy 16 in Griffin, Georgia. He said that he will be some help on the North end of the County but not on the South end of the Country.

Fire Chief Matthews reported that he did not receive the Safer Grant. He said that he plans to continue to move forward with hiring three firemen and then hiring six more firemen based on the approval of the board. Fire Chief Matthews said that he needs to start this process as soon as possible because of the 120-day gear cycle. He said even if they hire someone off the street, they

can send them to EMT training first and when they receive their gear, they can go to Fire School. Fire Chief Matthews said that they will have to wait a year before they can re-apply for the Safer Grant. He said that they did not get the Safer Grant because it was too fast for them. He said that once he got the okay from the board to apply, he was told to try for six firemen, and then they went back to three firemen. He said that they only had two weeks to apply for the grant and they worked late nights to try and get it all completed. Chairman Glass said that they rushed into it and did not receive the grant because they did not meet the qualifications. County Administrator Townsend stated that he knew the Fire Chief in Social Circle who is retiring and said that he can assist Fire Chief Matthews with some grant writing. County Administrator Townsend said that they did not receive the grant because it was a short period of time.

Vice-Chair Thrash said for the record that she wished everyone would use her Commissioner Thrash email at gmail.com instead of her yahoo.com account because there are a lot of emails that she is not receiving.

Commissioner Heiney inquired about the cost of gear per person. Fire Chief Matthews replied that the cost is \$3200.00 per person. Commissioner Heiney stated that it would cost \$1200.00 to rent the gear for four months if the cost for gear is \$300.00 per person. Fire Chief Matthews said that this is just for the coat and pants. He said that they can get the helmets and boots. Fire Chief Matthews said that COVID-19 is an issue with getting the gear because everything is affected all the way down the line. He said that if they hire someone off the street, they would give them the EMT program that lasts about three to four months, and then they will go right into Fire School after that. He said some of the people he had spoken to have businesses in Lamar County and they are interested in the 24/48-hour shifts. Fire Chief Matthews said that the two people that they are about to hire both work for Henry County and they both work the same day in Henry County so they will rotate that second day out. He said that they will work 24 hours in Henry County and then work 24 hours in Lamar County.

County Administrator Townsend said that what is in the Fire Department Budget is funding nine firemen. He said that he put \$129,000.00 into contingency in case the SAFER Grant was not received. County Administrator Townsend asked the board if they wanted to move the \$129,000.00 out of contingency and put it into the Fire Department budget. County Administrator Townsend said that when he worked on the budget he did not know if the grant was going to come through so he added \$129,000.00 in the contingency line item. Chairman Glass said he thought it was for three more firemen. Fire Chief Matthews said that the three new firemen are for now. Chairman Glass said he thought that the Safer Grant was for the other three firemen and if he did not get the grant why were they looking at three additional firemen. Fire Chief Matthews said that it was originally nine firemen. He said that the three firemen will be hired now as a part of the six firemen so they will have four people per day. He said there would be two firemen on the South end of the County and two firemen on the North end of the County. Fire Chief Matthews said that this gives them 12 total firemen. Vice-Chair Thrash asked if it was nine or 12 firemen? Fire Chief Matthews said that they have three firemen currently employed and they are going to hire the next three firemen next week and those firemen will start on November 13th, 2020. Fire Chief Matthews said that there will be two firemen per day. Chairman Glass said that he thought that they were going through 2021 with this. Fire Chief Matthews said that this was correct, that those three new firemen will move into 2021 and then they need six more firefighters. Fire Chief Matthews said

that they have budgeted for three more firemen in January. He said that if they move the \$129,000.00 from contingency, they can go ahead and hire six more firemen in January which would give them two firemen a day on the South end of the County and two on the North end of the County. Fire Chief Matthews said that this equals six firemen that they will have employed as of next week. Commissioner Traylor said that he understood that with the Safer Grant in January the idea was that there would be three more firemen funded in the budget and then three more that was supposed to have come from the Safer Grant giving a total of six firemen hired in January 2021. County Administrator Townsend stated that he put \$129,000.00 in the contingency line item that covered the additional three firemen that were not budgeted for 2021. Vice-Chair Thrash said that this means County Administrator Townsend had a backup plan in case the Safer Grant was not received. County Administrator Townsend said that the plan is to bring on nine new firemen because when Fire Chief Matthews came to the Workshop meeting he spoke to them about having two firemen that can enter a building and two firemen that stay outside the building. Vice-Chair Thrash said that this would have been for six firemen and the board agreed to fund three firemen which would be for nine and not 12 firemen. Fire Chief Matthews said that they will have a total of 12 firemen including the three current employed firemen. Chairman Glass stated that there was \$315,000.00 in the salary line item of the Fire Department for 2021. County Administrator Townsend said that right now that is three sets of three. Fire Chief Matthews said that they were counting on the Safer Grant so that would be six firemen with three more firemen and that would be 12 total firemen. County Administrator Townsend said that salaries for nine firemen are included in the 2021 budget. Vice-Chair Thrash asked if the \$315,000.00 is budgeted for nine employees. County Administrator Townsend replied that this is correct. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she understood this to be nine full-time employees plus the County's portion of the Safer Grant in the budget. Vice-Chair Thrash inquired about the contingency funds. Chairman Glass said that the \$129,000.00 allotted in the contingency fund, if they added that, would allow them to hire 12 total firemen. County Administrator Townsend said that if the board decided to only hire nine firemen then he would take the \$129,000.00 out of the contingency fund. Vice-Chair Thrash asked if nine firemen would work for Fire Chief Matthews. Fire Chief Matthews said that nine more firemen, which would be a total of 12 firemen, would give them four people a day. Chairman Glass said that he wanted to go with nine total firemen. Fire Chief Matthews said that nine totals would put them at three firemen a day. Fire Chief Matthews said that it takes two firemen to enter a building and two outside. He said that they had a fire in the Needleleaf subdivision and there were only five total people on the scene. He said this included himself, three paid firemen, and one volunteer. He said that the two paid firemen were swapping shifts and the other one came from his home and then there was the one volunteer. He said that there was a working kitchen fire but the house was saved. Fire Chief Matthews said that they cannot go in the building until technically there are four firemen on the scene. He said that they need two firemen to go in and two to rescue them. He said that this is the bare minimum. Fire Chief Matthews said that this is with himself pumping the truck and running a command. He said that they do not have a safety officer. Fire Chief Matthews said that if they hire six firemen they can put two at the South end of the County and if they go with the nine firemen they can put two on the South end and two on the North end of the County. Vice-Chair Thrash said that they are still using Fire Chief Matthews as a full-time firefighter. Fire Chief Matthews said that he was the first person in the door in the Needleleaf subdivision because they had no help. He said that they had to just pack up and go in. Commissioner Traylor asked if the City of Barnesville could have helped with the fire in the Needleleaf subdivision. Fire Chief Matthews replied that they could not. Fire Chief Matthews said

that typically when they first start the call, he said that a lot of people do not want to talk on the radio because there is a lot of traffic going on as far as picking up engines. He said that they need people to come to the scene. So, at the Needleleaf subdivision fire, they had one engine and five people. Fire Chief Matthews said that if to get to the 12 total firemen his goal is to roll an engine and a tanker out at the same time. Fire Chief Matthews said that the engine and tanker from Parker Branch Fire Station holds 10,000 gallons of water. Fire Chief Matthews said that the trucks are still going to the same call they will just be 20 minutes later.

Commissioner Heiney said that the big issue is the growth on the North end of the County and most of the resources are on the South end of the County. Fire Chief Matthews said that they need to focus on the Milner Fire Station and said that that station is not liveable for any more people. He said that the only people that are living there now are the Emergency Management Service (EMS) and they have one firetruck. Fire Chief Matthews said that eventually, they need to discuss rebuilding the Milner Fire Station and hiring two more people for them. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she is personally not interested in putting any more money into that place and they need to talk about building another fire station in Milner or building somewhere in that area in the next three years. Fire Chief Matthews said that when the high winds came through the other night on Matthews Road, they had had a massive oak tree that fell and crushed the person's barn. He said that the winds shifted and it caught fire. He said that one of the volunteers picked up the engine in Milner and by then the fire was about 30-foot-tall and blowing on the house. He said that all of the vinyl siding was melting off. Fire Chief Matthews said that they put the fire out and saved the house. He said that the Vintage Park subdivision in Milner is something that they are going to have to watch. He said that there are 87 houses and they are 15 feet apart. Fire Chief Matthews said that ISO requires 1500 gallons a minute and they are at 750 gallons a minute. He said that it takes at least 15 minutes for the trucks to get there. He said that the houses are made out of light construction and if something happens it is going to be bad. Fire Chief Matthews said that the goal is to clear the houses beside the house on fire and protect them.

Commissioner Horton said that with the growth in the County they need to address this problem now. Commissioner Heiney said it was not right to leave this for the next set of Commissioners. He said that this is a problem that needs to be addressed soon. Commissioner Heiney said that he does not want to spend the money but he believes that they need a new fire station in Milner. Fire Chief Matthews said that the Parker Branch Fire Station needs new carpet and some fixing up. He said that it is livable now, but they really do not want carpet. He said they would prefer hardwood or laminate flooring so that they can keep the germs down.

Vice-Chair Thrash said that when they did the wage studies there was an increase for the Fire Chief and she knows that there is longevity but asked why they were looking at a salary increase of \$61,000.00 for the Public Works Director when he is on call 24/7 and asked why he was making more than the Fire Chief would make when he is on call 24/7 as well. County Administrator Townsend said that he is getting a \$6,000.00 stipend for handling Animal Control. He said that the Public Works Director's salary is actually lower than the Fire Chief's salary. Chairman Glass said that the Public Works Director gets more calls than the Fire Chief.

Commissioner Heiney asked if Parker Branch Fire Station would work or would they need to build a new firehouse. Fire Chief Matthews said that if there is no more growth, they can make this

work. He said that all of the fire stations are full as far as growth. He said that Milner Fire Station is where they need to be planning for before Park Branch Fire Station. Fire Chief Matthews said that it still takes 10 minutes using Parker Branch Fire Station. He said that you have Cole Forrest subdivision, Oak Haven subdivision, and all of the houses on Liberty Hill Road and Fox Crossings. Fire Chief Matthews said that they are looking at building 105 more homes. Fire Chief Matthews said that Milner is the central hub and where he would like to see a ladder truck because it is 10 minutes in both directions.

### **CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT**

Clerk of Superior Court Tyson met with the board. Chairman Glass stated that Clerk of Superior Court Tyson's salary increase would be 10 percent; 5 percent for a new term and five percent because the legislators felt sorry for the Constitutional Officers. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that it was actually a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) clean up. Chairman Glass said that they will also receive five percent extra. County Administrator Townsend reported that he added money in the Clerk of Superior Court's budget for Communication for \$1,152.00. County Administrator Townsend explained that this is for the phone bills. Chairman Glass asked if they used the Board of Equalization. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that they had meetings and this was the week before one of his employees went out on maternity leave. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that he had money in his budget to cover this. He said that the Tax Assessor said that the hearings will be big so he keeps money in his budget to cover this. He said that thus far he has not had any big hearings. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that the training cost for the Board of Equalization does not change based on the number of hearings. He said that it cost the same for them to renew their training. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that this year everything was pushed to online training but the cost did not change. Vice-Chair Thrash asked about Court Report expenses. He said these expenses do not flow through his office. He said that the person making the Civil appeals has to pay for the Court Reporter transcripts and the file that is sent to the Court of Appeals. He said that on the Criminal issues when there is an appeal requested, someone has to pick that bill up too.

Chairman Glass stated that with the wage study they have compared the salaries for the Clerk of Superior Court staff in Lamar County with other Counties Clerk of Superior Court staff that is similar in population to make sure that are in line with Lamar County's salaries. He said that in most cases this leads to an increase in salaries. Chairman Glass stated that the increase for the regular employee salaries in the Clerk of Superior Court budget increase from \$192,281.00 to \$197,309.00 which is an increase of \$5,000.00. Chairman Glass stated that this could be one employee or spread amongst all of them. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that he would like to have the freedom to distribute this. Chairman Glass said that based on the employee's job title, compared to employees in other counties, get them on the same level. He said that going forward there are different levels in the pay scales where you move up the pay scale based on promotion and experience. Chairman Glass said it is not necessarily a one or two percent increase across the board every year. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that this is the way he has increased salaries in the past. He said even with a two percent increase he distributes based on those types of merits. Chairman Glass requested that he work with County Administrator Townsend before the beginning of the year. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson requested that County Administrator Townsend provide him the data on his employees. Chairman Glass stated that they are doing this

for all County employees and the purpose was to get the salaries more in line with similar size counties, what is reasonable in this economy, and a more deliberate way of approaching raises. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson said that he is not going to be requesting any budget additions for next year.

County Administrator Townsend said that there is one server requested for the Clerk of Superior Court that they will need so that a backup can be done on the server. He said that he would be working with the IT contractor regarding support and other equipment for the Clerk of Superior Court. He said that there would be a training video provided by the IT contractor rather than one on one training. County Administrator Townsend said that this is needed for security purposes. Chairman Glass reported that there is \$50,000.00 worth of cybersecurity coverage on the ACCG policy.

Clerk of Superior Court Tyson asked if any outstanding ballots had not been counted in Lamar County. He said he was trying to get a better grasp and understanding. Chairman Glass said that the Military ballots that are coming in from overseas are given a certain amount of days to be counted and there are about five to seven of those that the Elections Office is still waiting on.

#### **Executive Session**

Vice-Chair Thrash requested that they recess the Budget Workshop meeting to go into Executive Session for personnel. Commissioner Heiney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The board came out of executive session and continued the Budget Workshop meeting.

#### **Board of Elections**

Elections Supervisor Reid, Board of Elections Chairman Williams, and Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher addressed the Board. Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher stated that they are in the process of hiring a full-time elections worker and they have interviewed someone that has a number of years of experience. That person was making \$15.00 an hour and they have proposed \$13.00 an hour and they would like to offer them \$14.00 an hour. Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher requested that they adjust their proposal. County Administrator Townsend stated that this is not in the wage study because at the time this position was not proposed. Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher stated that the part-time employee that is on the payroll has not had any hours taken directly from them in the last couple of months and a limited number of hours in the past. He said that having a full-time person with experience will give them the ability to handle things better when Elections Supervisor Reid is out of the office.

Chairman Glass inquired about an election run-off in December. Elections Supervisor Reid said that she does not know yet. Board of Elections Vice-Chair Christopher said that it all depends on what happens at the State. Elections Supervisor Reid said that it will probably be the Public Service Commissioner. She said that it does not give them a lot of time to turn around and mail out ballots. She said that the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) deadline is

November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 for the January Federal runoff. She said that this means that they have to have ballots in the mail to everyone who has UOCAVA ballots. She said that they will probably get paper ballots with a UOCAVA watermark on it. Elections Supervisor Reid said that the only thing outstanding in the Elections Office was Military ballots, which are due by tomorrow, and Provisionals.

Vice-Chairman Traylor inquired about the Meetings and Trainings line-item actuals that were \$24,560.00 in 2019 compared to the budgeted amount of \$25,00.00 in 202. Elections Supervisor Reid said that they attend conferences and training throughout the year. Commissioner Horton inquired about the Dues and Fees line item. He said that in 2019 it was \$850.00 and this year it is \$250.00. Elections Supervisor Reid said that the dues and fees go along with the conference. Commissioner Traylor said that if they hire another employee they will probably go over budget with the Meetings and Trainings line item. Chairman Glass noted that the part-time employee also received the training certifications so there should not be an increase to this line item. Elections Supervisor Reid said that this is correct because in the past they had two part-time employees receiving training. Commissioner Traylor said that he was looking at this line item because in 2020 the budget was \$16,000.00 and wondered why it was under budget. Chairman Glass stated that they have not spent it this year because of COVID-19. Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher said that a lot of their training this year has been online via Zoom. He said that they have not had an overnight hotel or travel expenses. Commissioner Traylor said that he was referring to the fact that in 2019 they spent \$24,560.00 but they only budgeted \$16,000.00 in the year 2020. Board of Elections Vice-Chair Christopher said that this is because they do not have conferences in election years.

Commissioner Traylor said that he voted on the actual election day and said that it went very smoothly according to everyone that he had spoken to. He commended the Board of Elections for a job well done and asked if there was something different cost-wise that the board needed to do for them. Elections Supervisor Reid said that cost-wise the election expenses are going up depending on what day it is and what month it is and whatever the State demands that they have to have. She said that she does know that they will need to buy some more tables because they only purchased 40 tables. She said that a lot of the poll workers and the citizens like the smaller tables because they liked their own station where they were not crowded due to COVID-19. She said that using a fire station as a polling place was not a good idea because of the equipment, and fire trucks that were still in the Station. She said that she sends out election letters to the polling places ahead of time so that they know what the dates are and when the elections are going to be. Elections Supervisor Reid said that having the fire trucks in the building on election day was not good. She said that this was at the Chappel Mill Fire Station and they worked around it. Elections Supervisor Reid said that personally, it looked bad for the voters.

Vice-Chair Thrash asked why the Board of Elections group insurance line item doubled from last year. Elections Supervisor Reid said that adding another employee will increase the group insurance.

Elections Supervisor Reid said that spacing is an issue for them and they need to go into another facility. She said that they have a lot of equipment and putting them somewhere that will not accommodate what they have is not going to benefit them but make it harder on them. Elections

Supervisor Reid said that they have equipment and records at the old Health Department and in the Administration building. Board of Elections Chairman Williams said that the temperature that records are stored at is an issue because they cannot be too hot or too cold. County Administrator Townsend said that there are about 4,000 square feet of space that they will need. Chairman Glass said that parking at another facility is going to be one of the biggest issues. Chairman Glass inquired about early voting facilities. Elections Supervisor Reid said that she had reached out to the City of Barnesville about using the Barnesville Civic Center. She said that she did not know how much it would cost to use the Barnesville Civic Center. Elections Supervisor Reid said that the Governor's race was going to be similar to the high turnout they had in 2018. Vice-Chair Thrash inquired about the Board of Education's Fine Arts building. She said that they could use the foyer for early voting because there is plenty of space. Elections Supervisor Reid said that whatever facility they use, they will have to have Wi-Fi because of their laptop usage. Chairman Glass noted that early voting and counting votes are two different issues. Elections Supervisor Reid said that space for counting votes is an issue in the Administration building. She said that they cannot open votes in the hallways because people would wonder what they are doing. She said that they have to do Logic and Accuracy (L&A) testing after hours because they cannot do it all in the daytime and manage early voting. Chairman Glass asked if they had thoughts about where else they could count the votes. Elections Supervisor Reid said that tabulating the votes would have to be wherever the server is located. Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher said that the State is very strict on where they can move the server. Elections Supervisor Reid said that she could do early voting somewhere else but when it comes to opening the ballots that is an issue. She said that if they do early voting at the Barnesville Civic Center then they will still do the tabulations wherever their office is going to be. Elections Supervisor Reid said that they had a mechanical issue the first week of early voting which was the State's fault with their voter registration system. She said that when you have separate satellite locations and all the people that you would not normally have on the system, it crashes and that is what happened. Elections Supervisor Reid said that normally when they are processing 1 person it would take one to two minutes but it was taking six to eight minutes per person. Board of Elections Vice-Chairman Christopher said that wherever they go they have to have three people present when they are running ballots.

Board of Elections Vice-Chair Christopher reported that School Superintendent Dr. Wilson brought candy bars for all the poll workers at the Chappell Fire Station. He said that he thought that Dr. Wilson would be happy to participate with early voting at the Fine Arts Center as long as it did not interfere with what the schools had planned. Vice-Chair Thrash said that schools being open during early voting could be an issue. Board of Elections Chairman Williams said that securing the equipment could be a major issue because various school employees have keys to the Fine Arts Center. Commissioner Heiney suggested that they work something out with Ingles about the Board of Elections moving their operations to the old Ingles building. He said that is a lot of space and parking. Chairman Glass said that the feedback from Ingles headquarters was that they might be willing to sell the building but they would want to sell the entire building which houses both the old and the new Ingles. Elections Supervisor Reid said that they could put multiple offices in that building.

Elections Supervisor Reid reported that the school board will have their Education Special Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) election in March of 2021. She said that as soon as they finish one election and certify the election the week after that, it will be time to begin the EPLOST election.

Elections Supervisor Reid requested that they add a line item for overtime. She said that she has been the only full-time County paid employee and the board members have helped her out a lot along with some of the poll workers. She said that their salaries come out of the part-time line item. Board of Election Vice-Chair Christopher said that this year's overtime is about 20 percent and next year it will be about 10 percent which will probably be about \$5,000.00 even though they probably will not use it all next year but said they will need it in 2022. He said he does not see elections slacking off because the election turnout was about 70 percent.

The board discussed increasing the overtime line item to about \$1,500.00 for 2020 and the entire overtime line item to \$5,000.00 for 2022.

### **Administration**

County Administrator Townsend reported that he had to make some additions to the budget workbook. He said that he added \$2,880.00 into the Communication line item for Building and Grounds Administration Building. This is for the Fire Monitor and Charter Communication line items for the Clerk of Superior Court, the Senior Center building, and the Magistrate Court. County Administrator Townsend said that Magistrate Judge Jackson requested \$2,976.00 for retirement but it was actually over \$7,000.00 that was already spent for retirement so he had to add \$4,524.00 to equal the \$7,500.00. He said that he added \$7,111.00 for the Associate Magistrate Judge. County Administrator Townsend said that overtime for Public Works was also left out of the budget workbook. County Administrator Townsend said that included in the budget is where he paid the debt service of \$137,000.00.

County Administrator Townsend asked about the \$129,000.00 worth of contingency money he had allotted for the firemen. Chairman Glass said that he understood how he is getting a total of 12 firemen. He said that they are already doubling the Fire Department budget in one year. Commissioner Traylor said he was concerned with going from one fireman to three firemen and then to 12 firemen in 2022. Chairman Glass said that from three firemen to 12 firemen is a 300 percent increase. Commissioner Traylor said that he realized that they needed it but asked if they needed to plan for it. He said that he understood if they had received the grant, they could go to 12 firemen but asked if this were something that they should do right now. County Administrator Townsend said that he put the \$129,000.00 into contingency for the Fire Department but said it was the board's decision about moving it over to the Fire Departments' budget. Commissioner Traylor said that he thought Fire Chief Matthews heard that the board agreed to let him have the \$129,000.00 worth of contingency funds if the Safer Grant did not go through. Chairman Glass said that he thought they should leave it as is authorizing nine firemen; two firemen at Station 1 and one fireman at Parker Branch or wherever he needs that fireman. He said that they are going to have growing pains with this many people on staff regarding the equipment and the training. He said realistically even if they budgeted for 12 firemen, they do not have to hire but a total of nine for next year. He said that he would rather leave it at a total of nine firemen in the budget and plan for hiring the next three firemen the following year. Chairman Glass said that the firemen have nothing to do between calls and they sit around and figure out what toys they would like to have or what kind of money they would like to have. Vice-Chair Thrash said that it is like an insurance policy. Commissioner Heiney said that this is true until something goes wrong and they have to

endanger their lives. Chairman Glass said that he would like to have the heroes rescue them all when the time is appropriate without having to pay for it. The board discussed the call volume that the Fire Department receives compared to what the Public Works Department receives. Vice-Chairman Thrash said that Fire Chief Matthews is a hard worker and he has stepped up to the plate and fought for his Department. She said that he has missed family functions. Vice-Chair Thrash said that he is in the community and is a hard worker.

County Administrator Townsend said that currently, they pay 100 percent for the employees which are a little over 1,000,000.00. He said that if they were to provide family coverage it comes up to \$1,000,004.00 and the County would have to pay \$397,860.00 annually but with it starting insurance cycles on July 1st, that is six months, so it would only be \$198,93.00 in 2021 and then in 2022 it would go to the full \$397,000.00. He said that with talking to ShawHankins, they may want to start with the County paying 60 percent and the employee paying 40 percent of the family coverage premium. County Administrator Townsend presented an array of different percentages to the board to review. He said that everyone may want to participate so he is presenting a range of numbers to consider. Chairman Glass said that the board needs to decide if they want to pursue this without footing 100 percent of the bill. He said if they choose the 60/40 split it would cost the County at least \$92,691,00 in 2021 but it could cost the County \$174,888.00 if everyone signed up their families. Chairman Glass stated that the following year they would need to think about the full price of \$397,860.00 that would be in the 2022 budget. County Administrator Townsend said that they could gradually go up to where the next year it would be 65/35. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the key is getting the premium cost down. She said that the Wellness Program is helping but getting the premium cost down is the answer to having affordable health care in Lamar County.

Commissioner Heiney said that the way to do this is to go to a bare-bones program. He said that there is a place in Griffin where you can sign up for \$50.00 and they cover all of the supplementals. Commissioner Heiney said that they handle everything in-house. He said that they handle the things that you might use a deductible on; the small stuff such as shots, colds, and broken bones. He said that they also have a family plan and a catastrophic plan. Commissioner Heiney said that they actually operate their own insurance health program that is internal. He said that when you join that group, you are covered for things within certain parameters. He said that you are not covered for cancer, heart attacks, or things of that nature. County Administrator Townsend said that this a fully funded type program where the County funds itself. Commissioner Heiney said that it is a program where the County negotiates the plans that work the best for the employees. Commissioner Heiney said that they should not be paying a huge premium for a plan that has a \$5,000.00 deductible. County Administrator Townsend said that the deductible for the current County insurance plan is \$2,500.00. Chairman Glass said that the idea is to reduce the overall insurance premium by having higher deductibles and the employee cost would be covered by this supplemental program where the office visit cost does not carry over. He said that you are not building towards that \$5,000.00 deductible unless you have a catastrophic illness.

Chairman Glass stated that the board needed to think about family coverage for the 2021 budget. He asked the board if they wanted to pick up any of the cost for family coverage and if so what type of split did they want to choose. Vice-Chair Thrash said that if they are going to do it, they need to take the recommendation from ShawHankins and start with the 60/40 split. Commissioner Traylor said that he understood that the cost for the family coverage would be \$209,000.00.

Chairman Glass explained that the split would be based on how many families sign up for the family coverage. He said that if 53 percent of the employees sign up for family coverage then it would cost \$185,381.00 a year. He said that if 60 percent of the employees signed up for the family coverage then it would cost \$209,000.00. County Administrator Townsend said that the current family coverage is over \$600.00 a month per paid period. He said that having a 60/40 split family coverage would reduce the cost to \$364.00 for the employees' coverage. He said that family and child coverage is \$235.00 and family and spouse coverage is \$253.00 for the 60/40 instead of paying \$600.00 for family coverage. Commissioner Traylor said that when he was single he was extremely healthy and he got mad when other people got better insurance than he did and they renegotiated the contracts when he was the Chief Compliance Officer (CCO) and got paid almost \$500.00 a month to take the companies health insurance because he helped lower the premium cost of everyone else. He said that they had a third option because they had a lot of young employees, they figured out what the cost was that they were going to be spending so they increased salaries. Commissioner Traylor said he is hearing that they are looking at the family coverage option because it is a request from the employees. County Administrator Townsend said that Departments are losing employees because of family coverage. He said that the single coverage for the employees that the County pays for the employee will not change.

#### **Christmas Parade and Thanksgiving Breakfast Discussion**

Chairman Glass stated that Nurse Manager Sherry Farr, with the Lamar County Health Department, had some concerns about the Christmas Parade and the Street Dance. Vice-Chair Thrash said that it is outside. Chairman Glass said that he forwarded her email to the board. He said that he did not have as much of a concern with the Christmas Parade or Street Dance because it is outside as he does about the Thanksgiving Breakfast being inside. He said that he did not plan to attend the Thanksgiving Breakfast. He said he thought that they could do the Christmas Parade safely but said that they would have to walk a fine line so that people feel comfortable and safe. He said that everyone is ready to be back to normal activities and it is a balancing act as to what they should do. County Administrator Townsend said that Nurse Manager Farr would feel better if the Thanksgiving breakfast were catered versus bringing potluck. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she does not want to cancel anything else. She said that people can wear a mask and people can socially distance but she is just overall canceling everything and all of these scare tactics. Commissioner Heiney said that he was too. Chairman Glass said that there are people that are scared. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she realizes that and said they do not have to come. Commissioner Traylor said that he agrees with part of this but said that the non-potluck is the one thing that has become more consistent with everyone so he agreed that the Thanksgiving Breakfast should be catered. Vice-Chair Thrash said that for Thanksgiving events you cook but said that the employees would enjoy the County catering it and said that she is okay with it.

County Administrator Townsend said that the Christmas Luncheon and the Employee Recognition Service is on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. He said that they are working on getting a quote on having this catered too. Chairman Glass asked if, doing these events and catering them compared to doing it in a place that does not have handicap access, the handicapped people are going to feel excluded unfairly. Vice-Chair Thrash said that where they are having these events have handicap access. Chairman Glass said that this was a comparison. He said that they would not consider doing something where the handicapped people could not access it but said that they would consider

doing something where people do not feel safe without a mask and social distancing would not be included. He said that what you are saying is that if you do not feel safe then you do not have to come. Chairman Glass said that they are putting County resources into this but they are saying that you do not have to come but you are not welcome either and they are not going to try and welcome you like if you were handicapped and in a wheelchair. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she is just saying to be reasonable. She said that to have the Nurse Manager from the Health Department come in and say for them to not have this because of what? Vice-Chair Thrash said that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has already said that 85 percent of the new cases, that were reported last month, were by people who wore masks religiously. Vice-Chair Thrash said that they need to put everything into place that they can and if they have to separate the tables and put six feet between the chairs then they need to do everything that they can do but do not cancel it. Chairman Glass asked if it was okay to mandate maskssx. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she is not for mandating a mask. Chairman Glass said that mandating a mask and social distancing six feet apart makes people feel safe. Vice-Chair Thrash said that you are going to punish her because she is not scared or running from the virus. She said that you are going to punish her and other people that feel the same way that she does and follow the public health guidelines and say cancel everything and stay home and do not do this just because. Vice-Chair Thrash said that Chairman Glass is going to punish people that are scared of it and she is saying that on the other side you want to punish people who are not scared of it. Vice-Chair Thrash asked where the fine line was. Chairman Glass said that the message that they are sending is that if you are not feeling safe you are not welcome. Commissioner Heiney said that what they are saying is if you are not feeling safe then stay home. Commissioner Heiney said that Chairman Glass is basing his whole argument on the fact that he is saying that the science supports social distancing and masks. Commissioner Heiney said that science does not support that. He said that there is a huge division there and a lot of Scientists who say that wearing masks and social distancing are useless. Chairman Glass said that there are people that do not feel safe without social distancing and wearing masks. He said that if it was a person in a wheelchair you would not tell them that they are doing this on the second floor and there are only steps to get up to the second floor so just stay home and do not worry about it. Commissioner Heiney said that he is comparing apples to oranges. He said that if someone wants to come to this function and social distance and wear a mask they can do so and if they do not want to then they do not have to. Commissioner Heiney said that he is sitting in the meeting without a mask and Commissioner Horton is wearing a mask so he is protected because he has a mask on. Chairman Glass said that that is not the way science works. He said that the way science works is by saying that this is a barrier that has some degree of protection, not 100 percent because nothing is 100 percent. Commissioner Heiney said that cloth masks do not work at all. He said that the N95 mask has some level of control. Chairman Glass said that if they are trying to serve the people and they do not feel like they are going to be safe at the event then they are going to feel like it is unfair that the County is doing something and excluding them. Commissioner Heiney said that he thinks that most people are going to say okay I will wear my mask and I will socially distance and I will stay away from those that do not have a mask on. He says that this is good common sense and it is called being free and an American. He said that the idea that you tell people that they have to wear a mask is crazy because science does not support the mask.

Chairman Glass said that for the Christmas Parade and the Street Dance he thinks that this is fine but for an event, like the Thanksgiving Breakfast where the County is paying for people to come to eat, you are punishing people that do not feel safe there. You are saying that you are not welcome

to have any of this food. Vice-Chair Thrash said that if you do not have it you are punishing those that do not believe in all of that so where is the fine line. Commissioner Heiney said that if you invite people to the Thanksgiving Breakfast and they all wear their masks, half of them are not wearing their masks correctly. He said during the election, people were not wearing their masks correctly. He said that they were not helping at all if you believe in the mask theory. Chairman Glass said that his point is, if they are going to do the Thanksgiving Breakfast, he is not in favor of the County paying to cater it. He said that you are putting County resources into something that is excluding people. Commissioner Heiney said that you are not excluding anyone because you are including everyone. He said that if you say that if you have a mask mandate, you are going to have a lot of people that are not going to wear a mask and they are not going to come so it is the same thing.

Commissioner Traylor asked about finding a location that would offer two spaces. A space if you want to be with only mask-wearing people and a space where it is optional. He said that they could put a divider in the room to separate the space. Chairman Glass said that someone is not going to feel safe. The board continued to discuss the pros and cons of wearing a mask and excluding or including everyone. The board discussed catering the event with employees going through a line with a mask or without a mask. Commissioner Heiney said that 99 percent of the people have survived COVID-19 and whoever applied the word pandemic to COVID-19 was playing politics and not science. He said that you are looking at scaring people for no reason whatsoever. He said that if you had a five or ten percent death rate it would be different and everyone would voluntarily wear a mask. Commissioner Heiney said you have something so mild where even the death rate is questionable. He said that even with the numbers at one percent they do not know if they actually all died from COVID-19. He said that they have heard of people having motorcycle accidents. Commissioner Heiney asked where the fear was coming from. He said that Chairman Glass is saying that people do not feel safe and said that you have a 99 percent survival rate if you get it.

Commissioner Horton asked if they had received a majority of how the employees felt about the Thanksgiving Breakfast. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the decision should be made by the board. County Administrator Townsend said that a survey was sent out about who would want to attend the Thanksgiving Breakfast and few people responded. He said that Probate Judge Martin or her staff do not want to attend because Judge Martin has had a couple of Judge friends die and she is terrified of COVID-19. Chairman Glass said that if they have the Thanksgiving Breakfast and they do not cater the event then it is truly optional and they are not trying to exclude anyone but if the County caters to the Thanksgiving Breakfast then that crosses the line where they are excluding some employees based on their feelings.

Commissioner Traylor said that he has seen, at other places he worked for, where people could not get to an event, such as the location of the event, so they offered them, whatever was the dinner cost, a gift card. He said that if they cater it and it cost \$10.00 per employee, for those employees that are opting out, they could offer them a \$10.00 gift card from the caterer. Chairman Glass suggested that they have a boxed meal that they could pick up. Commissioner Traylor asked if this could be an option. Chairman Glass said that if this made everyone feel included then it could be an option. Commissioner Traylor said that they could set up a drive-thru so that they could pick up their box. Chairman Glass said that he is not in favor of having this catered but if they do the Thanksgiving Breakfast as it has been done in the past then that is fine.

Vice-Chair Thrash said that last year, for the catered Christmas Luncheon, the Courthouse employees were excluded because they had court going on, so they were excluded. Chairman Glass stated that this was a scheduling issue. Vice-Chair Thrash said that it still excluded them. Chairman Glass said that to make the Thanksgiving Breakfast safer, they are willing to pay for it to be catered but they are not willing to take other measures. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she is willing to pay to have it catered anyway. She said that the whole purpose is to have an event where they all get together on a holiday and share time. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she does not care if the County pays for it or if they bring dishes of food. She said that this is irrelevant to her. She said that she does not even mind doing social distancing. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she is not for a mask mandate and this is her choice. Commissioner Heiney said thinking about safety, you could have hundreds of people sickened from food poisoning. He said that only takes that one little mistake. He said that it happens all the time. He said that he came out of the pest control business and he was very involved in the food industry and it is fairly simple for people to get very sick from food poisoning. He said that you could have this event catered and you are concerned about safety when one percent may be dying of COVID-19 yet you have hundreds that are sickened and many of them died from food poisoning. Commissioner Heiney said that the whole idea of safety is way overblown. Vice-Chair Thrash said that someone could come in with the flu and they could all get the flu. Chairman Glass said that they are oversimplifying when you have focused on the death because the more people that become infected the more people that are going to have to be quarantined and less likely to do their job. He said whether anyone dies are not it is going to cripple the workforce in the County. Vice-Chair Thrash said that this is the same thing as with the flu and if someone comes in with the flu and everyone on the hall catches it then everyone is going home. Commissioner Heiney said that this is the same thing as having a cold. Chairman Glass said that there is a vaccine for the flu and it is not transmissible until the symptoms are present. He said that it is less likely that the flu will cause the same kind of problems as with COVID-19. Chairman Glass again said that he was okay with people bringing their own food to the Thanksgiving Breakfast or if the County caters the Thanksgiving Breakfast and they offer boxed meals then he is okay with that.

Chairman Glass said that they need to recognize that in Lamar County there are all types of divisions and they have to include all of them. He said that all constituents need to be represented whether they are democratic, republican, COVID-19 is a hoax, COVID-19 is the worse thing that ever happened. Vice-Chair Thrash said just cancel it all. Commissioner Heiney asked Chairman Glass how he is resolving this by telling people that they must wear a mask. Chairman Glass said he is not telling people that they must wear a mask. Vice-Chair Thrash said that this is what he said. Chairman Glass said that he said wearing a mask is an option to make people feel safe. Vice-Chair Thrash said that you are then excluding her. Chairman Glass said that he said that he was in favor of people bringing food and not spend County funds on bringing food or if the County caters to the Thanksgiving Breakfast and they offer boxed meals then he is okay with that.

Chairman Glass said that the Christmas Parade and the Street Dance are voluntary and safe enough that people are not going to feel threatened. He said there is a possibility of infection but there is a risk with everything and most people recognize that these types of events are not increasing the threats. He said that if it was an indoor event, they might feel that it is a significant increase.

Vice-Chair Thrash said that her vote for the Thanksgiving Breakfast and the Christmas Luncheon is to scrap them. Commissioner Heiney said that the to-go boxes are okay but said he was not clear on the mask mandate with Chairman Glass. Vice-Chair Thrash said that Chairman Glass said that if you do not have a mask mandate then you are excluding people. Chairman Glass said that he said only if you do not make them feel safe. Chairman Glass said that is one way to make people feel safe. Commissioner Heiney asked Chairman Glass how you structure all of these events. He said would you say that masks are mandatory or not. Chairman Glass said that if they have a mask mandate then people might feel safer. Commissioner Heiney said that they were all clear that he said that if they are going to have a Thanksgiving Breakfast and a Christmas Luncheon then everyone has to wear a mask and social distance. Chairman Glass said that he did not say that they had to do that he said that it was a way to make them feel safer. Vice-Chair Thrash said that while they are eating, they can take off the mask and when they are done, they can put the mask back on. Chairman Glass said that this is why he is not going to the Thanksgiving Breakfast. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she did not want to have it. She said just scrap it. Commissioner Heiney asked about the Employee Recognition Service. He said that they could have this without having food. Vice-Chair Thrash asked if they would make everyone wear a mask because you are at a gathering and you do not want to exclude anyone from getting their certificate.

Commissioner Heiney said that this is all really sad because the actual deaths are so minimal and there is a lot of skepticism as to how many people actually died from COVID-19 or died with it. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she understands where Chairman Glass is coming from the sense of having an elderly person that you are responsible for taking care of. She said that until everyone is immune to this or they get a vaccination it is a risk. Commissioner Heiney said that there is someone in town who has stage 4 cancer and is well over 70. He said that he had COVID-19 but he survived.

Chairman Glass called for a decision on the Thanksgiving Breakfast and the Christmas Luncheon. County Clerk Davidson inquired about the location. County Administrator Townsend stated that he had discussed with Recreation Director Lowe about having it at the gym. County Clerk Davidson said that it was more open at the gym than at the Courthouse for the Thanksgiving Breakfast. Chairman Glass said that he was in favor of this as long as they had box meals to offer the employees. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she thought that the County should pay for both the Thanksgiving Breakfast along with having a mask mandate in place. She said that if the employees come, they have to wear a mask and social distance. Commissioner Traylor said that they can cater it and still have the boxed meals. Vice-Chair Thrash and Commissioner Traylor both said that those that want to stay and eat can stay and those that want to take the meal box can go outside or somewhere else. Commissioner Traylor said he was against canceling it and they needed to modify it so the employees would show up. He said that he was in favor of catering it because he is not one that wants to eat someone else's potluck food. He said that he would still come to the event but he would not eat the potluck food. Vice-Chair Thrash said that she agreed with Commissioner Traylor. Commissioner Traylor said that if it is catered then he will eat the catered food. Commissioner Traylor said that if you give that option of the boxed meal then they solve all of the concerns. County Clerk Davidson and County Administrator Townsend both asked who was going to cater a breakfast in Barnesville, Georgia. Vice-Chair Thrash said that Maxi's is now serving breakfast and if they give them enough time, they could probably do it. County Administrator Townsend asked if they should get a headcount and do all boxed meals. Commissioner Traylor

said that they are going to have a hard time keeping them hot but that Maxi's would have a solution and they do not have to solve that issue.

County Administrator Townsend said that they are also getting quotes for the Christmas Luncheon. Chairman Glass called for a vote regarding the Thanksgiving Breakfast and the Christmas Luncheon. Commissioner Traylor made a motion that they do not cancel the Thanksgiving Breakfast or the Christmas Luncheon and that they cater the Thanksgiving Breakfast with an option of a carryout box lunch. Vice-Chairman Thrash seconded the motion. Commissioner Horton inquired about the mask mandate. Commissioner Traylor and Vice-Chair Thrash said that masks are optional. Commissioner Traylor modified his motion and made a motion that they do not cancel the Thanksgiving Breakfast and that they both be catered by the County and that they provide an option of a carryout box meal and that masks are optional and the event will be held in the Lamar County Recreation gym. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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Commissioner Horton said that he recently had an opportunity to perform with his band. His wife and he had a decision to make about him performing, since she has been sick, and they decided that he go and perform. He said that they prayed to the Good Lord about this. He said that she told him to go and perform but he said he could not sing with a mask. He said he kept his mask on until he performed. Commissioner Horton says that he feels both sides of these issues because they went to a restaurant and when it came time to eat everyone took off their masks and then when they were done, they put the mask back on. He said that he feels both ways and he prays to the Good Lord that he and his wife stay healthy and do not get the COVID-19.

Chairman Glass said that the point in his mind is a percentage gain. He said that there is a reduction of risk with wearing a mask. Commissioner Heiney said that the margin of percentage is low. Chairman Glass said that he is not saying that it is fail-safe but he does believe that there is value in wearing a mask for him. He said that he is not saying that everyone needs to or that everyone has to but he believes there is a reduction in the risk and he is going to keep doing it. Vice-Chair Thrash said that this is the beauty of living in America.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:45 p.m. and Commissioner Traylor seconded the motion. The motion unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Charles Glass, Chairman

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Nancy Thrash, Vice-Chair

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Bennie Horton, Commissioner

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Robert Heiney, Commissioner

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Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carlette Davidson, County Clerk