

Workshop Meeting of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners
January 15th, 2021
12:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 12:04 p.m. on January 15th, 2021. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chair Thrash, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Heiney, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. The meeting was available via Zoom.

The board recessed for lunch and resumed the meeting at 12:27 p.m.

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

Commissioner Thrash inquired about the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Funds and how the stimulus money had been spent. She said that she was concerned about additional expenses that might be needed for the COVID-19 vaccines. County Administrator Townsend reported that \$663,391.96 had been spent to date. Commissioner Thrash asked about employees at the Tax Commissioner's Office being paid and asked if the entire office was closed down. County Administrator Townsend said that they were all paid and they are waiting to hear if the County would be reimbursed. Chairman Glass said that the CARES Act funds received by the County have already been exhausted. He reported that an additional \$53,000.00 had been spent. He said that the CARES Act funds reimbursed them for all of the COVID-19 expenses except for \$53,000.00 and currently there is not a Part 2 for the CARES Act.

Commissioner Thrash asked how much money the County will have to spend for the COVID-19 Vaccine rollout. Chairman Glass said that they rented a Porta-Potty and that the Fire Department covered the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) support but said that if they had a call, they would have to leave. He said that he did not know if there would be an additional charge for them sitting at Southern Rivers, the site where the vaccines were administered. Chairman Glass said that they bought heaters for the testing site and there is a cost for the fuel. He said that they moved the trailer from the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) site to the E.P. Roberts Center and then back to the EMA site so there are fuel and labor costs for this. County Administrator Townsend said that they borrowed a digital sign from Monroe County and there is a cost associated with going to get this. Chairman Glass said that there are incidental costs that have to be covered at the Health Department but the County is not paying for the vaccines or their time or staff.

Commissioner Thrash stated that in a meeting that she attends with the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), she heard that the counties were going to be responsible for the storage of the vaccines. Chairman Glass and Commissioner Traylor both stated that the vaccines are stored at the Upson County Hospital and the Department of Health (DPH) is responsible for this. Commissioner Traylor said that the law enforcement presence at the vaccine testing site is covered by the School Resource Officer (SRO) from the Lamar County High School. Commissioner Traylor reported that if the vaccine gets below 78 degrees it has to be used within 5 days or it has to be discarded.

Fire Chief Matthews reported that Nurse Manager Farr needs help. He said that he does not mind putting a Fire Engine at Southern Rivers but said that this is not in his budget and there is no money allotted for this at the County level. Commissioner Thrash said that extra expenses would not be reimbursed.

Chairman Glass stated that they are administering the vaccine every Wednesday and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and the appointments are booked up through February 3, 2021. Commissioner Traylor stated that Ingles is administering the vaccine as of today. Commissioner Thrash said that Butts County is also administering the vaccine. Chairman Glass said that per the Census report, there should be over 3000 Seniors eligible for the vaccine and they are administering about 280 vaccines a day. Commissioner Traylor said that Hines Prescription Shop and CVS will also begin administering the vaccine. Commissioner Traylor said that you have to be 90 days post-lab positive and they have had people to show up that didn't meet the requirement. He said that you also have to meet the two weeks post Flu Shot requirement as well.

Commissioner Traylor said that he had a group come in to get tested and they had no idea that he was a part of the Board of Health but they wanted him to share with whoever was in charge and let them know that they are above and beyond the surrounding counties Health Departments. Chairman Glass said that this is why the District 4 Health Department asked Nurse Manager Farr to take the lead on the COVID-19 vaccinations. Chairman Glass said that for lunches they have volunteers making sandwiches and delivering them to the site. He said that they have this covered through the middle of February. He said that Nurse Manager Farr told him that you do not see this in other District 4 counties and this community is the one that steps up to the plate and asks if they can help.

Liberty Hill Park

Chairman Glass said that the biggest issue with the park is the entrance. He said that one of the work arounds is to share an entrance with the Vulcan Quarry once it is up and running. Chairman Glass said another possibility is to swap the land entirely but this would require permission from the Federal Government to do this. Commissioner Thrash said that she feels like this is not a good location for a park, especially if they are going to share a driveway with all of the trucks coming in and out of the Rock Quarry. She said that she does not think it is feasible. Commissioner Thrash said that a couple of years ago they were told that they were going to market the property and then when the truck lane only came about, they saw that opportunity and jumped back on it. Commissioner Thrash said that she does not think that it is a safe location for a park.

Chairman Glass said that he sent out his notes to the Commissioners when he started to write a letter and at the end, he listed other properties that might be potential swaps. He said he based his reasoning on tax parcel maps. He said that he looked for properties away from the highway and those that were 70 to 100 acres and had not been developed. He said he took the assessed value off of the Tax Assessor's map. Chairman Glass said that if they do submit a letter it might be smart to have one or two properties in mind. Commissioner Thrash asked if they would want to do a swap or would they want to get the verbiage eliminated from the warranty deed. She said that she feels like they need permission to sell the property or donate it to another entity. Chairman Glass said that his concern is if they go to the Fed's and if they want to sell the land then they will put a

restriction on it. He said that they are not likely to approve it unless it is something like the original plan. Chairman Glass said that they could tell them that they have three years to make this happen and then they will have to give them the money. Commissioner Thrash said that she does not think that they care nor do they want to get this involved with it. Chairman Glass said that he has been dealing with the Bureaucrats at the Veteran's Affairs (VA's) office and he thinks that they will be the problem. He said that he does not think it is a policy issue but whoever is going to be answering that letter is going to say that you cannot do that and that you have to do what they said to do originally and there is no reason to change anything.

Commissioner Traylor said that when they visited the Macon Quarry in Juliette, Georgia, they had a nice walking trail and maybe they can access the property from their property. He said that they could even have them initiate the walking trail. Commissioner Thrash said that they may be open to that. She said that they have a soccer park and a walking trail at the Stockbridge Quarry but they are not talking about the location where the entrance is and this is the thing that gives her the most heartburn. She said that she would hate for a family of five to go over and take a picnic lunch and when they are leaving get hit and killed by a Rock Quarry truck. Commissioner Heiney said that he would hate for this to happen for someone else too because this is a busy road. Chairman Glass said that the Rock Quarry trucks move slowly. Chairman Glass said that one of the concerns is sharing the entrance with the Rock Quarry trucks and cars at the same time. He said that there is a chance that they could use the same entrance but have an offset entrance. Commissioner Heiney said that they are open to this idea, because in a meeting that he was in with them, he brought it up, but he did not respond to them because he was not sure which direction they were going to take. Commissioner Heiney said that they still have time to ask them about doing this. Chairman Glass said that the other question is if they increase the traffic, is Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) going to change the requirements. Commissioner Thrash said that the GDOT has surprised her with the minimum requirements that they had for Vulcan Quarry.

Chairman Glass said that he would be glad to talk to them and tell them that they have two possibilities. One is if they share the entrance, they need to make sure it is okay with GDOT if they add this much more traffic, and if the Decel Lane is still required. The other one is if they split off the easement across from their property that it keeps the citizens away from their truck traffic.

Commissioner Thrash said that she would still like to see a letter sent to the Fed's to see if they will allow them to do that because she does not think it is a feasible location for a park. Vice-Chairman Horton asked how far Vulcan's Quarry entrance is compared to where their entrance is going to be. County Administrator Townsend replied that it was in the curve and Chairman Glass showed Vice-Chairman Horton where it was on a map.

Fire Chief Matthews said that there is a walking trail at Rock Springs that is just two miles from the Liberty Hill Park location. He said that there is also a play area and a football field.

Chairman Glass asked if they wanted to write a letter to the Fed's and talk to Vulcan Quarry. The board agreed that they did. Commissioner Traylor said that Phase I is for the walking trail and he said that this property will thrive when they put in the soccer fields. He said that there will be all types of travel sports teams once this is built and he is getting questions about whether or not they

are going to put softball fields on this property. He said that Henry County supplements their Recreation Program with money they are making from travel sports. He said that he agreed to Phase I but the other Phases are the ones that will bring more usage to that area. Commissioner Thrash and Commissioner Traylor agreed that there would also be more traffic. Commissioner Traylor said that if they put three soccer fields in Liberty Hill Park it would be full every weekend. He said that those communities that are profiting have hotels and restaurants. He said that it is good for the economy and the community. Commissioner Traylor said that this would be beneficial for this property. Commissioner Traylor said he agrees with Phase I but the other Phases are where they will get the most bang for the buck.

Community Ambulance

County Administrator Townsend and Fire Chief Matthews stated that they had been speaking with Joe Roberson with Community Ambulance. He said that they had a meeting on December 21, 2020, and he said that with COVID-19 they did not have people to work. County Administrator Townsend said that they mentioned money and Chairman Glass had asked what it would cost to assist them. County Administrator Townsend said that Mr. Roberson said that Upson County offered them a million dollars and he told them that money was not the issue. County Administrator Townsend said that on January 7th, 2021 he received a letter where Mr. Roberson was asking for \$1,096.00 per day for the duration of the Public Health Emergency issued by Governor Kemp. He said that when the Executive Order is over this would end. County Administrator Townsend said he was not sure but he felt like that the vaccines would slow down the spread of the virus.

Chairman Glass said that Mr. Roberson did not answer his question when he was trying to get the details. He said that he understood about giving them some incentives but said that he did not know if this was a viable plan. He said that Mr. Roberson wanted to increase the EMT's pay by \$10.00 an hour and those that work an extra shift they would get an extra \$10.00 an hour. County Administrator Townsend said that he was talking about giving them \$240.00 which is a 24 hour shift. He said that for each shift they would get an extra \$240.00. Commissioner Thrash said that Mr. Roberson is already having staffing issues with money and asked if he was coming to the County to get them to subsidize his employee issues. County Administrator Townsend said that he asked him the same thing and said that Mr. Roberson told him that this request was so that he can recruit new EMT's. He said that Mr. Roberson has had a lot of his employees leave to go work for a different ambulance service. County Administrator Townsend said that he believes that this is just a management issue within Community Ambulance. Chairman Glass said that he had heard the same thing from other sources. He said that Mr. Roberson is saying that it is a staffing issue throughout the Country and not just Community Ambulance. Chairman Glass said that it probably is but his employees are not happy with Community Ambulance. Vice-Chairman Horton said that they should not have to fix their problems. Chairman Glass said that he does not believe that his intent was to punish the County and he is struggling to figure out how to fix this. He said that Mr. Roberson is not recognizing the personnel issues.

County Administrator Townsend said that he has submitted an Open Records request to find out who has the Lamar County 911 license. He said that Fire Chief Matthews was told that Community Ambulance has the 911 license. County Administrator Townsend said that they are telling him that

they cannot find anything on who has the 911 license. Commissioner Thrash said that she thought that the 911 license was under a doctor through Community Ambulance.

Fire Chief Matthews said that they have a 911 Zoning License for the ambulance service and then there is a Medical First Responder (MFR) license which is for the Fire Department. He said that the Fire Department holds this license. He said that they do work for doctors which is the same thing as the zoning license. He said that Mid Georgia Ambulance service got the 911 zoning license but said he could not remember what year this was. Fire Chief Matthews said that they transferred the 911 zoning license over to Community Ambulance when they took over. He said that the ambulance service has been good to the County.

Fire Chief Matthews said that COVID-19 has been an eye-opener for them and the workforce is an issue. He said that it is coming down to the money and the amount of work that is being done. He said that you have an ambulance service that is paying \$4.00 more an hour and the people are doing the same job in Lamar County yet they can drive five minutes and make \$4.00 more an hour. Fire Chief Matthews said that there have been about ten employees leave Community Ambulance. He said that when Pike County did their ambulance exchange, that is when Community Ambulance decided to let Lamar County have the service for free. He said that the Pike County Board of Commissioners said that if you could do it for free then why are you charging us \$400,000.00 and they still got rid of them. He said that they still hold the 911 zoning license. Fire Chief Matthews said that his recommendation is to put the 911 zoning license under Lamar County, so at that point, you can say bye if you don't agree with their services. He said that they could also build a contract around obtaining the 911 zoning license. Fire Chief Matthews said that technically you cannot tell Community Ambulance to leave and they cannot bring anyone else in because they hold the license. Fire Chief Matthews said that Community Ambulance went ahead and increased the pay by \$4.00 an hour but no one that left came back so this tells him that it is not a money issue.

Commissioner Traylor said that when he was working at the Spalding Hospital back in 2013, 2014, or 2015 where he was part of the ambulance negotiations and Spalding Hospital was bidding for the contracts, they ended up not getting it. He said that there were concerns about the Spalding ambulances not having a walk through from the front to the back of the ambulance. He said that the Spalding ambulances had a window but not a walkthrough. Commissioner Traylor said that this may have been something that Lamar County wanted. He asked if this was when Community Ambulance took over in Lamar County. Fire Chief Matthews and Chairman Glass said that Lamar County has not done a bid and Chairman Glass said that he was thinking about some other County. Chairman Glass said that before it was time to renew the contract, they just came back and offered to service the County for free because Grady Ambulance was servicing everyone for free. County Administrator Townsend said that this was in 2015. Commissioner Traylor said that Spalding Hospital put their name in the hat because they were trying to get Pike, and Lamar County. Chairman Glass said that Pike County came up for bid before they did and Lamar County never did any type of Request for Proposal (RFP). Chairman Glass said that Commissioner Traylor may be thinking about Pike County.

Fire Chief Matthews said that this style of ambulance would not keep Lamar County from holding the 911 zoning license but it might keep them from hiring because they are running Sprinters versus Box trucks. He said that this would not affect the services. Chairman Glass said that the

question that they needed to answer was, did they want to provide the type of stipend that Mr. Robinson has proposed. Vice-Chairman Horton asked if the amount was negotiable. Chairman Glass said it would be and Fire Chief Matthews said that currently, the service is under contract for free. County Administrator Townsend said that they have \$355,000.00 in contingency so they could offer \$250,000.00 to \$300,000.00 along with obtaining the 911 zoning license.

Fire Chief Matthews said that they had a call the other night where they had an ambulance in Macon that was an Advanced Life Support (ALS) truck. He said that the Basic Life Support (BLS) truck which is just EMTs needed to get drugs, called his guys at the Fire Department and they could not do that for them. Commissioner Thrash said that she understood them to say that Lamar County has an ambulance company that is asking for this stipend but they are not meeting our standards and there is nothing that Lamar County can do about it. Fire Chief Matthews said that there are some things that they can do about it but it will take more time. He said he would not offer Community Ambulance any money until they can guarantee two trucks every day; 24-7, plus the 911 zoning license. Fire Chief Matthews said that in the contract it states that they will turn the 911 zoning license over if the services are not adequate and they need to provide 30 days with 2 ambulances.

Fire Chief Matthews said that they are struggling right now and it is pretty bad right now. He said he knows that everyone is having issues but when you raise your pay and no one comes back there to work, there are other issues. Commissioner Traylor said that this is the same as with the pay issues at the Sheriff's Office. He said that people were staying because they enjoyed working for Sheriff White. Commissioner Traylor suggested that if they do consider the contract and the money that they ensure that it is not a lump sum of money but that it is given to them periodically. He said that it needs to be performance-based pay where they are getting paid while they are consistently doing the job. He said that they need to make sure that the money is used for what it is earmarked for which is salaries for employees. Fire Chief Matthews said that they could bill Lamar County every 30 days depending on the amount that is agreed upon.

Fire Chief Matthews said that Community Ambulance is trying and he wants to give them credit for that but said that his goal is to protect ourselves and the citizens. Chairman Glass suggested that they put the Community Ambulance contract on the agenda for Tuesday night where County Administrator Townsend negotiates the contract. County Administrator Townsend said that the ambulances are carrying people to the hospital and the wait times are well over three hours and sometimes they have been turned away because the hospitals are full and they have to carry the patient to another location. Chairman Glass said that besides putting it on the agenda for County Administrator Townsend to negotiate the contract, they also want to include some conditions; the 911 zoning license, the amount of the shift premium, two ALS ambulances in Lamar County; 24-7.

Commissioner Heiney asked about the difference between an ALS ambulance and a BLS ambulance. Fire Chief Matthews said that it is paramedic versus EMT. The paramedic has a higher rate of pay than the EMT. Chairman Glass said that paramedics make \$18.00 an hour and EMTs make \$14.00 an hour and advanced EMTs make \$16.00 an hour.

Chairman Glass said that ACCG is asking the State to up the reimbursement rates for ambulances. He said that this will not happen until at least the middle of the year. He said right now they are limited as to how much they can get per call out. If someone refuses transport then this is a flat amount of money that they get. Chairman Glass said that it does not matter if they are called out for a toe pain or if they have to hook them up to the automated external defibrillator (AED) it is still just one flat amount. Chairman Glass said that this is about \$46.00 for a no transport. Fire Chief Matthews said that this is about \$350.00. Chairman Glass said that the increase was \$46.00 and that ACCG has the details on this. Chairman Glass said that at the upcoming Regular Business meeting, they will approve County Administrator Townsend to negotiate an ambulance contract modification with these conditions. He said that the goal is to improve the services for the citizens. County Administrator Townsend said that he did not get an update from Mr. Robinson to see if they approved the agreement with the Veteran's ambulance service.

Legislative Update

Commissioner Thrash gave a 2021 legislative update and said that the first council meeting was held on January 11th, 2021. She said that election reform is going to dominate the legislative session this year. She said she made note of several issues:

1. The speakers creating a committee to look into election reform. The things that they are suggesting is that ID's be absolutely required for absentee ballots.
2. Another issue is with the third-party grants that some of the bigger counties receive. This is where they got money to help with the election process. They found out that some of the election's superintendents were actually swearing in these third-party vendors. These third-party vendors were scanning and helping to count ballots.
3. When to begin the processing of absentee ballots. It was suggested that it begin on the 2nd Monday prior to the election.
4. Applications: Who qualifies to get an absentee ballot.
5. Discussion of drop boxes.

Chairman Glass said he was concerned that the cost would be coming back to Lamar County. He said that there will be more requirements with scanning an absentee ballot and requiring an ID. He said that if they are going to open absentee ballots two weeks early, they will have to have the storage space to make sure that they are secure. He said that he assumes that this cannot be mixed with the ballots that have not been opened. Chairman Glass said that the ideas are good but he is concerned about the cost.

Commissioner Thrash said that another issue that she is very concerned about is the truck weights.

1. The proposal is to increase the truck weights from 84,000 to 100,000 lbs.
2. Commissioner Thrash said that adding the additional axel helps to evenly distribute the weight of the truck but it doesn't do that. She said that it has already been proven that they are tearing the roads up when they come upon curves and when they have to slow down and stop. Commissioner Thrash said that this is a pre-file bill and does not have a bill number.

Chairman Glass said that adding the axel gives them more surface area to divide the extra 12,000 lbs. He said that the issue is when they stop and start. He said that when they stop, it pushes all of the extra weight on the front wheels, and then even more weight is pushing on those front wheels. He said when they start off, they are putting the extra weight on the back wheels of the tractor. He said they are not adding any axels so they are pushing more pressure on the pavement and the back wheels. He said that even if they add 10 more axels it is not going to affect the stop and start damage. Chairman Glass said that just cruising down the road, the truck is not going to tear anything up. He said that it is the stop and start of slowing down in the curves that is tearing up the roads.

Commissioner Thrash said that Representative Oliver has pre-filed a bill regarding annexation allowing schools to object to tax abatements that Industrial Development Authorities (IDA's) negotiate. She said that it also allows them to intervene in bond issues. She said that the schools are saying that the IDA's are out negotiating for these businesses and throwing out these tax abatements and it affects their digest and they have no say so in this.

Chairman Glass said that in Lamar County, the school systems have always been involved in the discussions regarding negotiations and tax abatements even though this is not a requirement. Chairman Glass said that some school systems are County-owned and it is the City School Systems that are having these issues; Lamar County is both City and County.

Commissioner Thrash said that they want new requirements in place for counties to provide liability policies on their police officers up to \$250,000.00 on each officer and eliminate their immunity clause. She said that officers can be sued personally therefore this is a dangerous bill.

Commissioner Thrash said that there has been legislation pre-filed about underground utilities. It will require the Public Works Department to have to locate underground utilities for traffic signals and stop signs. She said that replacing a stop sign could take three to five days.

Regular Meeting Discussion

- 1) County Clerk Davidson stated that Pastor Martin Johnson of East Mt. Sinai Baptist Church would give the invocation at the Regular Business Meeting.
- 2) The board reviewed 4 sets of minutes.
- 3) The board reviewed the Second Reading Ordinance 2020-25 Route of Travel No Thru Trucks adding Crawford Road and Parker Branch Road.
- 4) The board decided to wait on acquiring a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) until February.
- 5) The board reviewed the annual board appointments:
 - i. Vice-Chairman (District 1)-Bennie Horton
 - ii. County Attorney-Smith, Welch, Webb, and White
 - iii. County Physician
 - a) Drs. Woodall, Wilson, and Manley
 - b) Dr. Aaron Buice
 - iv. County Surveyor-James Butler
 - v. Open Records Custodian-Scott Mayfield

Chairman Glass explained that James Butler is now on the Lamar County School Board. He said that if there is a survey that involves both the School Board and Lamar County property then he would recuse himself otherwise there is no reason he cannot be the County Surveyor. Chairman Glass said that they only pay him if they need him for something. Chairman Glass said that this used to be an elected position but the legislation changed it to an appointed position. Chairman Glass said that there is no need to do an RFP every time that they want something surveyed, they can use Mr. Butler as the County Surveyor.

Sheriff Vehicles from Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds.

Chairman Glass said that the Sheriff has had an issue with buying cars because when he finds a car and they get a bid or a quote for it the prices change before the Board of Commissioners can have a meeting to approve the bid or quote. Chairman Glass said that the suggestion was made to have a "not to exceed amount" for the cars and then let the Sheriff and the County Administrator negotiate the bid or quote within this amount. He said that this way they do not have to come back to the Board of Commissioners for approval and risk losing the deal. Chairman Glass said that the vehicles are in the SPLOST budget.

Contract for Probation Supervision Services

Chairman Glass said that this is a renewal contract for Probation Services that is done every five years. He said that the County Attorney has reviewed the contract and there have been no changes since the last Probation Services contract was approved.

Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend said that the numbers are still changing. He said that the revenues are at 102 percent. He said that the expenses are at 92.5 percent. He said that they have to accrue revenues and payables back for the prior year and some of the numbers will change. County Administrator Townsend said that for Year to Date (YTD) the revenues over expenses are \$1,029,520.59. He said that the revenues and expenses for the Clerk of Superior Court and the Sheriff's Office will have to be booked back. County Administrator Townsend said that the numbers are not solid until they are booked back. He said that with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) you have 60 days. County Administrator Townsend also provided the Board of Commissioners with a report showing the Constitutional Officers collections turned in for the year 2020. County Administrator said that he has been getting quotes for the back windows at the Courthouse. He said that he and Recreation Director Lowe were scheduled to take a field trip over to Monroe County to look at their gym. County Administrator Townsend said that he is planning on speaking to Todd Albritton from Thomaston to do the drawings for the new gym.

Executive Session

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to go into an executive session for personnel. Vice-Chairman Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The board came out of executive session and resumed the business meeting.

Round Table

County Administrator Townsend bragged on the new Accountant, Todaysia Colquitt, and stated that he has been very impressed. County Clerk Davidson concurred with this and stated that she is doing a great job.

Chairman Glass reported that there was a blood drive at the Barnesville First Methodist Church on January 28th, 2021 from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and appointments are requested. He announced that that three re-zoning requests will be heard in the Public Hearings for February and the meeting will start at 6:00 p.m. He said that the packets for each request had been given to the board members for review.

Adjournment

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the workshop at 1:47 p.m. Commissioner Heiney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Bennie Horton, Vice-Chairman

Robert Heiney, Commissioner

Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk