

Workshop Meeting of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners  
March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
12:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Horton, Commissioner Heiney, Commissioner Traylor, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. The meeting was available via Zoom.

**Zoning-Abbott Woods**

Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that the Planning Commission board met and said that most all of the existing homeowners were in attendance and everyone was in favor of changing the zoning to R-1. She said that the variances that were agreed upon included, if you have public water you can have a one-acre lot, 140 ft. lot width minimum, and a 75-foot setback on exterior lots. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that the setback, currently in R-1, is 125 ft. which does not fit on a one-acre lot. She said that the R-1 zoning requirement would be for 2000 square ft. minimum home size. She said that a condition that was also requested was that the garage be side or rear faced. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that the re-zoning request is for R-2 and Agricultural Residential (A-R) be changed to R-1.

**Board of Appeals**

- a. Mildred Merchant-term expires July 1, 2021
- b. Danny Vaughn-term expires January 1, 2024
- c. Dean Gore-term expires January 1, 2023

Planning and Community Development Director Buice said they were working with a four-member board and Mildred Merchant had not been able to attend any of the meetings due to illness. She said that Danny Vaughn and Dean Gore tendered their resignations. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said currently they have two sitting board members; Frankie Holland and Eddie Felton. She said that they are both in District 3. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said the Ordinance is not written so that the board members are assigned per District line with a Chairman at large. Chairman Glass said that replacing board members is hard so that is why the Ordinance was not written in this manner but essentially a board member is needed for District 1, 2 and 4. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said the there has been one person interested in this position.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that Rudy Vaughn's application will be the next one that goes before the Board of Appeals and said that it would be great to have a full board.

**Legislative Update from Commissioner Thrash**

Commissioner Thrash shared a legislative update.

- i. House Bill 148: Development Authorities want a process from the Gold Dome as to how they appoint people to the Development Authority. The bill says that they can serve no more than four years and they cannot be re-appointed for two more years.
- ii. Senate Bill 95: Authorizes counties and cities to hold public hearings via teleconference in emergency situations.

Commissioner Thrash stated that the voter bill proposals are going to cost the counties a lot of money. She said that for some to the rural counties it is not even realistic.

Commissioner Thrash said that one of the proposals is for every ballot to be embossed and have a tracking device. She said that she is working with the Elections Supervisor and the Board of Elections in regard to keeping them up to date on all of the proposals. Commissioner Thrash said that one of the changes that they want to make is that if you request a mail in ballot, you will have had to have voted in a prior election. Commissioner Thrash said that the Democrats are saying that this is voter suppression.

Commissioner Thrash said that this week they have been having the NACO Legislative Conference. She said that not a lot of Resolutions are coming out of the departments but a lot of attention has been placed on broadband from the National level. Commissioner Thrash said that she sent an email to the board about House Bill Resolution 1319. She said that 65.1 billion dollars from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act II, will go directly to the counties and will be based on population. Commissioner Thrash said that it can be used for public health emergencies, to reward essential workers such as a \$13.00 an hour additional pay for the first responders. She said that it can be used to make up for reductions in revenue and water, sewer and broadband. Commissioner Thrash said that you cannot reduce the millage rate. She said that you cannot put it into a pension fund. Commissioner Thrash said that there will be reporting requirements and it all has to spent by the December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. She said that 50 percent of the funds will come within 60 days of the enactment and the other 50 percent no earlier than 12 months. Commissioner Thrash reported that based on Lamar County's population the County will receive about \$3,732,000.00. County Administrator Townsend reported that it changed to \$3,699,867.

Commissioner Thrash reported that House Bill 272 gives a \$6,000.00 supplement to Judges who have Accountability Courts. She said that this bill increases the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court from 17 to age 18. Commissioner Thrash said that this could be a possible 7,000 new Juvenile Court cases and could be a large increase for the counties. She said that the judges are supporting this bill because of their \$6,000.00 supplement.

Chairman Glass said that there should not be 17-year-old juveniles in the system because the counties have to pick up the tab. Commissioner Thrash said that the Policy Committee has suggested that they put some things in place, since it is State programs, to help these kids. She said that there are currently three to six facilities Statewide that you can send these seriously troubled kids too. Commissioner Thrash said that it should not be put on the taxpayers to foot this bill and funding needs to come from the State to help these kids. Chairman Glass noted that the Judges supplement does not help with this issue and said that there are outside attorneys that cover every juvenile case. Commissioner Thrash said that years ago when the Juvenile Justice Reform was adopted, they said that this would not cost the counties any money. She said that it has cost the counties money and the Juvenile Court budget in Lamar County has gone up and larger counties are also reporting that their budget went up substantially.

Vice-Chairman Horton said that there are 19- and 20-years old's that need help too. Commissioner Thrash said that this was true but since there is such a large increase in juvenile crime, they are looking at the sentencing aspect of it. She said that juvenile sentencing is lighter than adult sentencing and they are trying to get them some help before they release them into society as adults. Chairman Glass said that in most States, the adults are 18 instead of 17. Commissioner Thrash said that the counties do not need another unfunded mandate.

### **Other Discussion**

Commissioner Traylor requested for an update on the Recreation Department repairs and the new gym. County Administrator Townsend stated that Glenn Allen with the City of Barnesville said that there is a pole at the Recreation Department on Academy Drive that has a light and some boxes that need to be updated. He said that Mr. Allen is getting him some quotes. Commissioner Traylor said that ideally LED lighting would be the best but remarked that the cost of that would be around \$300,000.00. County

Administrator Townsend said that this cost is per field and said that for 8 fields that would cost \$2,400,000. Commissioner Traylor said he heard that other counties are getting grant money to fund LED lighting with Georgia Power and the EMC's. He stated that Mr. Allen told him that the lights are in bad shape. Commissioner Traylor said that Mr. Allen said that the City of Barnesville would provide free labor but the County would need to purchase the materials. Chairman Glass said that he did not think that Georgia Power would give the County grant money when the City of Barnesville provides the power. Commissioner Thrash inquired about getting a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Commissioner Traylor said that he has been getting phone calls about the gym. He said that just enough is getting done so that the Recreation teams can play on it. Commissioner Traylor said that the gym is not in the condition where the County can have the outside community using the gym. Commissioner Traylor asked about how long it will be before the new gym/facility will be up and running.

County Administrator Townsend said that they just completed the bid for the new Architectural and Engineering firm. He said that he had three contractors to come in and he is recommending Precision Planning and GMA. County Administrator Townsend said that they deal with a lot of gyms and animal shelters. He said that GMC, that has been used before, also put in a bid. County Administrator Townsend said that this bid is for a standby Architectural and Engineering firm so that when they are needed, they can be called in based on their strengths. He said that instead of accepting just two bids they could actually accept all three bids and have them all on standby.

Commissioner Traylor inquired about paying for the building. County Administrator Townsend said that they had made a deposit for \$53,000.00. He said that once it is delivered it will cost another \$69,000.00. Commissioner Traylor inquired about the delivery. County Administrator Townsend said that the architect will have to complete the design for the doors, windows, basketball goals and other items that will be in the gym.

Commissioner Thrash asked if they could get a metal building for the base of the animal shelter. County Administrator Townsend said he had spoken with Pike County's Finance, Building, and Animal Shelter Directors. He said that it will cost Pike County a little under \$300,000.00 to build their animal Shelter which is around 2950 square feet. County Administrator Townsend said that this includes everything on the inside and a \$24,000.00 incinerator in the back of the animal shelter. He said that there will be two garage doors so that they can drive their truck into the animal shelter and then they can put the animals into quarantine areas. County Administrator Townsend said that there are ten pens and a cat room. He said that they have a room where someone can play with the animal and check them out before adoption. He said that it is a nice building and said that they will also have a place for office space. County Administrator Townsend said that they drew up their own plans for a metal building. He said that Pike County earmarked \$81,000.00 towards the Animal Shelter and someone donated \$225,000.00 towards the animal shelter.

Vice-Chairman Horton said that the constituents in his District feel like that they really have not had a fair share to the Recreation facilities. He said that they want to make sure that they can have some time to use the new gym. He said that these are adults, and when they get off work, they want to come to the gym for about an hour and get refreshed. County Administrator Townsend said that he had spoke to Recreation Director Lowe about starting up some adult leagues. He said that she told me that she would have to see about getting it coordinated and they would have to pay the recreation fee. County Administrator Townsend said that fee goes toward paying the referee's, materials and the jerseys. Vice-Chairman Horton said that they feel like as far as being a part of the community that they are not getting their fair share from paying their taxes.

## **Rural Broadband in Lamar County**

Chairman Glass reported that Butts County approved a joint Resolution with their Board of Education. He said that they are each contributing \$300,000.00 to help prioritize Broadband with the Central GA Electric Membership Corporations (EMC). He said that Southern Rivers EMC is not in Butts County. Chairman Glass said that they would be next on the list after Monroe County and they are expecting the service to start rolling out in the fall of 2021. He said that the Lamar County Superintendent Jute Wilson said that he would present it to the Lamar County Board of Education but he did not believe that \$300,000.00 would be possible and said that they had discussed not doing anything. Chairman Glass said that Butts County told him that based on ACCG guidance and what is happening in Monroe County, it will have to go through their Industrial Development Authority (IDA). He said that Butts County feels like getting their Resolution done and contributing the \$600,000.00 gets them ahead of the other counties.

Commissioner Thrash said that she fully supports the CARES Act II funds going towards broadband. Commissioner Traylor said that with ESPLOST, they could have announced that they were going to donate so many dollars towards broadband. Chairman Glass said that it was not allotted in ESPLOST. Commissioner Traylor said that he understood that but most people would feel like that it is a good faith effort on the school system to have broadband therefore they would vote for the ESPLOST. Chairman Glass said a lot of people are interested in it but from the school systems point of view, their concern is for the kids that are not in school right now who are not doing well at all. He said that this is from an academic to a life skills aspect and they need to get the kids back in the classroom with face-to-face instruction. Chairman Glass said that this also helps the parents who are having issues with day care and homeschooling. He said that Lamar County has always been trying to keep the kids in school and they are having a hard time justifying giving them access for remote learning. Chairman Glass said that they are saying that this is not a good thing and they need to get the kids back in school.

Chairman Glass requested that the board produce a similar amount and Resolution just like Butts County did for broadband service. He said that he spoke to the Deputy County Manager, Michael Brewer, and he said that there was a lot of discussion about the EMC's committing to certain things. He said that they were not able to work everything out and they were worried that some other County was going to step in and say that they wanted to be next and here is our money. Chairman Glass said that the Resolution commits Butts County to \$300,000.00 and the Butts County Board of Education to \$300,000.00 and they expect the EMCs to get started on this and make it happen before the end of this year. He said that the details will be worked out between the Butts County Board of Education Chairman, the Butts County Commission Chairman and the EMC President.

Chairman Glass said that the Lamar County Board of Education is not ready to commit anything at this time but said that if the Lamar County Board of Commissioners are ready to commit to contributing to the rural broadband project then it might pressure the Lamar County Board of Education into committing something.

Chairman Glass said that the EMCs are having to pay for the fiber and get it installed. He said that they will have excess capacity after they do it for their own use; for controlling smart meters, outages and monitoring. Chairman Glass said that the excess capacity will be leased to Conexon and they will be working with the EMCs to provide internet service to all the people that sign up for it and want it. He said that the money that the EMCs are having to put into this they will have to borrow. Chairman Glass said that they can use some of their electrical stuff, based on the fact that they are controlling their electric grids, but they cannot borrow the money based on the future internet service. He said that this has to be a separate business and they cannot mix their electrical and internet business money together. He said that their interest rate is fairly high because they do not have the future business revenue to justify it. Chairman Glass said that they are essentially promising that they will be able to lease excess fiber capacity. Chairman Glass said that anything that the County can offset will help. He said that if they give them \$100,000.00

then that is money that they do not have to borrow and pay interest on and that is why it could help move Lamar County up in the queue.

Commissioner Heiney inquired about the total borrowing cost. Chairman Glass explained that it is \$85,000,000.00 between the two of them. He said he had not seen it broken down and he does not know what it is for each County. Commissioner Heiney asked if this was for all three counties. Chairman Glass said that there was about 14 counties involved which is the whole area that the EMCs cover. He said that there is 6,000 miles of fiber that will be laid out.

Commissioner Thrash asked Chairman Glass about his thoughts on how successful this rural broadband project would be. Chairman Glass said that he thought there was a lot of demand for the service but he said that no one knows what the prices for the service will be. He said that Conexon has done this in other States. He said that they are not going to lease that excess capacity from Southern Rivers and Central Georgia EMC if they think it will cost them money in the long run. Commissioner Thrash said that she did not want it to be like what happened with the Water Authority where the customer service base wasn't there. She said that she does not want the County to invest all of this money and then have the citizens say that they are not paying for this type of internet service. Chairman Glass said that from the County's standpoint, whatever money they do this with, whether it is a \$100,000.00 or a \$1,000,000.00, they are transferring it over to Southern Rivers EMC and there is not a point where it could come back on the taxpayers. He said that it is a one-shot deal. He said that once they contribute the money it is up to the EMCs and Conexon to go from there. Chairman Glass said that they are borrowing the money and said that this will never come back on the County.

Commissioner Traylor said that this seems like it rolled out faster than the announcement. Chairman Glass said that Southern Rivers EMC was not ready but Monroe County had the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) money and they felt like that they had to do something with it. Commissioner Thrash said that this has been discussed for several years. Commissioner Traylor said that when they started out Verizon and AT&T said that they could not do it and he does not think that all the I's and the T's were dotted and crossed and there is still a lot of things up in the air. Commissioner Thrash said that she thinks that Verizon and AT&T did not think that it would ever go this far.

Chairman Glass said that the way that this works is that the money actually goes to the IDA. He said that counties can do an intergovernmental transfer of funds to the IDA but they cannot give it as a gift to Southern Rivers EMC. He said that the IDA has the authority to work from a business and an economic development perspective investing in the broadband rollout. He said that the Resolution will not say that it is going to Southern Rivers EMC it will say that it is going to the IDA with the purpose of facilitating broadband rollout by Southern Rivers EMC by the end of the year.

Commissioner Thrash said that they invest the money but the IDA has the say so as to how it is used. Chairman Glass says that the Constitution states that the County cannot give a gift to anyone; citizens or businesses. He said that the IDA has the authority with economic development processes to work this into an economic development activity.

Chairman Glass said that he thought that they would be fine to wait on a Resolution next month but the sooner that they can give Southern Rivers EMC some dollar amount, the more it would help to get things moving. Commissioner Thrash said that an investment in broadband is necessary in Lamar County. Chairman Glass said that \$300,000.00 is ten percent of \$3,000,000.00. Commissioner Heiney asked what Lamar County gets out of this. Chairman Glass said that Butts County is bigger than Lamar County and said that if they were going to do a percentage the dollar amount would not have to go as high as Butts County.

Commissioner Thrash said that as they roll along with their economic development, and the development that is coming into the different counties, people who are looking to move into Lamar County, Butts and Monroe County have already taken a piece of this. She said that people are going to look at them first because their internet access is better.

Chairman Glass said that he heard that places such as Atlanta's with a lot of office space will be hurting because the office space is vacant. He said that this will hurt their tax base because people are working remotely and they do not want office space. He said that if broadband can be provided here then they are more likely to come to Lamar County versus Monroe, Butts or Spalding County. Commissioner Traylor said that this holds true for the school system and water availability. He said that broadband is a top ten resource for companies and people that are re-locating to Lamar County. Commissioner Traylor said that internet is a need for the County. Commissioner Heiney asked whether or not the marketplace has a solution for this. He said that he just got AT&T fixed wireless. Commissioner Thrash said that they have been fighting about this with AT&T for five years. Commissioner Heiney asked who would make the money in the long run. Chairman Glass said that this is a 1 gigabyte connection. Commissioner Heiney said that he understood that 1 gigabyte is a lot faster but noted that 25 Mbps broadband internet connection is pretty fast. Chairman Glass said that it is compared to what they have been struggling with. Commissioner Heiney said that for most people 25 Mbps is more than enough. Chairman Glass said that it is good to have options and more choices. Commissioner Heiney asked why they should fund this because ultimately, they will be the ones that will have to sell it.

Chairman Glass said that essentially, they are accelerating the rollout and they will do it within four years regardless of what happens. He said both of the EMC's are planning on building out the entire service sector within four years. He said that if they want to be next in line next to Monroe County, this is the way to incentivize them so that Lamar County is next. Chairman Glass said that maybe they will come to Lamar County next but said he does not know. He said that they are saying that they have this service area and we are going to do it in four years. Commissioner Traylor said that he does think that it would not look very good if they rolled it out and they went to Butts County next because Lamar County would not participate. Commissioner Heiney said Lamar County could be next because Lamar County gave them \$600,000.00. Commissioner Heiney said that it is almost like a bidding war. Chairman Glass said that technically they are not competing with Butts County because that is Central Georgia EMC. He said that Butts County could be next with Central Georgia EMC but Lamar County could be next with Southern Rivers EMC.

Commissioner Thrash said that money that is being returned to Lamar County, in the CARES Act II, is still her money. She said that it is tax dollars that they have paid and she looks at it as like they are getting back some of the money that they have paid in and it is a good investment in the community. Commissioner Thrash said that this helps everyone. Chairman Glass said that broadband is a possible use for the CARES Act II funds. He said that \$100,000.00, to be spent on broadband, is not going to go very far unless you say that you incentivized them to move up from year four to year one. Chairman Glass said that this is why Monroe County got into this to start with because they had the SPLOST money and they found out that that was not enough to make anything happen. He said that this is why they did the Request for Proposal (RFP) and incentivized someone for doing it. Chairman Glass said that whatever couple of \$100,000.00's that Lamar County can contribute will buy them this many miles of fiber. He said that you will not get many miles of fiber with this amount of money.

Commissioner Thrash said that she understood Chairman Glass's point. Commissioner Heiney said that politically he said a lot of people would say do it because they want internet but also asked what their responsibility was with the County Government. He asked if they should get in the business of giving money to someone who is going to do it anyway just so that they can move up on the list.

Chairman Glass said they can look at this as a private enterprise activity or they can look at it as an economic development activity. He said that they could wait and in four years they may have rolled out the broadband to Lamar County. Chairman Glass said that the Resolution for Butts County says that they have the condition that they have to have the broadband rolled out by the end of the year. He said that they are not competing with Central Ga EMC because the provider for Lamar County is Southern Rivers EMC. He said that a small portion in the North Eastern part of Lamar County is covered by Central Georgia EMC. Chairman Glass said that they have to start at substations with the fiber and roll it out so once they start at the substation, they will cover the entire area. He said that in Monroe County, the part that is serviced by Southern Rivers EMS is actually on Hwy 18 in Lamar County. He said that there will be people in Lamar County, along the route of the substation, that will be offered internet service. Chairman Glass said that Lamar County customers will have an opportunity to have this service.

Commissioner Heiney asked what the broadband service will cost. He said that he guesses it could be \$80.00 to \$100.00 a month and a lot of people may not be able to afford it. Commissioner Thrash said that this is what she meant about the customer base. She said that she does not want the same thing to happen like it did with the Water Authority. Chairman Glass said that Conexon has done this before and they could probably find out what the service cost is averaging in other places.

Chairman Glass said that he would like to commit to a dollar amount, even though they do not have a Resolution and it could be a good faith effort with Southern Rivers EMC. He said that they have a Resolution with them so that they hold Lamar County's place in line. Vice-Chairman Horton said that in his meeting with Three Rivers Regional Commission they were speaking about the broadband service. He suggested that Chairman Glass get with the Three Rivers Regional Commission Director Kirk Fjelstul. Chairman Glass said that he has mostly been speaking with Southern Rivers EMC and said that Mr. Fjelstul is aware of this. He said that he had spoken to him about broadband in general. Vice-Chairman Horton requested that Chairman Glass contact Mr. Fjelstul because he may have some new information about the broadband with Southern Rivers EMC.

Chairman Glass asked if the board wanted to commit to \$200,000.00. Commissioner Thrash said they could commit to \$300,000.00 and Commissioner Traylor suggested \$250,000.00. County Administrator Townsend said that they could obligate \$500,000.00 from the CARES Act II funds. Commissioner Heiney said that using the CARES Act II funds makes sense. Chairman Glass said that this would be easy to justify because it is one of the allowable uses and said that it does benefit the entire County. He said that they could tie it back to the COVID-19 pandemic because people had to work virtually. Commissioner Thrash suggested that they commit \$300,000.00 to start off with and see what position it puts them in and then later invest more money. She said that they could set aside \$500,000.00 from the CARES Act II funds for broadband and then give \$300,000.00 up front to see how it goes. Chairman Glass said that they could commit \$300,000.00 to the EMCs and the other \$200,000.00 they could reserve in order to put broadband in the Fire Stations and then have hot spots around the County for the citizens to use.

Commissioner Traylor said that since the whole County is not Southern Rivers EMC, will they get the broadband service from Georgia Power. Chairman Glass said that Southern Rivers EMC covers everything except the North Eastern portion of Lamar County which is covered by Central Georgia EMC. He said that Georgia Power comes through the County but Southern Rivers EMC's service area is for residential. He said that they can set it up in Milner for a big business or a school system. Chairman Glass said that they can do a bidding war for the provider that gives the best rate. Commissioner Thrash inquired about the people that are being serviced by Georgia Power. She said that their tax money is going to something that they will not receive. Chairman Glass said that typically people in the cities are not covered. He said a lot of the people in the cities have Georgia Power and Southern Rivers EMC running past them so broadband will be available. He said that wherever there is an EMC pole there will be service available. Chairman Glass said that Southern Rivers EMC services part of the school system and their poles run through the school system campus.

Commissioner Thrash said that the proposal on the table is for \$500,000.00 of the CARES Act II funds will go to broadband with \$300,000.00 targeted for the rollout. Commissioner Traylor said that by committing to the \$300,000.00 he hopes that the school system will step up to the plate and give another \$200,000.00. Commissioner Thrash suggested that Chairman Glass speak to Superintendent Wilson about throwing in another \$200,000.00.

### **Liberty Hill Park**

Chairman Glass said that they need to find a piece of land to swap. He said that they have to have another piece of land that they will transfer the restrictions over to because there are rules about how you use the money. Chairman Glass said that the next step is to identify a piece of land. He said that it probably needs to be in the North half of the County and does not need to be on a State highway due to the safety of entrance and exit. Chairman Glass said that if they do have it on a State highway with a safe entrance and exit then that will be appropriate.

### **Towaliga Circuit**

Commissioner Thrash said that she does not like it that the taxpayer houses the criminals, feeds them, and then they have to pay for the attorney and then the trial. She said that the District Attorney has access to things that the Public Defender does not have. Commissioner Thrash said that the District Attorney has access to the Sheriff's Office, the FBI, the GBI and all the resources that they have. She said that the District Attorney's increase is to prevent the loss of personnel. Commissioner Thrash said that the Court systems are about to get slammed. She said that he received two grants; one for \$100,000.00 and other one for \$50,000.00. She said that these grants will fund two positions, one in Lamar and one in Monroe County. Commissioner Thrash said that the increase is not for personnel and he agreed that the State needs to have more State programs. She said that he usually has about 1800 cases closed and now they are down to 1300 cases. Commissioner Thrash said that the Public Defender also has cases that are sitting out there lying dormant because of the COVID.

Chairman Glass said that the real issue is that the Public Defender process has gotten out of control. He said that it used to cover a small fraction of the people that qualified and now it covers the vast majority that are represented by the Public Defender. He said that this is a State issue. Chairman Glass said that they have justified their budget but he does not see any big chunks of money that they can take out of the proposed budget. Commissioner Thrash said that one thing that they can do is work with the legislators regarding unfunded mandates.

Commissioner Thrash said that the Constitution says that people who have committed a crime have a right to an attorney but the Constitution does not say that it is responsibility of the taxpayer to pay for that attorney. She said that it is an assumed position.

Commissioner Traylor said that he would like to see a utilization review based on percentages over the last 10 to 15 years and how the qualifications have changed. He said that the threshold may need to be adjusted.

Chairman Glass said that he wanted thoughts from the board about the Towaliga Circuit Budget prior to the April Regular Business meeting. He said that he thought it was reasonable to go back to the circuit and say that they are willing to approve the budget but they expect them to battle with the legislators on the portion that they will fund or their thresholds. Chairman Glass said that they need to help us make this case to bring their budgets down.

### **Towaliga Judicial Circuit**

<b>2020</b>	Lamar %	<b>2021</b>	Lamar %	<b>2022</b>
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Lamar %					
23%	\$72,218.80	25%	\$78,498.70	27%	\$84,778.60
23%	\$119,531.67	25%	\$129,925.40	27%	\$167,081.78
23%	\$22,179.95	25%	\$24,108.64	27%	\$27,251.53
23%	\$24,000.00	25%	\$24,000.00	27%	\$30,000.00
	<u>\$237,930.42</u>		<u>\$256,532.74</u>		<u>\$309,111.91</u>
Lamar County Quarterly Payments	\$59,482.61		\$64,133.19		\$77,277.98

**Public Defender**

Lamar %	<b>2020</b>	Lamar %	<b>2021</b>	Lamar %	<b>2022</b>
23%	\$162,675.24	25%	\$159,990.20	27%	\$201,643.41
Lamar County Quarterly Payments	\$40,668.81		\$39,997.55		\$50,410.85

**Towaliga  
Accountability Court**

	<b>2020</b>		<b>2021</b>		<b>2022</b>
	\$40,123.32		\$41,296.68		\$42,000.00
Lamar County Quarterly Payments	\$10,030.83		\$10,324.17		\$10,500.00

**COVID Testing**

Chairman Glass said that COVID testing is going on every Thursday at Southern Rivers EMC and said that next Thursday is the last day for testing on a weekly basis. He said that since testing is down then they will switch to a monthly basis. Chairman Glass said that if they were just vaccinating Lamar County it would take until Thanksgiving to get 75 percent of the people vaccinated. He said that the Health Department is looking at doubling the number of days that they vaccinate at Southern Rivers EMC. He said that the number of doses is not the driving factor, it's getting the staff and volunteers to make this happen. Chairman Glass said that they still had to check with Southern Rivers EMC about doubling the number of days they can vaccinate. He said that Health Department vaccinates on Wednesdays and Upson EMC vaccinates at Upson Regional Medical Center on Thursdays. Chairman Glass said that Ingle's Grocery and Hines Prescription Shop also is giving vaccinations.

**Old Jail Museum**

Chairman Glass said that the City of Barnesville is interested in taking over the Old Jail Museum and doing repairs on the building. He said that they would like to carve off a piece of the lot on the back and then take over the title and the maintenance. Chairman Glass said that the City of Barnesville is willing to do the survey and the title transfer. He said that the City of Barnesville is willing to put all of the money and the work into the Old Jail Museum if Lamar County will give them the title. Chairman Glass asked if the board wanted to negotiate with the City of Barnesville or just let them take

over the building and the maintenance and give them the title. Chairman Glass said that the building is in bad shape with leaks and the records are in danger. Chairman Glass said that they had previously discussed expanding the Courthouse with more parking. He said that this would require tearing down the Old Jail Museum. He said that they could probably build a parking deck to expand the number of cars that they can have on the lot.

Commissioner Thrash asked about the plans for the gym on Academy Drive. Chairman Glass said that the gym portion of the Service Center building is more serviceable than the other offices in the building. He said he thought that the rest of the building should come down. Commissioner Thrash asked if the Service Center building could be used for a museum.

Chairman Glass said this was the original jail. He said that a lot of records are stored at the Old Jail Museum and it is a historical building. Chairman Glass said that if they do not do something about the Old Jail Museum building there will not be anything left to preserve.

Commissioner Traylor asked about the Old Jail Museum having a partnership. Chairman Glass said that the City of Barnesville wants the Old Jail Museum to be a tourist site which will help attract people. He said that they would like to have a shuttle tour where people can tour the City of Barnesville. He said that the tour could start at Gordon State and go all around the City. He said that the Old Jail Museum and shopping and eating downtown could be included in their stops. Chairman Glass said that the City of Barnesville is interested in building up the downtown area and thinking forward as to what will bring more people into the City. Commissioner Traylor said that City Manager Tim Turner has a personal interest in the Old Jail Museum as the local historian. Chairman Glass said that they do not have the shuttle bus plans in place but they are thinking about possibilities and things that could be a boom to the City of Barnesville.

Chairman Glass said that other than minor repairs, the County has not put much investment into the Old Jail Museum over the years. The board agreed to consider letting the City of Barnesville take over the Old Jail Museum and requested to have Chairman Glass get a proposal from them.

## **TSPLOST**

Chairman Glass said that the City of Barnesville is interested in a Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) and said that he is thinking that Lamar County could do a TSPLOST in the Fall of 2021. He said that this adds a penny to the sales tax. Chairman Glass said that Upson and Spalding County have a TSPLOST. He said that from an economic standpoint it would not hurt the retailers to add a penny. Chairman Glass said it would give them more money to use on transportation related projects.

Commissioner Traylor said that he had spoken to Public Works Director Rigdon about how the Department of Transportation (DOT) is slowly dwindling down. He said that this will be an opportunity to help make up for the loss of this money. Commissioner Thrash said that Public Works Director Rigdon told her that they are about to get slammed with bridge repairs. Chairman Glass said that eventually there should be some infrastructure money coming from the Federal Government.

Chairman Glass proposed that they talk to the cities to see if they are on board with having a TSPLOST. He said that Upson County bonded theirs in the referendum so that they could start knocking all the projects out rather than waiting to collect the money. He said that they could do 50 miles of roads in one contract where Lamar County is doing 3.8 miles in one contract. Commissioner Traylor said that Public Works Director Rigdon told him that you get a discounted rate from the contractors if you do it this way. He said that there was an anticipated increase in the cost of asphalt that could be a factor in getting a TSPLOST. Chairman Glass said that they would get more feedback from the cities to make sure they are

all on board. He said that the biggest question is if they want to bond it or not and requested that the board start thinking about some projects.

### **Senior Center**

Senior Center Director Antionette Watts addressed the board about an issue with the Happy Days Travel Club. She said that Jeff Baker, President of the Happy Days Travel Club, had requested to use the Senior Center bus to take 25 people on a trip. Senior Center Director Watts said that he does not want to social distance or have the Seniors wear the mask. Commissioner Thrash said that Lamar County does not have a mask requirement. County Administrator Townsend said that there is an Executive Order that President Biden passed on January 21, 2021 that prevents this from happening. Senior Center Director Watts said that she told him that he may could get 12 to 13 passengers on the bus. She said that Mr. Baker wants all 25 people on the bus. Chairman Glass said that wearing masks and social distancing is a Federal requirement. Senior Center Director Watts asked if he followed the mandates would he be able to use the Senior Center bus. Chairman Glass said that as long as he followed Federal guidelines, he did not see a problem with it. He said that he probably will make the argument that since they are all over 65 years old, they have probably all been vaccinated. Senior Center Director Watts said that he did make that argument.

Senior Center Director Watts said that Mr. Baker also wants to rent the Senior Center in May for a 99 people banquet. She said that she told him that she was not sure that they would be open in May but if they go by square footage, they can only have about 43 people. Commissioner Thrash said that 99 people was to many in the Senior Center facility. Senior Center Director Watts said that she spoke with someone at Environmental Health and she said that the dining room could be considered a banquet hall but only 50 people would be allowed. She said that the Executive Order expires on the March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Chairman Glass asked if 99 people was even possible under normal conditions. Senior Center Director Watts said that Mr. Baker said that they have done it before but she said that she has never seen it. Senior Center Director Watts said she spoke with Nurse Manager Sherry Farr with the Department of Health and for Senior Prom Date she was advised that they could only have 12 to 15 people at a time.

Chairman Glass said that he is optimistic that there will not be any issues in May. He said that they could make a reservation and if they put a deposit down and the restrictions prevent them from doing it then they will refund them the deposit. Chairman Glass said that he could not guarantee that the restrictions would be lifted by then and they will have to take that risk. Chairman Glass said that they could not guarantee what the requirements will be in the Executive Order.

### **Regular Business Meeting Discussion.**

1. The board heard that the invocation would be given by Reverend Jimmy Fambro of Hope Tree Ministries.
2. The board reviewed three sets of minutes.
  - i. Workshop Minutes-February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021
  - ii. Public Hearing Minutes-February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021
  - iii. Regular Business Meeting-February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021
3. The board reviewed the Division of Family and Children's Services (DFACS) Child Abuse Proclamation.
4. The board heard from Planning and Community Development Director Buice that there are three vacancies for the Board of Appeals. She stated that Doug Walker is interested in being on the Board of Appeals representing District 1.
5. Fire Chief Matthews addressed the board and stated that there is a need to place a repeater on the radio tower on High Falls Park Road. He said that this is for radio communication from Van Buren Road to Hwy 36 and Chappel Mill Road to I-75. Fire Chief Matthews said that you may or may not get E911

service on the handheld radios. He said that the E911 service is good on the truck radios. Fire Chief Matthews said that he and the Sheriff have been in touch with the owner of the radio tower. He said that it is a 298 ft. tower. Fire Chief Matthews said that the owner's taxes are currently \$247.25. He said that they negotiated with the owner about using the building onsite along with his power as long as the property taxes went to zero. Fire Chief Matthews said that the power from Southern Rivers EMC is \$27.50 a month. He said that the repeater box uses very little power. Fire Chief Matthews said that a building with heat and air and a generator would cost \$15,000.00. Chairman Glass said that it was illegal to reduce the owner's taxes to zero. He said that they could work out a deal where the owner is providing services to equate to this amount. Chairman Glass said that they are not trying to violate the Constitution but they are trying to do something for the citizens.

6. County Administrator Townsend presented a bid for the Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) with staff recommendation for Blount Construction in the amount of \$526,851.03.
7. County Administrator Townsend presented a bid for the Courthouse Windows with staff recommendation for Ben Fleming Construction in the amount of \$33,600.00.
8. County Administrator Townsend presented a bid for the Architectural and Engineering Firm with staff recommendation to approve all three companies; JMA, GMC, and Precision Planning as a standby contract as needed.
9. First Reading of Ordinance 2021-03 Timber Harvest. Chairman Glass said that this Ordinance is driven by the State Legislation changes and to be in compliance updates were necessary. He said that the goal was to have a consistent process across all of the counties so that the timber harvesters did not have to deal with 159 different rules or forms.

Commissioner Thrash said that she got a call about a company cutting timber in Woodall Estates in Milner, Georgia. She said that Milner does not have a Timber Ordinance so they sent the logging company over to the County to get a logging permit. Commissioner Thrash said that she called Attorney Mayfield asking about who is in charge of Code Enforcement in Milner. She said that Lamar County ended up issuing a permit for a logging company in the City of Milner because they do not have a Timber Ordinance. Commissioner Thrash said that she told Mayor Marlowe that with all of the construction going on in Milner, they probably need to address this issue. County Administrator Townsend said that he understood that they were going to send someone out for training in Milner so that they can start doing Code Enforcement. Commissioner Thrash said that she did not want to put Public Works Director Rigdon in the middle of this. Chairman Glass said that they did not need to get involved in a lawsuit with a timber harvester. Public Works Director Rigdon said that he knew the timber harvester and he did what he asked him to do.

10. County Administrator Townsend explained that he is working on a bid for a paver. Public Works Director Rigdon said that they are paying Michael's Asphalt \$15,000 to \$20,000.00 to patch a road and said that if the Public Works Department gets a patcher then they can pave a road for around \$6,000.00 to \$7,000.00. He said that next month they will request to have a street sweeper approved that will go along with the paver which would cost around \$30,000.00. County Administrator Townsend presented a bid of \$142,386.00 from Yancey/CAT for the paver. Public Works Director Rigdon said that the paver is computerized and it is a top-of-the-line machine. He said that they have a lowboy to haul it. Commissioner Thrash said that she has six roads that need paving in District 4. County Administrator Townsend explained that the funds for the paver will come out of SPLOST. Public Works Director Rigdon said that the asphalt will cost the County \$57.00 a ton as opposed to \$150.00 a ton from Michael's Asphalt.
11. The board discussed the Abbot Woods Subdivision and the rezoning from R2 and A-R to R-1. Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that the Planning Commission Board had put several conditions on their approval;
  - 140' minimum lot width
  - 75' minimum setback on exterior lots

- 60' minimum setback on interior lots (this number will reflect the setbacks on existing homes)
- All new homes must have side or rear facing garages

### **Administrator's Report**

County Administrator Townsend stated that a Money Market account was opened and that \$1,700,000.00 was moved from the General Fund into the Money Market account leaving \$1,000,000.00 dollars in the General Fund. Chairman Glass said that he would like to acquire a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) in April. He said that they may not have to draw from it but he did not want to not have it in case it was needed to cover accounts payable or payroll. Chairman Glass requested that the TAN be put on the agenda for April. County Administrator Townsend stated that \$2,000,000 would be very safe since the funds in the bank are currently high.

Commissioner Traylor requested that something be published in the legal organ regarding the increase in the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) and the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). He said that the citizens need to understand the significant impact that the sales tax has made on the County and the substantial effect that ordering online makes to the sales tax distribution.

### **Round Table Comments**

There was discussion about Commissioner Traylor abstaining from the vote since he lives in Abbot Woods subdivision. Chairman Glass said that if he doesn't have a financial interest in the rezoning then he does not have to abstain from the vote. He said that if there is a conflict of interest then he would have to leave the room. Commissioner Traylor said that the large property owner might complain about one of the conditions. He said that he wanted to add that the homes be a minimum of 2400 square feet. Commissioner Traylor said that the Planning Commission did a very good job and Planning Commission board members, Mr. Dwight Fleming and Mr. L.D. Parks, wanted to put that in there because of a recommendation that came from one of the homeowners.

County Administrator Townsend shared with the board that a Department Spotlight had been added to the homepage of the Lamar County website and will run on a quarterly basis. County Clerk Davidson explained that the NewsTicker was changed to run at the top of the homepage instead of the bottom. She also shared the Featured Resources section on the homepage where vital information is being displayed.

### **Executive Session**

Commissioner Heiney made a motion to go into executive session to discuss Real Estate. Commissioner Traylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The board came out executive session at 2:39 p.m. and resumed the Workshop meeting.

### **Round Table Comments**

Commissioner Traylor reported that May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 is the Community Great Day of Service. He said that it is a continuation of the Centennial Celebration. Commissioner Traylor reported that over 300 people are involved in this event and they will be doing everything from slinging hammers to roof repairs. He said that there is a list that people can choose from. Commissioner Traylor reported that Gordon State College students will be involved and everyone is to meet at the Summers Field Park on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the Workshop meeting at approximately 2:57 p.m. Commissioner Heiney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Charles Glass, Chairman

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Bennie Horton, Vice-Chairman

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Robert Heiney, Commissioner

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Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

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Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

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