

Workshop Meeting of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners
May 12th, 2022
12:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. on May 12th, 2022. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Heiney, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. The meeting was available via Zoom.

Chairman Glass gave an update on the feedback that was heard regarding changes to the Development Ordinance at the Town Hall Meeting on May 10th, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. at the Lamar County Courthouse. Some of the issues that were heard included making the changes applicable across the County, minimum lot and house size, and design and architectural standards. The board's purpose is to update the Development Ordinance based on controlling the growth in Lamar County while making the infrastructure the main focus. The board discussed having vegetive buffers around the perimeter of the major subdivision, minimum square footage of a home in a major subdivision, with a mixture of homes being 1600, 1800, and 2200 square feet based on Residential (R1 and R2) zoning. Chairman Glass suggested that they increase the square footage by 400 square feet for all zoning requirements. Vice-Chairman Heiney stated that the purpose of changing the Development Ordinance is to control the growth in Lamar County by changing the minimum acreage from 1 acre to 5 acres but not specifying what people live in such as the size of the home. Board of Appeals member Dwight Fleming stated that developers cannot afford to build major subdivisions if you set the minimum acreage to 5 acres. Chairman Glass said that they could carve out road frontage and put in houses rather than building subdivisions or they could set the minimum acreage in major subdivisions from 1 acre to a minimum of 2 to 3 acres.

The board discussed imposing impact fees to help with the services and the infrastructure. Mr. Fleming stated that in Henry County they list the areas that the impact fees are assigned. Planning and Community Development Director Buice stated that they could hire a contractor for this and it was suggested that they set up a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

The board discussed conservation subdivisions with 2/3 of the land designated as permanent green space. Mr. Fleming suggested that they have no houses fronting existing roads which helps keep all the lots on inside roads while protecting the rural look of the County even though they have added houses. Former Commissioner Traylor asked about the County taking over the property if a subdivision goes bankrupt. Chairman Glass said that this would have to be with County approval and if a Homeowners Association (HOA) goes bankrupt and no one pays the taxes on the land, then the County could decide to sell it through a Fieri Facias Lien (FIFA). Mr. Fleming stated that in a typical conservation easement, it is put into permanent conservation with no rights of being able to subdivide the property. If you require an HOA and they have levy rights or if one owner does not pay the HOA dues, then the property can be levied. Ashely Gilles inquired about this type of conservation usage. Commissioner Thrash noted that this would be non-buildable green space. Mr. Fleming stated that the green space could be managed for forestry usage to be harvested or clear cut. Chairman Glass stated that they need to keep Conservation Subdivisions in the Developmental Ordinance. He requested a summary of items and requirements that they want to be included in the Developmental Ordinance for the Public Hearing on Tuesday night.

The board heard comments regarding the Rezoning Application by Clinton Middleton to rezone the property from Agricultural Residential (A-R) to Highway Commercial (C-2) 2889 Hwy 36 East, Jackson, Ga., Tax Map 086, Parcel 043 and recorded in Deed Book 156, Page 676. Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that the properties in the area are a mixture of both Commercial and Manufacturing. In general, the area is Commercially zoned. The property owners have lived there for around 20 years and they are ready to retire, downsize and move on. They feel like they will get a better

value on their home if it is changed to Commercial zoning. There are no actual plans for the property other than marketing it as Commercially zoned.

County Administrator Townsend shared a request from Fire Chief Matthews to purchase a new Fire Truck from the updated SPLOST Budget for \$504,374.00. He has two trucks; two that are 2012 models and one from the year 2018. The new Fire Truck will be housed at Fire Station 1 and then he will move another Fire Truck to the Parker Branch Fire Station. County Administrator Townsend said that in the next five years, the plan is to build a new Fire Station on the North end of the County. The board discussed the priority of a new Fire Station versus a new Fire Truck since the growth of the County is encouraged to go towards the North end of the County. Chairman Glass requested to see a five-year plan for the Fire Department.

The board discussed the Towaliga Circuit Budget. Chairman Glass stated that there was not a consensus among the 3 counties at this time. The Public Defenders budget supplement went from \$15,000.00 to \$21,000.00. The District Attorney sent out a modification where it went up by \$37,000.00 due to the delay of hiring an employee for 6 months. Commissioner Thrash said that the only issue that she has is with the \$5,000.00 increase for State employees. Chairman Glass said that there was discussion amongst the counties regarding taking the \$5,000.00 increase out of the non-State employees because none of the counties are doing this for their employees. Chairman Glass stated that the Judge asked that the budget be approved by May 15th but since he did not receive a response from the Judge regarding holding a Special Called meeting of the Board of Commissioners to approve the budget, he decided that they would put this on the May 17th, 2022, agenda. Chairman Glass stated that he would respond on May 18th, 2022, to the Judge with the Board of Commissioners' decision. The board discussed the Accountability Court budget which was increased from \$42,000.00 to \$70,000 because they are proposing 2 new courts; Mental Health and a Veterans Court.

County Administrator Townsend shared a proposal for a Brella Contract with NFP. Since the Board of Commissioners canceled the Wellness Program with Corporate Health Partners (CHP) for \$58,600.00, the Anthem Healthcare Program has added coverage for employee Dental, Vision, and a new Brella Premium with the savings attributed to canceling the Wellness Program. Employees pay \$5.00 to sign-up for the program and they can receive a maximum of up to \$700.00 in rewards. NFP will provide 6 months of coverage and then the remaining 6 months of coverage for the Dental premium will cost the County \$19,493.00, \$3,936.00 for the Vision premium, and \$14,904.00 for the Brella premium.

Ashley Gilles addressed the board as a citizen of Lamar County. Ms. Gilles received a call from the Democratic Chairman, Lynn Hadaway. Ms. Gilles said that she was cussed out for about 30 minutes with the expectation that she was going to somehow change the board. Ms. Gilles said that some of the phrases used in the conversation were concerning enough for her to contact the Sheriff of Lamar County. Ms. Gilles said that she already felt that she was at a disadvantage. Ms. Gilles said that she wanted to review the things that happened with the ballot question; as a concerned citizen. If that happened to the other side, she said that she would feel justified and right in defending that person. Ms. Gilles said that she has a problem with this repetitive issue. Ms. Gilles said that she asked Elections Supervisor Reid on March 10th, 2022, to put a question on the ballot. Ms. Gilles said Elections Supervisor Reid told her she was checking with a liaison and she would let her know. On April 14th, 2022, she asked her if the question was on the ballot and received the answer that it was not on the ballot. This was on April 19th, 2022. Ms. Gilles said that the problem she has with this is that all of the ballot information had already been submitted prior to the initial email in March. Ms. Gilles said that she did not understand how the ballot information could have gotten sent off before the qualifying had ended. Ms. Gilles said that this was done in a timely fashion and they had everything submitted and when it was addressed it should have been fixed properly. It does not matter about the cost, just follow the law. There was time and a way to fix it, then the question was

asked about putting it on the general ballot which she said that she discussed with other people in the room and they said that you could not do that. Ms. Gilles said that they are making decisions and breaking the law by trying to rectify the stuff they are not doing. Ms. Gilles said that they need hold people accountable for this whether they are on the board or not. If this had happened to the Democrat Party, she would be standing right there with them saying that this is not right and it all needs to be changed. Ms. Gilles said that a fair and free election is paramount to this Country. Ms. Gilles said that she feels frustrated and threatened. Ms. Gilles stated that she started with a reform that a lot of small counties have; 2 Democrats, 2 Republicans, and a Court Appointed middle person. She stated that she spoke to some people about this and they wanted to keep their representation from the City of Milner, or Lamar County which is fine but said it is supposed to be non-partisan. Ms. Gilles said that this is not the first time an incident where they say they have not turned their stuff in on time has happened but she has not heard it happen to the other side. The fact that the Elections Superintendent will not even cordially respond, talk to, or inform the Chairman of one of the parties, even though there are two parties to help supervise the elections is not acceptable. Chairman Glass requested that they focus on the reform that Ms. Gilles is proposing. Ms. Gilles said that she would like to be able to replace board members if they are not doing the right thing with a 2-year term versus a 4-year term. This would be with the same appointing authorities that are already in place. Ms. Gilles said that if they are doing their job, let them stay in. Ms. Gilles said that this would be the Chair of the Party that could remove anyone in the County or the Cities if they are not doing their job or not holding to the standards and anyone who has an appointment could remove that person. Chairman Glass noted that this is not-reappointing but removing. Ms. Gilles said that she would love to be able to remove someone "At Will." Ms. Gilles said that they have to be able to hold people accountable on either party side. Ms. Gilles said that she has spoken to the City of Barnesville and the City of Milner. Chairman Glass said that this would have to be local legislation that would be taken up in the 2023 Legislative Session unless there is a Special Called Legislative Session that might allow for this. Chairman Glass requested that they bring this request back to the Workshop meeting in June.

Chairman Glass stated that the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) sent out a summary of all of the Legislative bills. Some of the things that they were fighting against were not passed; legalized horse racetracks, limiting local control on zoning. The \$5,000.00 increase for all state employees and elected officials did pass. Locally, it will cost the County \$55,00.00 for the eleven elected officials plus the FICA. Chairman Glass stated that some of the things that they wanted and some of them did not, but overall, it was a good Legislative Session.

The board reviewed the Regular Business Meeting.

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) The invocation will be given by Cyndi McDonald of the First Methodist Church of Barnesville
- 4) Recess for Public Hearing
 - i. Rezoning Application by Clinton Middleton to rezone the property from Agricultural Residential (A-R) to Highway Commercial (C-2) 2889 Hwy 36 East, Jackson, Ga., Tax Map 086, Parcel 043: and recorded in Deed Book 156, Page 676
- 5) Reconvene Regular Business Meeting
- 6) Approval of Agenda
- 7) The proclamation will be given to John Perry Walker, Sr.
- 8) Minutes Approval
 - i. Workshop Minutes-April 14th, 2022
 - ii. Public Hearing Minutes-April 19th, 2022
 - iii. Regular Scheduled Meeting-April 19th, 2022
- 9) 2nd Reading Ordinance 2022-01 Development Regulations

10) Ordinance 2022-05- Rezoning Application by Clinton Middleton to rezone the property from Agricultural Residential (A-R) to Highway Commercial (C-2) 2889 Hwy 36 East, Jackson, Ga., Tax Map 086, Parcel 043: and recorded in Deed Book 156, Page 676.

11) Board Appointments

- i. Region 04 Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council
 - a. Term Change in the Bylaws from 2 years to 3 years.
- i. Position 1: Douglas Matthews Expiration June 30th, 2023
- ii. Position 2: Robert Cox Expiration-June 30th, 2024

12) Towaliga Circuit Budget

13) Indigent Defense Services FY 2023 Contract

14) Right of Way Mowing

County Administrator Townsend explained that the estimate from Bradley's Cleaning and Lawn Services (BCLS) for County Wide Mowing is \$261,261.00. Due to the increase in fuel cost, they are increasing their prices to \$16,107.00 per cut to help cover the cost. In the event, that the fuel cost continues to rise, the buyer will be charged up to \$25,000.00 per cut. The board agreed to defer the request if gas prices get higher than \$6.00 a gallon. Vice-Chairman Heiney suggested that wildflowers be planted on the property owners' side of the drainage ditch. Mr. Fleming asked if they were cutting to the backside of the ditch. Chairman Glass stated that they are cutting along the right of way. Mr. Fleming said that if you want your drainage ditch maintained properly then the wildflowers need to be on the backside of the ditch because the front and the backsides of the ditch need to be cut. Some of the wildflowers have to be re-seeded and the cost is not cheap.

15) Recreation Gym Bid

County Administrator Townsend presented a bid from Blue Bear Restoration for the Recreation Gym which includes the bathroom roof coating, the front of the gym roof coating, the closed cell foam for the roof, the closed cell foam for the walls, insulation removal, and haul off and paint foam with thermal fire paint for a cost of \$168,029.00. The bid from Southeastern Surfaces & Equipment, Inc. for the Gym flooring, the basketball backstops, and the telescoping bleachers was for a cost of \$153,412.00. The bid for new HVAC units from A&B Heating & Cooling was the low bid for a cost of \$72,660.00. The total cost received thus far for the renovation of the Gym is \$394,101.00. County Administrator Townsend is waiting on the bid from Blue Bear Restoration for the new LED lights. Commissioner Thrash received an email from Josh Griffiths requesting that they include more money in the budget for the Recreation Department. He stated that the Recreation Department is in great need of upgrading the fencing, lighting, and bathrooms. The Recreation facilities in other counties are in better shape because the Recreation Department is not being funded by the County. Commissioner Thrash noted that back in 2010 the Recreation Department took the biggest budget cut. She said that they do need to spend some money on the lightning and the bathrooms. County Administrator Townsend said that Recreation Director Lowe received a quote a couple of years ago on LED lighting for the football fields for a cost of \$30,000.00. He reported that they are cleaning out the old recycling building. Commissioner Thrash and the board discussed the deadline issue for turning away kids that wanted to play ball. The issue is with the number of kids on a team and the number of coaches that they have for each team.

16) Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend reported that everything is doing well this month. The revenues should be at 33 percent and they are 31 percent. The expenditures were higher in April because

they paid out Worker's Comp, Retirement, and the Courts but they leveled off when the trends were forecasted. He reported that he and a guy in Macon are harassing the manufacturer, Tucker Windows, about the Courthouse windows. He reported that they started on the High Falls Park Road tower this month to put in the repeater, and the cars for the Sheriff's Office were received this month with the funds coming from SPLOST. The LOST distribution received for April was \$151,640.34 and the SPLOST distribution was \$270,786.43.

County Administrator Townsend presented the program TextMyGov which the Citizens can easily find information and get their questions answered by texting in keywords. Smart texting answers questions instantly with an automatic response 24/7. This will be used for Public Works, the Recreation Department, Planning and Zoning, Commissioner meetings, and County notifications. This will also be included on the Lamar County website. The cost for the TextMyGov program is \$5,000.00 annually.

- 17) The board heard Round Table comments. Chairman Glass reported that Early Voting is continuing until May 20th, 2022, and May 24th is Election Day. Absentee Ballot requests are due by May 13th, 2022, and they will need to be picked up personally at the Elections Office or downloaded from the Lamar County website.

County Administrator Townsend reported that changes to the design of the building are ongoing and the only change thus far was for the location of bathrooms. The engineers are reporting water damage on the breakroom wall but Chairman Glass did not see any water on the back wall after heavy rains. County Administrator Townsend said he still wants to put in a patio for the employees to eat lunch. Chairman Glass stated that there has been some interest in the current Administration Building. They would like to preserve the historic building and it could be used for office buildings or a training center.

- 18) Commissioner Thrash made a motion to go into Executive Session for personnel at approximately 2:23 p.m. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The board came out of Executive Session. Vice-Chairman Heiney made a motion to adjourn the Workshop meeting at approximately 2:27 p.m. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Robert Heiney, Vice-Chairman

Bennie Horton, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk