

Workshop Meeting of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners
July 14th, 2022
12:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. on July 14th, 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.

Three Rivers Transportation-Tommy Kennedy

Transit Program Director Tommy Kennedy addressed the board. He stated that Three Rivers is a 10-county area; Butts, Meriwether, Carroll, Pike, Coweta, Spalding, Heard, Troup, Lamar, and Upson Counties. They service people with disabilities and transport older adults to and from the Senior Centers, and medical facilities. Their busses are for 14 to 10 passengers with wheelchair access. They are funded by grants from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) as well as the Department of Human Services (DHS) and some local contributions. They have been reviewing the total cost among the counties because of the increase in fuel costs. The contributions in Lamar County were not collected in 2020 and 2021 because they used other sources of funds to cover the cost. The annual contract of \$17,500.00 for the years 2022-23 is higher than in the prior years based on fuel costs and inflation. Mr. Kennedy and the board discussed ways to network and promote the service via the local newspaper, flyers, and news releases.

Senior Center Director Watts explained that clients are not being picked up and brought to the Senior Center because the scheduler from DHS is not seeing them in their system therefore the driver cannot pick up the passenger. Senior Center Director Watts said that if she is putting them in the system that should be proof that they should be picked up. Mr. Kennedy said that sometimes the system has bugs in it but would be glad to look into the matter with the DHS service. Senior Center Director Watts said that this is a regular occurrence. To cancel the Seniors request she has to be in the system three hours prior to them being transported at 9:00 a.m. therefore she has to be up by 6:00 a.m. If not, then the County is charged. Also, if a Senior gets sick and has to go home, she is charged for a no-show. Mr. Kennedy said that DHS has a set of rules that has to be followed including the no-show rules so they will have to come up with a plan for this. Commissioner Thrash inquired about the passenger busses being empty when they come through town. Mr. Kennedy said that there are 2 computer systems involved in the routing of the transit; the trips system with DHS and the Que Ride system. When the transit bus drops off and travels to pick up another client, then the bus looks empty because there are a lot of routes involved. Mr. Kennedy stated that you can get picked up in Lamar County and cross county lines between Upson, Pike, Butts, and Spalding County. The board discussed not seeing monthly or quarterly reports with metrics regarding the routes and trips traveled in Lamar County. Mr. Kennedy stated that he would start providing quarterly reports to the County.

Ameri-Pro EMS Discussion

Doug Norton, Regional Director of Operations, GA Market with AmeriPro EMS addressed the board about the ambulance service and staffing issues. Mr. Norton stated that healthcare is in a very bad staffing crisis. The major concern is not having enough paramedics and having to staff the ambulances with Advance Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). The fundamental difference between an EMT and a Paramedic comes down to advanced procedures and medication administration. Paramedics are generally paid between \$18.00 to \$24.00 an hour. Up until July, every ambulance in Lamar County was staffed with a paramedic and they had a paramedic on their quick response vehicle. Now, they have a plan in place to get a paramedic to the scene if necessary. They currently have 4 openings in the entire system. They staff ambulances 24 hours a day 7 days a week. When they took over the ambulance service, they kept most of the employees but since they have a more stringent requirement some

of the EMTs have not made it. Because Healthcare is so devastated, referral bonuses of \$5,000.00 and sign-on bonuses of \$5,000.00 are being offered. They have a full-time recruiter that handles the State of Georgia and most recently Ethan Gray was promoted to Operations Manager and is moving to Lamar County. AmeriPro EMS is working with the Medical Director at Upson Regional to determine if a patient needs to go to the hospital. If they do need to go to the hospital then they will have a protocol where they can go with the EMT and keep the paramedic in the County.

AmeriPro EMS is currently working with the County Administrator in Pike County to see if they can be a part of the regional system. The services will need to go up and subsidy has to go down. This will give them more resources and then they can have a floating truck. They do provide a data report to the County Administrators regarding the calls and the type of support that is being utilized. Currently, a paramedic is being used about 16 percent of the time. This does not mean the patient will die if they do not have a paramedic but they may be delayed getting the treatment that they need. Mr. Norton said that in Texas, where he served for two years, they only have ALS's on their ambulances and the paramedics are in fly cars; dodge chargers. He said that they may explore this system in Georgia in the future because they are struggling to have paramedics.

Mr. Norton stated that he meets with the hospital Administrators, Chief Nursing Officer, and the Director of the Emergency Room (ER) to review the calls that are received and the condition of the patient. He said that he changed the contract that gave AmeriPro EMS first right of refusal. They originally said that you need to call them first, but if they do not want to call them that is fine. Mr. Norton said that their primary goal is to respond to a 911 call and not the hospital. The Lamar and Upson County Administrators have been working together with both the hospital Administrators, AmeriPro EMS, and the Fire Department to make sure everything is working the way it should and to build an amazing system.

Regular Business Meeting Discussion

The Board reviewed the Regular Business meeting agenda.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation will be given by Pastor Rex Kessler of Lilla Memorial Baptist Church
4. Recess for Public Hearing
5. Public Hearing
 - i. Reviewed Development Regulation V4.
 - ii. Discussed that the First Reading of Ordinance 2022-01 was done in February but the changes are so significant that a new Ordinance is necessary. The board agreed to withdraw the First Reading of Ordinance 2022-01 based on the number of changes that had been made and proceed with the draft of the First Reading of Ordinance 2022-06 which is being reviewed by Attorney Mayfield.
 - iii. Stated that the Moratorium was extended in May for a period of 90 days. Suggested that they work on the Lamar County Comprehensive Plan in terms of the Land Use Plan.
 - iv. Discussed putting both Ordinance 2022-01 and Ordinance 2022-06 on the agenda.
6. Reconvene Regular Business Meeting
7. Approval of Agenda
8. Minutes Approval
 - i. Workshop Meeting-June 16th, 2022
 - ii. Public Hearing-June 21st, 2022
 - iii. Regular Business Meeting-June 21st, 2022

9. Reviewed two 2022 Mutual Aid Agreements By and Between the Fire Departments and the Lamar County Fire and Rescue, Georgia
 - i. Spalding County Fire Department
 - ii. Wellstar Spalding Regional Hospital EMSChairman Glass stated that County Administrator Townsend is working with AmeriPro EMS about joining with Pike County and also Meriwether County. Other areas in the State are interested in the process of combining counties with the ambulance service.
10. Agreed to keep the Three Rivers Regional Transit Agreement for FY July 1, 2022-June 30th, 2023, on the agenda based on the information that they had received from Transit Program Director Tommy Kennedy.
11. Reviewed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Budget. County Administrator Townsend provided a list of Departments and Constitutional Officers that would be included in the premium pay.
12. Reviewed a bid from Ten 8 in the amount of \$32,751.06 for the purchase of new equipment for the Fire Truck.
13. Discussed approving Commissioner Thrash as the 2022 Legislative Leadership Voting Delegate.

Round Table

Chairman Glass stated that they are still working on Local Options Sales Tax (LOST) negotiations with the cities. The proposal for the County is 58 percent up from 56 percent and the cities would figure out the last 42 percent. The City of Barnesville said that they cannot take a reduction from 39 percent so that left ½ percent for the Town of Aldora and 2½ percent for the City of Milner but they both said that they could not do that. Chairman Glass said that he has been trying to work out what he thought was fair amongst all the citizens based on the services but it does not seem that they are going to be able to resolve the numbers between the cities. Chairman Glass said that they may have to go before arbitration. They would probably select someone from the Carl Vinson Institute for the arbitration. An agreement between the County and the City of Barnesville has to be signed by December 31st, 2022. The City of Milner and the Town of Aldora do not have to be included but they will have to give them something based on population. Chairman Glass explained that the LOST penny is meant to offset property taxes and to be used in the operating fund. Therefore, the City of Barnesville cannot include the cost to run the water or the sewer in their LOST proposal because these are revenue funds that the customers pay for. The City of Barnesville has services such as Police, Fire, Animal Control, and Roads that they are saying the citizens are being doubled taxed on because the County is also charging them for the Sheriff, County Roads, County Fire, and County Animal Control. Chairman Glass stated that this is why the City gets 39 percent of the LOST distributions. The County gets more because in addition to these services the County pays for the ambulances, the courts, the jails, the Coroner, the Probate Court, etc. The City of Barnesville is saying that they use County roads to get people to the cities to spend money but they are the economic engine of the community because they have most of the infrastructure and businesses. Chairman Glass said that compared to 10 years ago, most business is done online. The County took on the Library and things have fundamentally changed. Chairman Glass said that the City of Barnesville has “Buggy Days” and “BBQ and Blues” that generate a lot of revenue. Commissioner Thrash said that the City of Barnesville did not include the County and they included the City of Barnesville in the Christmas Parade. Chairman Glass said that the LOST negotiations between the County and the City of Barnesville are down to a 2 percent difference and asked if they wanted to fight over that and jeopardize the relationship with the City of Barnesville. Chairman Glass said that the latest proposal that the City of Barnesville will sign off on is that the County gets 58 percent and the City of Barnesville gets 39 percent, the City of Milner gets 2½ percent and the Town of Aldora gets ½ percent. The problem with this is that if the County and the City of Barnesville sign this agreement, and send it to the State, the Town of Aldora gets a portion based on their population and it goes to zero and then the City of Milner goes to 4.6 percent based on their population which means it comes out of the City of Barnesville’s portion. The City of Barnesville will not sign it without the City of Milner or

the Town of Aldora being included in the LOST negotiations. All of the cities want to keep it the way the LOST Distributions are currently set up; County: 56 percent, City of Barnesville: 39 percent, City of Milner; 4 percent, Town of Aldora; 1 percent.

Chairman-Elect Traylor weighed in on the discussion. He said that for over 10 years the County's percentages have gone up and asked if the cities percentages went up too. Chairman Glass stated that the City of Barnesville wants to focus on the daytime population because they believe that people coming into town generate sales tax and that they are the economic engine. Chairman Glass stated that the City of Barnesville feels like this is double taxation. Commissioner Thrash asked what would be the downside of accepting the 56 percent. Chairman Glass said that financially this would be \$57,000.00 and it would not sink the County. Commissioner Thrash said that as part of the negotiation to accept the 56 percent they need to let the City of Barnesville know that they want to be included in the Roberta Drive property decision, and other issues that should involve the County. Chairman Glass said that this is not money that will be collected today but it is what they are hoping for in the future.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Robert Heiney, Vice-Chairman

Bennie Horton, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk