



Carl Vinson Institute of Government
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Lamar County Commissioners Planning Workshop & Retreat

January 26, 2023

Georgia Center, Athens-Clarke County, GA

Facilitated by: Hardin Watkins, CVIIG Public Service Faculty

RETREAT REPORT ACTION PLAN 2023



Retreat Report & Action Plan - 2023
Lamar County Commissioners Planning Workshop & Retreat
January 26-27, 2023
Georgia Center, Athens-Clarke County, GA

Attendees:

Chair Ryran Taylor
Vice Chair Nancy Thrash
Commissioner Jarrod Fletcher
Commissioner Jason Lovett
Commissioner Ashley Giles
County Administrator Sean Townsend
County Clerk Carlette Davidson
UGA CVIOG Public Service Faculty Facilitator Hardin Watkins

Retreat Overview

Review of objectives, format, content, agenda, and opening remarks

What do attendees hope to accomplish today?

Get to know each other better.
Team building.
Learn.
Learn what community likes and dislikes.
Illuminate perspective of fellow county officials.
Understanding.
Set goals.
Establish goals and objectives.
Establish framework for working together.

What one word represents your perspective on your role in Lamar County?

Serve.
Limited.
Voice.
Fair representation.
Trust.
Service.
Finance.
Working together.

What one word comes to mind when you think of Lamar County?

- Giving.
- Community.
- Home.
- Home.
- Home.
- Home.
- Home.

What is your vision for Lamar County?

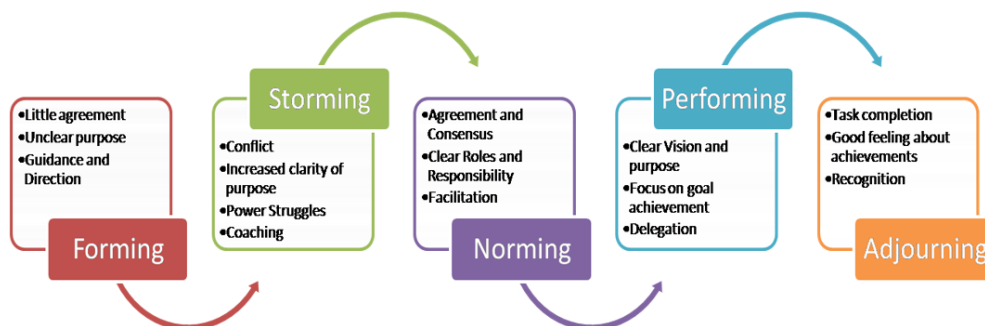
- Good quality growth: larger lot sizes, more business and industry, help eliminate property owner tax burden.
- Controlled growth: low impact, high wage growth – smart businesses.
- Small town feeling: do more to help build sense of community connectedness and relationships.
- Great place to live, work, and shop.
- Keep Lamar County’s history and grow the way we want (hometown feel) while moving forward.

Nurturing a Team to High Performance

Mr. Watkins provided an overview of research and applicable components of Bruce Tuckman’s model of group/team development. With a group of new Commissioners, there are new ideas and new goals to be considered and handled carefully. Everyone has a defined role and set of responsibilities. Each commissioner had joined a new team responsible for achieving results. County staff is looking for clarity regarding decisions.

Tuckman’s concepts provide a useful framework to look at your team dynamics and establish a basis for team conversation without boxing you in.

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development



County Administrator Report

County Administrator Townsend gave an overview of current issues and updates on various projects and initiatives of importance to this discussion. This included new asphalt, culvert replacement, Bottoms Road (difficult to achieve results), and the Animal Ordinance. ARPA (\$3.7 million) needs to be spent by December 2024 or adopt a plan to indicate how you plan to spend.

What do you want Lamar County to accomplish in the next 5 years?

Responses were collected and placed on flip charts for all to review and discuss.

After discussion, the Commissioners focused on prioritizing the items discussed in the morning.

Consideration of each item included the following factors:

- Whether the item was high, medium, or low priority?
- Level of urgency.
- Is the item high impact or low impact?
- What is the return on investment (ROI)?

The following list represents the eight (8) items that received one or more vote from Commissioners.

Retention of employees - 4

Animal shelter/Ordinance - 4

Better communication - 3

Annual budgeting without increase - 2

New business/industry (including spec building) - 2

Consolidated government/functions - 2

Fund balance/contingency increasing - 2

Commercial development outpaces residential - 1

A number of items were listed on the flip chart for discussion but did not receive any priority votes in the exercise. These items include: Justice Center & Courthouse, new fire building for Milner area (north), mental health & domestic violence center, and impact fee discussion/research. These topics were not prioritized and received no further discussion after the voting exercise.

Action Planning

Once the prioritization was established, the next focus was on action planning to determine who is responsible for each item and establish a timeframe or due date for progress tracking.

Priority 1A. RETENTION OF EMPLOYEES

WHO LEADS: County Administrator Townsend

DETAILS: Want to ensure competitive salaries.
Keep our quality employees and avoid being a training ground.

Can people receiving bonus or increase be required to stay for a time period?
Ask employees via survey what is the most impactful.
Keep the employees informed with good communication.
What is the appropriate role for elected official involvement in survey and supporting survey?
Consider bonuses for employees (\$750-\$1,000) and/or pay adjustments (3%).
Bonuses could be payable at holiday time period.
Take a look at the overall pay structure, including retirement program and family health insurance premiums.
Take a look at the performance evaluation system.

WHEN: Complete survey of employees by 3/31/23.
Report to Commissioners by 3/31/23.
Commissioners to follow-up with County Administrator & Constitutional Officers during Q2.
Consider pay changes (possible 3%) with budget preparation for budget adjustments or next year's budget.

Priority 1B. ANIMAL SHELTER/ORDINANCE

WHO LEADS: Shelter → County Administrator Townsend and Commission Chair Traylor.
Ordinance → Anita Buice.

DETAILS: Shelter → should be economically viable.
SPLOST vote was 6-7 years ago.
Operating cost = \$260,000 annually.
Building cost = TBD.

Ordinance → should mimic state code – reasonable, but be comprehensive, get it all
Goal is to be following state requirements.
Not aggressive.
Review draft from Anita.

WHEN: Shelter → Discuss on 1/27/23 and develop timeline.
Ordinance → Draft ready for review by end of February 2023, discuss at March 2023.
Workshop.

Priority 3. BETTER COMMUNICATION FOR BETTER INFORMED RESIDENTS

WHO: Short-term → Carlette Davidson, Long-term → New Deputy Clerk

DETAILS: Branding and education.
Public awareness campaign.
Facebook page, apps.

Do we need communications director? A proposal is coming soon.
Better website, more user-friendly navigation.
Improve website integration with cell phone for easier readability.

Short-term or low-cost staffing ideas for consideration → offer a supplement to an existing employee, student intern help, ACCG internship.

WHEN: By March 31, 2023

Priority 4A. ANNUAL BUDGETING WITH NO MILLAGE RATE INCREASE

WHO: County Administrator Townsend & All County Commissioners

DETAILS: Raise the bar on services without increasing property taxation.

WHEN: July – November 2023

Priority 4B. NEW BUSINESS & INDUSTRY (POSSIBLE SPEC BUILDING)

WHO: Commission Chair Traylor and County Commissioners

DETAILS: Attract jobs
Identify and recruit industry to fit the tax base for the community.
Consider construction of a spec building for a prospect.
Find ways to provide opportunities for more people to work locally.
Evaluate feasibility of attracting more movies and filming.
Find the County's "niche" in the market.
Do a better job working with the IDA, including more dialogue.
IDA relationship is intertwined with Chamber.
What is IDA funding being used for? (\$77,000 annually).
What is the ROI for IDA investment and other future economic development efforts?

WHEN: Invite IDA to attend County Commissioners Meeting in April 2023 – 1st step

Priority 4C. EVALUATE CONSOLIDATION OF GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS & SERVICES

WHO: County Administrator Townsend & Commissioner Lovett

DETAILS: This is part of ongoing, routine conversations.
Look for opportunities as they present themselves.
Service delivery strategy process next year provides opportunity to discuss.

WHEN: 2024

Priority 4D. INCREASE FUND BALANCE & CONTINGENCY

WHO: County Administrator Townsend

DETAILS: Steady progress has been made.
Fund balance goal is 6-12 months.
Presently, the fund balance is 2.4 months.
Cost of 6 months fund balance = \$4 million.

WHEN: Ongoing

Priority 8. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTPACES RESIDENTIAL

Rolls into Priority 4B - new business and industry. This aligns with IDA goals. Evaluate zoning packages for major subdivisions.

Day 2 Discussion, Friday January 27, 2023

County Commissioners met with County Administrator Townsend and County Clerk Davidson on site at the Georgia Center to discuss the following topics: budget review, departmental information (some planned to dial in via virtual meeting technology), social media policy, and proposal for new administrative staff. CVIOP faculty were not present for this portion.

Department Interaction Via Zoom

WHO: Recreation Department-Director Tiffaney Lowe

Details: Overview of Department Needs, Obstacles and Successes

1. Gym Renovation
 - a. Led light.
 - b. HVAC.
 - c. Flooring.
 - d. Office Space.
2. Spring Ball Season
 - a. Increased Enrollment.
 - b. Increased Coach Involvement.
3. Budget Constraints
 1. Fencing.
 2. Ball Park Lights.
 3. Scoreboard.
 4. Electrical Boxes.
 5. Park Appearance.
 6. Sponsorships.

3. Tournaments

- a. Hotels.
- b. Restaurants.
- c. Opening Ceremony.

Who: Senior Center-Director Antionette Watts

Details: Overview of Department Needs, Obstacles and Successes

1. Activities

- a. Superbowl Party.
- b. Chili Cook-Off.
- c. Valentine's Day Celebration.
- d. Mardi Gras Celebration.
- e. Bingo.
- f. Corn Hole.
- g. Line Dancing.
- h. Volleyball.
- i. Yoga.
- j. Kia Chia Yoga.

2. Needs

- a. More Space.
- b. Pocket Doors for separation of rooms.
- c. Passenger Bus.
- d. Additional Parking Spaces.

3. Meals on Wheels

- a. Upton Senior Center provides the meals.
- b. Three Rivers Area Agency on Aging (TRAAA) determines the qualifications and makes the assessments.
- c. Drivers Routed based on spreadsheet maintained for all addresses.
- d. 30 plus meals delivered daily.

Who: Lamar County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)-Director Becky Martin

Details: Overview of Department Shares, Concerns and Obstacles Activities and Successes

1. Shares

- a. Joined the EMA team the Summer of 2008.
- b. Billy Campbell retired a year ago.
- c. Serves as Interim EMA Director and works parttime 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- c. Works with the Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) to obtain emergency funds.
- d. Monitors the National and State Weather System.

2. Concerns

- a. Gas Line cut during Recreation Renovation.

- b. No State required Generator and concerns of loss of power.
- 3. Activities
 - a. 10 Sirens received through grants and tested by Truman Boyle. Applied for 2 more sirens through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) but no funds. Discussion regarding applying for more sirens or using CODE RED for storm warnings.
 - 1. City Hall in Milner.
 - 2. Redbone Fire Station.
 - 3. Johnstonville Fire Station.
 - 4. Chappel Mill Fire Station.
 - 5. North Milner Fire Station.
 - 6. Grove Street at Public Works Facility.
 - 7. Piedmont Fire Station.
 - 8. High Falls Road.
 - 9. Bush Road.
 - 10. Corner of Brooks and Bottoms Road.
 - b. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) dismantled due to non-activity and age.
 - 1. Classes and Certification is offered online.

Who: Lamar County Tax Assessor-Tax Assessor Jeannie Haddock

Details: Overview of Department Shares, Valuations and Concerns

- 1. Shares
 - a. Tax Assessor for 27 years with 6 years in Lamar County, 9 years in Pike County and 12 years back in Lamar County.
 - b. 2 Fulltime and 1 part-time employee.
- 2. Valuation Report
 - a. Contractors for Commercial and Residential Assessments
 - b. Values of houses have not decreased.
 - c. Sales of houses has declined.
 - d. Sales ratio is at 33 and the Department of Revenue requires it to be 38.
 - e. A house that sold for \$250,000.00 and is valued at \$200,000.00 the ratio based on the value of the house and the sales price divided by 40% equals the ratio of 35. The ratio needs to be between 38 and 42 for the Department of Revenue. If the houses are selling higher than they are valued at the ratio drops. Houses in subdivisions are selling for \$400,00.00 and their values do not match. A tiny home on a 5 acre-trac of land sold for \$250,000.00.
 - f. Brought in 360 million dollars last year.
 - g. Board of Assessors will decide in April if there will be another reassessment.
 - h. If the 38 ratio is not meet then the schools could lose State Funding and they could loose funds from State utilities.
 - i. The ratio last year went from 38 to 36 and they lost \$27,000.00.

Who: Planning and Community Development-Director Anita Buice

Details: Overview of Department Shares, Reports, and Information

1. Shares

- a. Worked for Monroe County for 19 years and was appointed County Administrator in 2009. and hired as County Manager in 2015. Planning and Zoning was her favorite. Has been in Lamar County for 4 years as the Planning and Community Development Director.
- b. There are 3.5 employees in the Planning and Community Development office included the Code Enforcement Office. 3 employees and 1 part-time employee.
- c. Charles Abbott and Associates is the contract that will handle all of the Commercial permitting.

1. Reports

- a. Code Enforcement incidents where they make contact with the property owner regarding complaints received. If issues not resolved then Major Holmes will be contacted to resolve the issue.
 - i. Trash.
 - ii. Old refrigerators.
 - iii. Cars.
- b. Owner with 31 acre lots requesting rezoning back to A-R.
- c. FoxCrossing Subdivision is under EPD court order so their building phase has halted.

Who: Solid Waste Authority-AmWaste

Details: Overview of AmWaste Services

1. Shares regarding AmWaste Service

- a. Two Parts to Solid Waste Authority
 - i. Trash Pickup.
 - ii. Scale House.
- b. Agreement with Solid Waste Authority for 4000 lbs. waste.
 - i. \$13.00 a month per cart for trash pickup.
 - ii. Photo Id and Driver's License required.
 - iii. Hours: 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm M-F and 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm on Saturday.
- c. New faster internet service to get people in and of the scales.

Who: Public Works Department-Director James Rigdon

Details: Overview of Department Shares, Obstacles and Needs

1. Shares Took on Animal Control.

- a. 15 Years with Lamar County.

- b. Hired as Fleet Technician and offered job as the Public Works Director.
 - c. 12 employees in the entire Department including the Secretary. Has had several Secretaries or Assistants hired to help with paperwork over the years.
 - d. Moved people in Maintenance to different roles after they started purchasing new cars.
2. Obstacles
- a. Broken Tractors and complaints about grass and trash pickup that led to the Mowing and Trash pickup contract that allows for service 3 times a year.
 - b. Illegal Tire and Trash Dumping.
 - c. Dirt Road issues; rock and limited right of way.
 - d. Issues with Tractors and Track Hoes.
 - e. Upgraded to Caterpillar Tractor from C.W. Matthews.
 - f. Handles Bush Cutting and new Equipment will be delivered in April.
 - g. Mows around Dams and Bridges.
 - h. 63 Year agreement where the County Maintains and Cuts 4 watersheds for private owners with 30 acres on each one without any fishing privileges
 - i. Maintains Pipe Replacements.
 - j. Operates Small Patch Machine. Needs a Paving Operator other than Public Works Director Rigdon.
 - k. Handles Storm Water and Driveway Culverts
 - l. Salary issue with keeping employees.
3. Needs
- a. Tac Machine for Paving.
 - b. Machine Operators.
 - c. Security for Public Works Department when paving or working on the roads.

Who: County Administrator-Sean Townsend

Details: Board Discussion

1. Funds for testing water hydrants in the County, that belong to the City of Barnesville but affects the Insurance Services Office (ISO) for the Fire Department; Approximately \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00.
 - a. Negotiate with the City of Barnesville.
 - b. Funds pulled from the American Relief Program (ARP).
 - c. Location of Fire Trucks testing hydrants.
2. Commissioner Cellphone Discussion and Issues
 - a. Download RingCentral App on personal phone instead of County Phone.
 - b. Open Records Request with phone being used either personal or County.
3. Holiday and PTO Discussion moved to next year.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Nancy Thrash, Vice-Chair

Jarrod Fletcher, Commissioner

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk