

**Budget Workshop Meeting**  
**Lamar County Board of Commissioners**  
**10/30/2023**  
**12:30 p.m.**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 8:36 a.m. on October 31, 2023 . Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor Vice-Chair Thrash, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson.

**Commissioners**

County Administrator Townsend stated that the most significant increase was with the State increase with salaries of \$2,000.00 for each Elected official. The travel line item has increased due to increased fuel and hotel costs. Increased the travel pay for each Commissioner from \$200.00 to \$250.00.

Chairman Traylor suggested that the board recess the Budget Workshop so that the Commissioners could leave to get their Budget Workshop books. Commissioner Gilles made a motion at 8:40 a.m. to adjourn the Budget Workshop meeting, and Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The board resumed the Budget Workshop meeting around 9:00 a.m.

**Departments and Constitutional Officer Budget Concerns**

**Zoning**

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the board with the following concerns.

- Code Enforcement Officer five percent budget increase for completing a certification.
- Increase in Retirement.
- Part-Time salary was added back to the budget that was supposed to be changed to a contractor for building inspections. In 2023, they did a partial contractor for commercial-only building inspections and continued using the part-time Code Enforcement Officer even though it was deleted from the budget.
- Concerns with having a Code Enforcement Officer available to police issues such as junk cars. Concerns with having a Code Enforcement Officer who can write tickets. They currently work with the Sheriff's Office to write code enforcement tickets if necessary.
- Requested to combine the Planning Commission Board and the Board of Appeals. They have two separate five-member boards, and the goal was to combine both boards last year. Since Planning and Community Development Director Buice did not think they would need the Board of Appeals line item, they removed the budget for the Board of Appeals. However, the Ordinance to combine the two boards was not approved, and they continued to use the Board of Appeals. Requesting to combine both boards by January, which will eliminate \$2,750.00 from the zoning budget. Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that the Planning Commission is a joint commission. The Board of Appeals hears the County's special exceptions and variances. They make recommendations on special exceptions, and they make final decisions on variances. The Planning Commission is a joint board that includes the City of Barnesville. They hear the County's rezonings, and they hear the City of Barnesville's rezonings, special exceptions, and variances. The City of Milner would also like to be included in the combining of the two boards.

Once the two boards are combined, the Board of Appeals for Lamar County will be dissolved, and one board will be in charge of variances, special exceptions, and rezonings. There will be seven members: two from the City of Milner, two from the City of Barnesville, and three from Lamar County. There will need to be two readings of an Ordinance. Planning and Community Development Director Buice requested that the first reading be in November and the second reading be held in December. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that even if the Cities decide to have their own Planning Commission board, the alternative would still be to combine both boards in Lamar County.

- Commissioner Lovett said they are seeing a downturn in the economy and asked if there was a backup plan in case they ran out of work. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that there will be more time for Code Enforcement, and they will have time to be better at all of the base things that they do. Currently, they fly past them to get them done. Commissioner Lovett asked if they have a plan if it has dropped to nothing. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said that if it drops to nothing, they will eliminate the part-time position. County Administrator Townsend said that the outsourced commercial contractor is on an as-needed basis only.

### **Tax Assessor**

Tax Assessor Haddock addressed the board with her budget concerns as follows:

- Requested to have a Flight evaluation added to the budget, which is around \$48,000.00. People do not want the appraisers to be on their property. The flight is done by EagleView Aerial Imagery, where they can look at a house: the front, back, and side. Field Crest, College Manor, Woodall Estates, Needleleaf, and Cole Forest subdivisions have not been evaluated by a Flight since 2020.
- Requested an increase of \$6,000.00 for Wingap since she lost a lot of picture data in their server crash last year.
- Tax Assessor Haddock reported that the market is not going down. Commissioner Lovett said the market is not going down because there is not a surplus of inventory, and the number of houses is dropping. Tax Assessor Haddock said the number of houses being built is dropping. Commissioner Lovett said that after this transition is over, there is a lot of supply and demand because Wall Street bought up all of the supply. Tax Assessor Haddock said because things are still selling, they will have to go up again from \$90.00 to \$110.00 to stay within the sales ratio. Commissioner Lovett said that if the sales ratio goes up, they can adjust back on the millage rate. The current sales ratio for 2023 sales is 35. Commissioner Lovett noted there is no increase in taxable properties; therefore, the only revenue growth is inflation. That is taken care of with the millage rate rollback. Tax Assessor Haddock said the inflation growth from this year will carry over to taxable property for next year. Commissioner Lovett said that inflation growth is still the same for people; 100 people are paying taxes this year, and 100 people are paying more taxes next year. Tax Assessor Haddock reported that the school will be unable to decrease their millage rate, and the County will not be able to decrease their millage rate. The evaluations are happening now in the Northwest portion of the County, which will be new evaluations.
- Reported that a full-time position in the Tax Assessors' office is going to a Part-Time position. Reported that she is training an employee to take over for her Tax Assessor position in the next five years.
- Reported that rent in Lamar County ranges from \$1,200.00 to \$1,400.00, and there is no place to rent in Lamar County. They had one taxpayer charging \$600.00 to \$800.00 in rent, and she went before the Board of Equalization with a tax appeal. They can tax a rental property based on income

instead of cost, and since their income was only \$900.00 a month, they were able to work with this person's values.

## **Recreation**

Recreation Director Lowe addressed the board with her budget concerns.

- Requested to replace a scoreboard.
- Requested to have new toppers on fence lines.
- Applying for a 365 Grant for new swings that are rusting out at the bottom.
- Program area increases in particular sports.
- Increase in participation fees.
- Lawn Care and Grounds Maintenance increased by \$5,000.00 because of the high cost of paint, lawnmower maintenance services, heating, and cooling.
- Utility increase in the gym for heating and air.
- Salary increases for entry-level positions. The starting salary is currently \$12.00 to \$13.00 an hour.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that donations will need to be added to the budget on the expense and the revenue side per the auditor. A budget amendment was done in 2023 to add this to the current budget.
- Discussed the tennis courts and the skateboard surface area. The net is too high for pickleball, but they can still play on the court. The renovated gym has two portable pickleball courts. A quote of \$80,000.00 from C.W. Matthews was received for resurfacing all three courts. This does not include the repair of the nets or painting the lines on the courts. With inflation, the cost will now be around \$100,000.00. County Administrator Townsend reported that the poles would have to be reset once the paving is done.
- Commissioner Gilles reported that she had contacted Tony Hawks organization regarding the skateboard court but discovered that it has to be concrete.
- Recreation Director Lowe suggested that the Community in Lamar County volunteer to complete the projects. Reported that Monroe County had two projects completed by volunteers only. Their Horse Arena was completely redone by volunteers, which took a few years to complete. Grants usually require 50/50 matches, with studies being done for each grant.
- Commissioner Lovett pointed out that he came from a community that spent millions of dollars to build a park, but the people who are paying for the park are working at the Waffle House while other people are playing in the park. He met with the Three Rivers Commission, and they discussed grants. The number one grant criterion is to have it in the Comprehensive Plan. They also need to create a project/wish list in the Comprehensive Plan.

## **Probate**

Probate Judge Martin addressed the board with her budget concerns.

- Reported that her budget is the same as last year.
- Reported that she is over on postage, but the notices she sends out via mail are court-ordered, and she has no control over it.
- Requested an imaging project to scan the Probate Court's old records in case of fire, storm, or weather-related incidents. Currently, they scan all of the new records onto the cloud.
- Requested increases in salaries for her employees if possible.
- Reported that everything that they do is State-mandated.

## **Tax Commissioner**

Tax Commissioner Anthony addressed the board with her budget concerns as follows:

- Requested new ergonomic chairs.
- Requested dual monitors that are around 18 to 20 inches.  
Commissioner Traylor suggested ergonomic monitors that could be placed on the wall.
- Requested an increase in salaries for her employees.
- Reported that postage has increased due to the cost of legal ads increasing.
- Reported that the Training and Education costs have increased.

## **Sheriff's Office**

Sheriff White addressed the board with his budget concerns as follows:

- Reported that the Sheriff's Office budget is under by \$180,000.00.
- Reported that Kellwell Food Management contracts out their food service for the kitchen at the jail, and they are changing their billing format based on a percentage. Rosalyn Fletcher runs the kitchen, and all the food is cooked on-site. They are now serving more greens rather than so many starches, which lowers the cost of the food. Commissioner Lovett mentioned that they are working with the Senior Center on the same type of issue with meal cost.
- Chairman Traylor inquired about the inmate Health Care. Sheriff White stated that they are currently using Dr Hall, who formally had a practice in Griffin. He also manages the Spalding County jail. Mindy Strickland is the inmate nurse for the Sheriff's Office and has been with the Sheriff's Office for many years.
- Chairman Traylor addressed Sheriff White about his salaries. He mentioned that Sheriff White had changed the base rate for the starting salaries several years ago. Sheriff White said that Pike County's starting pay for a new deputy is \$52,000.00 yearly, but they are not fully staffed. Lamar County Sheriff's Office is fully staffed, and the starting salary is around \$43,000.00. Most of the Lamar County Sheriff's deputies are making around \$50,000.00.
- Reported that the Roofing project has been terrible. The company did not put a tarp over the roof, and when it rained, the jail was flooded. Sheriff White noted that it was fortunate not to have gotten into the Administration Office. Major Holmes said the fire alarms were activated, and they could not tell if it was an actual fire or hazard for the inmates.
- Sheriff White said there is only one other jail designed in the State, like the Lamar County jail, which is in Ben Hill County, and they now have a new facility. He said that in the future, the jail needs to have a pod system. Currently, the control system is separated from an A hall and a B hall that they cannot see. There is a main hall that they can see through windows. They rely on two TVs to look into the cells, and they can only see half of the cell, which is a dayroom. There are little squares on a 72-inch TV, and they cannot physically see into the cells, with the exception of the detox, home cell, and the observation cell. Most jails are now built in a pod system where the controller is at the top of the pod, and they are physically able to look down into the cells through windows from up above. Sheriff White suggested that they wait to build a jail until they can afford one that will last 20 years.
- Reported that the addition for an add-on to the building is in the new SPLOST.
- Reported that the purchase of three cars is included in the new SPLOST. The cost of a Dodge Charger 10 years ago was \$23,000.00 at a contracted price. The cost of a Dodge Charger in 2023 is \$43,000.00 for a base patrol car.

- Reported that they have lost deputies to other Counties and one to the DA's office as an investigator.
- Concerned with the reports about the change in the Insurance Company. Chairman Traylor stated that the insurance company is an in-network PCHS plan.
- Commissioner Lovett stated that he continues to call the Sheriff's Office over noise violations. Sheriff White stated that they get the same calls, but because a case is still pending in court with the owner of the noise violations, they will not continue to write tickets because one is still pending in court, and it will do no good to write anymore.

### **UGA Extension**

UGA County Extension Agent Jackson addressed the board with her concerns as follows:

- Reported they have been very busy. The 4-H program is expanding along with the number of volunteers.
- Reported that Commissioner Gilles will be leading the Horse Quiz Bowl.
- Reported that the 4-H is still at the Lamar County Elementary School, and they do Educational programming at Rock Springs Church.
- Reported that she does Science Projects when she is in the classroom, but activities are also offered outside of the classroom. Becky Patterson is spearheading an art club.
- Reported that they have agricultural programs where people request water and soil samples and troubleshoot lawns.
- Reported there are around 250-300 kids in the classrooms at both schools and around 50-60 kids in the after-school programs.
- Concerns with the new building and having enough space for the children. Ms. Jackson said that there are concerns with the times that the kids and parents meet after 5:00 p.m.
- Concerns with the deep freezer and other appliances in the current office. They need the deep freezer for storing items that they sell and for Buggy Days when they sell snow cones.
- Concerned when they are moving into the new building. County Administrator Townsend said he is meeting with different moving companies, and they recommend that each building move separately from the others. Ms. Jackson stated that moving during the Holidays is unsuitable for her because that is when she takes time off but she would be glad to move if necessary.
- Commissioner Lovett noted an incident with a pregnant cow and said that the UGA animal hospital is an excellent resource for those who do not have access to a large animal Veterinarian over the weekend. He said that working with the UGA veterinarian hospital was a great experience, and they have a 1-800 number that people can call. He requested they get brochures and ads in the paper so the public knows about this hospital.

### **Public Works**

Public Works Director Rigdon addressed the board with his concerns as follows:

- Reported that his biggest concern was his employees. He has one who quit and went to work for McElroy and two who have been out of work due to illness.
- Reported that the budget was less the same, but the Training and Education cost have increased.
- Reported that the fuel could go up or down but he is requesting an increase.
- Chairman Traylor said that he is working with Vulcan Rock Quarry (Vulcan) on getting an extension for acquiring the rock. Public Works Director Rigdon said that if there is no extension,

he will have to hire every dump truck in the County to get the rock moved away from Vulcan. He has hauled approximately 6000 tons out of Vulcan. He said free rock is a lot of money to be left behind. It takes a large amount of secure space to store the rock, and on the weekend, people could take the rock. Initially, the contract said they had one year to remove the free rock, but then they said it had to be removed by the end of this year. The first load was hauled out on June 29, 2023. Chairman Traylor said that he is working on getting it until the end of June, 2024.

- Reported that 1300 tons were put on Bottoms Road, 500 tons on Turner Bridge Road, and 400 tons on Dean Road.
- Reported that Grated Aggregate Base (GAB) rock costs \$19.55 a ton, and number 5 grade rock, they put on dirt roads, costs \$28.95.
- Commissioner Lovett noted that there are 1200 loads of rock at Vulcan at 20 tons a truck, which is around \$960,000.00, and they want you to come get it by the end of the year; therefore, dump trucks will be needed to get it. Chairman Traylor said that it will be after the end of the year, but it will either happen by June of 2024 or the end of 2024.
- Public Works Director Rigdon said that he only has a crew of six, and they spent a solid week on Dean Road cutting limbs, pulling ditches, and re-rocking the road. Mr. Rauch called about the rock two days later and said that the rock had washed down the road. Public Works Director Rigdon said that someone went over there on their tractor and stole the rock, and now it is in their driveway. Commissioner Gilles said the same thing happened on Ingram Road. Chairman Traylor said that they need to look into this.
- Public Works Director Rigdon said that all of his work is done per FEMA rates, including equipment, employee time, and the cost of the rock.
- Commissioner Gilles inquired about the average pay rate for a Public Works employee. Public Works Director Rigdon said the pay is around \$18.00 an hour. He said that when he goes to Monroe County to get tar, they are offering his employees \$20.00 an hour. County Administrator Townsend said that a few years ago, it was \$14.00 an hour, and they are continually raising the rate.
- Commissioner Lovett said they had previously discussed compensation based on certification and crossing training on equipment. Public Works Director Rigdon said that comes at a cost. Public Works Director Rigdon said all his employees have been there for five years or longer, but other Counties and companies are hiring his new employees for a higher pay rate.
- Commissioner Lovett asked if Public Works Director Rigdon could pave the tennis courts. Public Works Director Rigdon said he could pave them, but the issue is with the fence post.

## **Senior Center**

Senior Center Director Watts addressed the board with her concerns as follows:

- Concerned with the increase in meal cost going from \$7,000.00 to \$13,000.00.
- Concerned with the Seniors not having meals because of not having enough money in the budget to finish out the year. Reported that they could go to shelf-stable or frozen meals to save on cost.
- Concerned with Seniors being dropped off at 6:30 a.m. at the Senior Center by the Three Rivers buses and no one being present at the Senior Center until 7:00 a.m. Receives calls as early as 5:00 a.m. about transportation issues. Concerned about the Seniors that have traces of dementia and being left unattended. Concerned about being charged for pickup and drop-offs that do not happen. County Administrator Townsend said that Three Rivers had a bus driver drop a blind man off at a doctor's office and left him there. He had to call someone to come and get him.
- Discussed getting meal costs cheaper with Three Rivers by cooking meals on-site rather than from the Upson Senior Center. They have a spreadsheet that gives the total unit cost for every meal.

Currently, they are paying \$7.25 per meal, but Upson Senior Center is proposing to go up to \$11.00 or \$12.00 because they want to repair the roof at their Senior Center.

- Commissioner Lovett said that they have a program at the jail for \$3.00 a meal, and they are already following dietary guidelines. Senior Center Director Watts said they have to follow the guidelines from Three Rivers, and she would be cited for failing to follow the menus they are required to provide. County Administrator Townsend said that they would work with the contractor that the jail is using.
- Reported that the Travel Club members will not sign the waivers when riding on the Three Rivers Bus. Reported that the President, Jeff Baker, of the Travel Club, will not pay for the mileage to ride the bus. Senior Center Director Watts said that he does not talk to her, and when he does, he talks over her and raises his voice at her. She said that one day, the Meals on Wheels employee had to ask her if she was okay when Mr. Baker talked to her with an ugly tone at the Senior Center. County Administrator Townsend said that Mr. Baker does not deal with women. He said Mr. Baker told him that Senior Center Director Watts needed to listen to him. County Administrator Townsend told Mr. Barker that if they do not sign the waiver, then the bus will not be used. Commissioner Gilles said that she had a request to speak to Travel Club Member, Janie Hugley because she thinks that Mr. Baker is not telling the Travel Club members the truth. Chairman Traylor said he wants to meet with Mr. Baker after Senior Center Director Watts and Commissioner Gilles meet with Ms. Hughley. Senior Center Director Watts said Mr. Bakers complains about everything at the Senior Center.

### **EMA**

EMA Director Martin addressed the board with her concerns as follows:

- Reported that the Pre-Hazard Mitigation 5-year update will expire in December of 2027. The start date of the process is September 2024. This is a \$24,000.00 expense, and she is working on the application now. The Pre-Hazard Mitigation can be paid upfront or quarterly.
- Reported that the two new sirens are still on hold based on FEMA's timeline. The cost of the sirens is \$72,000.00, which is in the 2024 budget. The reimbursement from FEMA is 75 percent. 2
- The Local Emergency Operation Plan (LEOP) has been updated.
- Concerned about moving to the new space because she has always worked alone in a building. The move will happen next year or later.
- County Administrator Townsend said that the Corner had requested a two-person freezer for the deceased to be placed in the back of the renovated 911 Center. EMA Director Martin was concerned that this freezer would be near her location. Chairman Traylor assured her this would be in another part of the 911 Center.
- Chairman Traylor requested a brief preparation narrative from the EMA command center in case of a catastrophe.
- Commissioner Fletcher inquired about the EMA's hours of operation. EMA Director Martin reported that she works 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

### **Fire Department**

Fire Chief Douglas Matthews addressed the board with his concerns as follows:

- Requested new mattresses for beds in Fire Station 1.
- Requested to replace the fire hose that was purchased in 1981. Applied for a \$23,000.00 grant to replace the fire hoses.
- Requested to replace a 1981 and 1982 Fire Truck. To purchase a new fire truck from SPLOST, he has applied for a FEMA Grant and is working with a grant writer who required to be paid five

percent of the total grant. There is also another grant that pays for the grant writer because they are a combination of full-time and part-time. The match is ten percent for the FEMA grant. The fire trucks cost around \$650,000.000 a piece and would cost the County around \$65,000.00 if the grant is approved, plus the five percent for the grant writer if the grant for them is not approved. Fire Chief Matthews is recommended to purchase two trucks.

- Reported that his fuel has increased.
- Requested to add a generator for the Parker Branch Fire Station and this would come up under Maintenance.
- Added a monthly increase of \$79.00 a month for internet instead of the current Wi-Fi Hot Spot that costs around \$38.01 a month. This is for the Parker Branch Fire Station.
- Requested new radios but has applied for a 365 Grant to cover this.
- Reported that three new Fire Fighter volunteers will start at the end of the month.
- Reported that the workload is the same with the ambulance company and they are averaging the same number of calls. There is still a shortage of paramedics. There are eight trucks with an Advanced Life Support (ALS) employee but no paramedics.
- Reported that flights for accidents have increased this past month.
- Reported that there are still staffing issues and requested that they review the contract.
- Requested two new battery chain saws.
- Reported that to build a Station 3 in Milner, he has no land.
- Chairman Traylor stated that they would discuss this later in Executive Session and said that it may behoove them to buy land in the next three years as opposed to now.
- Commissioner Lovett said that the biggest benefactor of fire is industry, and industry should give you the land you need. Reported that the Rock Quarry on Hwy 41 gave the Fire Department three acres of land beside the cemetery. Commissioner Lovett suggested that Jordan Lumber build a new Fire Station on the North side of the County.
- Invited the Commissioners to family night at Station 1 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

### **Building and Maintenance**

Building and Maintenance Director Beverly addressed the board with his concerns.

- Reported that his supply list goes toward all of the buildings.
- Reported they installed a new air conditioner in the pharmacy in the Health Department.
- Reported that he does not provide supplies for the 911 Center or the Tax Commissioner.
- Reported that McIntosh Trail could be leaving the County if a new building is not provided to them.
- Reported that the Grounds and Maintenance for the Courthouse have increased because a heavier trailer and a building for the equipment is needed. Chairman Traylor suggested that they purchase an enclosed trailer.
- Reported that a blower was stolen this past year.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that he put landscaping under the Courthouse building.
- Chairman Traylor reported that the leaves from the trees are abundant at the new Administration Building and that the trees may need to be taken down. He also said a privacy fence could be installed, and a golf cart access road could be presented to the City. He said that some evergreens could also be included. Chairman Traylor said that he would present this to the City of Barnesville. Commissioner Lovett said the golf cart access road should be 24 ft. wide.
- Reported that the lawnmowers are getting old.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that a new Maintenance truck will come out of the new SPLOST budget.



## **Recess for Break**

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to take a 20-minute break at approximately 12:35 p.m. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Reconvene the Budget Workshop Meeting**

The board reconvened the Budget Workshop meeting at approximately 1:00 p.m.

## **Elections**

Board of Elections Chairman Christopher addressed the board with members of the Board of Election and Election Superintendent Anita Reid's concerns as follows:

- Reported that the salaries had remained unchanged but requested that they be brought up to what they are in competitive areas.
- Reported that the \$30,000.00 expenditure for the Election carts was cut because they are purchasing them this year.
- Reported that there could be some run-offs, and they may see all five elections, including two run-offs that will be held in 2024.
- Reported the Elections will probably be audited in 2024 and could take up to two days.
- Chairman Traylor noted the \$25,000.00 increase for the Poll Holders.
- Reported that all machines will be used next year and said that this is mandated by Federal law that requires a machine for every 250 voters at a polling place.
- Reported that Training and Education costs have increased; there are two conferences that they must attend. On even number years there is no conference but on odd number years the expenses go up. There is a conference in December of 2023. There is another in the Spring of 2024 and then another conference in December of 2024, and then another one in the Spring of 2025.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that there could be a coding issue for the Tools and Supplies line item in 2022 since it is reported as zero.
- Reported that \$21,000 was allotted for purchasing new polling machines listed under the Equipment line item in 2023 for all polling places. The original request was for \$30,000.00.
- Concerns reported that Homeland Security did their security audit, and one of the things they suggested was a hardening of the exterior outside of the building and a record of inspections and written procedures for emergencies.
- Concerns were resolved by Homeland Security for losing power at the polling places and determining where the generators are located and how long they last.
- Concerns about having a belligerent person at a polling place and knowing the procedure for how to handle this. Concerns about getting in touch with law enforcement and who makes those decisions. Board of Elections Chairman Christopher suggested they have a Security person on site for all Departments and Constitutional Officers for the entire building because he wants everyone in the building to be safe.
- Board of Elections Chairman Christopher reported that New Hampshire has 21 Republicans and 24 Democrats on their Presidential Primary ballot.
- Reported that the City of Barnesville is costing around \$1,000.00 a vote, and the only thing that can change that is the State Legislature.
- Reported there are three weeks of early voting, and two Saturday voting. He said \$18,000.00 is the lowest cost that they can run an election.
- Reported that the State built their ballots incorrectly twice because they did not understand that the City of Barnesville election was separate from the County.

- Elections Superintendent Reid reported that she spoke to Senator Williams regarding unfunded mandates.
- The Sunday Election Voting was successful, and over 60 people voted. The demographic study showed that the working age people from 25 to 55 age voted.
- Reported that in the 2024 Election year, they voted to have half a day Sunday voting for the Presidential Preference Primary, half a day on the General Primary, and half a day on the General Election.
- Reported that the mail-in absentee voting has decreased since 2020, but there are almost as many absentee ballots by mail as they have had voters. There are around 70 to 80 absentee ballots and around 96 on-site voters for this current election. Absentee applications cannot be mailed out, and it has specific State requirements attached to each ballot.
- The window for the run-off is tight, and as soon as the election and the audit are finished, they have to start testing the machines for the run-off.

### **Clerk of Superior Court**

Clerk of Superior Court Tyson addressed the board with his concerns as follows;

- Reported that there is a decrease in the Clerk of Superior Court budget.
- Reported an increase in postage due to the Board of Equalization Appeals, and decisions regarding this have to be mailed out.
- Concerned about the increase in the cost of health insurance based on an article in the Herald Gazette. Chairman Traylor said that the article was misleading and there would not be an increase in cost to the employee but rather an increase in effort to the employee regarding strategies to cover the claim and their health care decision. There will be information provided to the employee explaining the new procedures during open enrollment.
- Chairman Traylor noticed that the credit card purchases for postages, office equipment, supplies, and communication were either high or low. Clerk of Superior Court Tyson stated that this must be a coding issue with the postage. He said he does not see the communication bills. County Administrator Townsend said he would look at the details of these line items. The office equipment had to do with the cost of printing and scanning, but the cost went down due to purchasing a new copier that had previously been leased.
- Concerned about the window replacement in the front of the building. County Administrator Townsend said that he is working on this with various companies. Blue Bear Restoration installed the new windows in the back of the Courthouse.
- Concerned about an old metal detector that is not accurate. Chairman Traylor stated this would come from the Sheriff's Office's budget.

### **Revenues**

County Administrator Townsend addressed the board with his concerns as follows:

- Reported that revenues in the budget are based on trends.

### **Human Resources and Personal Policy**

County Administrator Townsend stated that Human Resource Director Kilchriss is working on the new PTO policy in January. He said sick time is maxed out and carried over up to 288 hours. At the end of the year, vacation is lost if it is not used. With the new GASB rules, sick time has to be reported as a liability in the audit. Once they change the process over to PTO, then the employee can use the time as they need it. The accrual process for both sick time and vacation will not change. In order to start the

process, they will need to implement the PTO now and then start the PTO for the employee in January 2025.

County Administrator Townsend reported that they have been studying the Holiday Schedule. Other Counties are getting anywhere from 12 to 15 days with a floating holiday included. Lamar County currently has 10 Holidays. It was suggested that Juneteenth and Veterans Day be added to the Lamar County Holiday Schedule. He said many Counties follow the State Holiday Schedule, which is 15 days. There are 14 holidays with a floating holiday. Chairman Traylor suggested that they add two more Holidays. Commissioner Lovett agreed with adding a floating holiday. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the Department Heads take care of their employees, and if they are out sick, it is not reported in Payroll, and the regular employees do not have that luxury. County Administrator Townsend said this is not happening with the Departments but in the Constitutional Officer's offices. Commissioner Fletcher asked if this would change once they get into the new Administration building. Chairman Traylor said he had an issue with his former employer where the supervisor was not submitting time off, and they had a major accident. They filed it against Worker's Compensation, but she was legitimately at home. County Administrator Townsend said he used to meet with the Constitutional Officers about this. He said that some employees take extended lunches to get their hair done. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the other employees know that this is happening.

### **Administration**

County Administrator Townsend reported on Administration as follows:

- Reported that he took out contingency this past year because they paid retirement twice. It may have been booked into last year, and he will check with Finance Director Johnston. The retirement may not be coded correctly.
- Vice-Chair Thrash asked about the \$7,000.00 booked for Centennial. County Administrator Townsend noted that this is for the Christmas Parade.
- County Administrator Townsend said \$3,500.00 is budgeted for the Employee Appreciation Recognition (EAR). This is the Christmas luncheon and the plaques for years of service and retirement awards.
- Reported that the Communications line item increased due to the FIBER in the new Administration building.
- Chairman Traylor suggested having a ribbon-cutting ceremony in December.

### **Magistrate**

Magistrate Judge Kunst addressed the board with his following concerns:

- Reported that the part-time salary line item increased by \$5,000.00 for the Associate Magistrate Clerk. The Magistrate Pay is paid bi-weekly, and the Associate Magistrate Clerk is paid once a month. There were salary adjustments to cover this.
- Reported that he pays \$120.00 a month for Westlaw. As a member of the Georgia Bar, he has access to FastCase, which does not cost him anything.
- Reported that he has not begun E-filing even though their CJT software allows them to do this. However, he needs to be able to do hearings remotely, but he does not have a County Zoom account. He is using his own Zoom account. County Administrator Townsend suggested that he pay for this monthly or annually with a County credit card. County Administrator Townsend suggested that he get an OWL-type camera and recording system.

- Requested to have blinds installed in the Magistrate Clerk's office at each desk due to the sun shining into the windows.
- Requested to have a phone installed for his bench.
- Reported that the ceiling tiles in Magistrate Court need to be replaced due to water and mold damage.
- Requested LED light fixtures in the Magistrate Court.
- Requested to remove the sign on his side door to the Magistrate Court Judge's office.
- Reported that he included a 10 percent raise for his employees in the budget like they did last year. Reported that for 2024 there is a \$2,000.00 increase for the Constitutional Officers.
- Reported that he is using the language phone system for language translation and interpreting services, which the City of Barnesville pays for. The program is called LanguageLine Solution.

### **Round Table**

Chairman Traylor stated that he, Vice-Chair Thrash, and County Clerk Davidson have served on the Christmas Parade committee for several years. He said that they try hard to get the employees involved in this by having an employee cookout along with a half-day off. The issue is that the Parade is on a Saturday, but everyone enjoys the Parade, and it has become a part of the community. Chairman Traylor suggested that the Commissioners think about the theme for their float. County Clerk Davidson asked if they were closing early on Friday, along with the employee luncheon. Vice-Chair Thrash said they would need to do something to get the employees involved with the Christmas Parade. The first year for the Christmas Parade was the Centennial of the County, and there were lots of activities and things done for the celebration. The County paid for the employees to do their float; they got a half day off to work on the float and an employee cookout. Last year, they had a BBQ luncheon for the employees sponsored by the Public Works Department. Vice-Chair Thrash said the flyers and the banner will be up the week after Thanksgiving. County Clerk Davidson reported that the Barnesville Chamber of Commerce would sponsor a Mr. and Mrs. Barnesville Christmas Pageant. Vice-Chair Thrash said she would like to have a luncheon and give the employees a half-day off to work on their float. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the City of Barnesville is responsible for a lot of the cost of the Parade. The Christmas Parade is at 6:30 p.m. on December 9, 2023.

Commissioner Lovett asked why the other agencies were absent from the Budget Workshop meeting. County Administrator Townsend said that he could request other agencies that have budget requests come to the Workshop meeting on November 8, 2023.

Commissioner Lovett said that the IDA receives \$70,000.00 from the County and around \$65,000.00 from the City of Barnesville, and there is no industrial property. He said he found out from the Tax Assessor that the growth is \$26,000,000.00 in non-adjusted growth coming into the community. If you apply the millage rate, it is about \$265,000.00 of free cash. Without a tax increase, you have about \$265,000.00 of free cash. They are looking at a budget increase of \$1,200,000.00. If you discount that, they are \$960,000.00 upside down going into next year. Commissioner Lovett said they can accommodate this by the rise in house prices or an increase in the millage rate. Commissioner Lovett said his concern is that they are basing a budget of \$15,000,000.00 off of proposed property tax increases and/or millage rate increases.

Commissioner Fletcher said that he was preaching to the choir. He said that the IDA director came to speak to the board at another meeting, and no one said anything. Vice-Chair Thrash said that the budget was not being reviewed at that meeting. Chairman Traylor said that they could have the IDA come to speak to them if necessary.

County Administrator Townsend said that the budget is actually over \$14,500,000.00. Chairman Traylor said that the other agencies could be added to the list for them to speak to at another time: the Coroner, the Barnesville-Lamar County Library and any others.

Commissioner Gilles inquired about adding the Recreation Board member appointments. Chairman Traylor said that they would do that in December.

County Administrator Townsend said that there had been more requests for pauper burials. He has increased this line item from \$2,500.00 to \$3,000.00. This is listed in the DFACS budget.

Vice-Chair Thrash requested that when they change the date of a board meeting, they receive a text or an email reminder.

The board agreed to add NFP, Personnel Policy, No Thru Trucks on Morgan Dairy Road, and the Ordinance for the combining Board of Appeals and Planning and Commission to the Workshop Agenda for November 8, 2023.

Commissioner Lovett and Vice-Chair Thrash discussed the issue with Spalding County paving Macon Highway. Now, the propane trucks are cutting down Morgan Dairy Road. This is 45 minutes out of the way for the truck drivers. Commissioner Lovett said that they need to address this with Spalding County. He said that the propane truck traffic was going down Hwy 41, and now they are turning down Morgan Dairy, which has become a Lamar County issue. Chairman Traylor suggested that they go down McKenzie Road. County Administrator Townsend said that they replaced three pipes on this road. Chairman Traylor said they need to give the propane trucks away in and out of Lamar County.

Chairman Traylor said that the worst nightmare for the County is the Lamar County Discussion page and the negative comments. He said that when he worked for HealthSouth, he would go in to buy facilities, and he would spend a good week or two in a community attending clubs and functions to see if they wanted their name associated with that facility. Vice-Chair Thrash said that Lamar County is losing business because of this. Chairman Traylor said friends are calling him and saying they have a mess down here. Chairman Traylor said that they need to maintain the image that Continental has for Lamar County. Continental is the one shining thing that goes out to all other industries to say that Lamar County is the place to come to. Chairman Traylor said that they do not need to upset the gas companies, so they need to find another route for them to travel. Commissioner Lovett said that they need to go and speak to Spalding County. He said that Caterpillar goes to Ranew every single day.

County Clerk Davidson addressed the upcoming dates with the board. November 8, 2023, for the Workshop meeting; November 14, 2023, for the employee Thanksgiving breakfast, changing the location from the Senior Center to the gym; Public Hearing starting at 6:00 p.m. and then 7:00 p.m.; the Regular Business meeting on November 14, 2023, and the employee Christmas luncheon on December 12 at the gym.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 3:01 p.m. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners

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Ryran Traylor, Chairman

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Nancy Thrash, Vice-Chair

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Jarrod Fletcher, Commissioner

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Jason Lovett, Commissioner

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Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

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