



**LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Workshop Meeting Minutes
Administration Building
January 11th, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m. on January 11th, 2024. Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor Vice-Chair Gilles Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash. County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson.

Amy B. Cowan-Freeman, Mathis & Gary, LLP

Chairman Traylor explained that this is the conflict attorney that County Attorney Mayfield recommended. This is a time to meet her and to decide if they want to use her as a conflict attorney. Amy B. Cowan of Freeman, Mathis & Gary, LLP introduced herself to the Board of Commissioner. Ms. Cowan stated that she is a partner with Freeman, Mathis & Gary law firm in Atlanta, Georgia. They are a national law firm located near the Atlanta Braves stadium. Ms. Cowan said that she practices in their large government section which does a variety of local government representation. Ms. Cowan said that she has been practicing around 19 years representing cities and counties in local law and litigation. She said her current practice is in the defense of cities and counties in litigation, primarily land use. Ms. Cowan said that she is also serves as an Associate Magistrate Judge.

Chairman Traylor asked Ms. Cowan if there were any conflicts, she has seen between her and Lamar County. Ms. Cowan replied that was correct and said when she was first contacted about this, her firm ran a complete conflict check on the conflicts and counsel representation of the county and there were no issues with representation of this capacity.

Commissioner Thrash asked Ms. Cowan if she or the firm, either currently or in the past had any clients in the Solid Waste or the Landfill industries. Ms. Cowan replied that they have but she has not personally been involved with that litigation. She said that her firm has had litigation involving the Solid Waste Industry representing an Authority or a County Government. Ms. Cowan said that they have not represented a Solid Waste private company.

Commissioner Thrash asked that they define the role of the conflict attorney and what they will have this firm do. She also asked that they interview at least one more firm and not the firm recommended by the attorney that is being conflicted. Commissioner Thrash said they have to get this right to limit the County's liability. She said, for example the Mayo Hill Open Records request that was erroneously reported in the legal organ that said it was filed against the Solid Waste Authority but was actually filed against the County. They have to ensure they

get this right and she thinks it would behoove them to interview one more firm. Commissioner Thrash said the County Attorney had another one but she had a conflict. She requested County Administrator Townsend find one more firm because they do not want to kick the can down the road. Commissioner Thrash said that they may have varying opinions or the same opinion. They could call a Special Called meeting to interview one more firm.

Commissioner Lovett said that the longer they let this draw out. Commissioner Thrash said she did not want to kick the can down the road but felt it was important to have several conflict attorneys to choose from. Chairman Traylor said they would try and get another conflict attorney to interview through a Special Called meeting.

Secure Signatures

County Administrator Townsend explained that the County is migrating from Incode 9 to Incode 10 and the signature process for checks will change. He said that the Finance Director and the County Administrator both sign off on the check register. The Chairman and Vice Chairman can sign off on the check register. When the checks are cut, the signatures are automatically on the checks. All of the checks will be printed on blank stock. The auditors agree with this process. Commissioner Thrash asked if there was an increase for fraud. County Administrator Townsend said there was a check and balance in place where someone enters the data and then another person cuts the check. County Administrator Townsend said before the batch of checks are released, he and the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman will review them.

Industrial Development Authority (IDA) Update

IDA Director Kathy Oxford addressed the board via audio zoom. Mrs. Oxford explained that the State offers tax credits to existing industries as they grow and expand. There are several types of tax credits: job tax credits, and investment tax credits but the tax credit amount is based on a tier. Lamar County is a tier three as of January 1, 2024. In the past, Lamar County was a tier-one or a tier-two. Lamar County was a tier two last year and tier one in the last four to five years ago. The State created tax credits to incentivize companies. A tier one applies to the least healthy County and there are 18 to 20 of those each year. This means the States wants counties to maintain jobs if they are in a tier-one status. It is good news when you move up in a tier because they are economically healthier. It lowers the amount of credit companies can take and raises the threshold for new jobs or the investment that a company must make to qualify. A company's corporate tax liability is based on the amount of goods sold inside the State of Georgia, and most companies are not selling just inside the State of Georgia. They are selling all over the world. Mrs. Oxford said that she is not worried about the change in the tier because 15 jobs is not a lot to create in a tier three. She said that the tier one counties get the greatest impact but she would rather be in a healthy situation and they could change back to a tier two next year. Companies are not allowed to change counties because of the tier status. The tier does not affect the ability to apply or get grants, it is just an amount that a company could take if they are expanding their jobs or they are investing in their company. Mrs. Oxford said that she has alerted the companies that have changed their job counts in the last couple of years. She said they have the potential to change every year, but it is bit unusual to go from a tier one to a tier three in two years. However, it could be that other counties that lost jobs that bumped Lamar County to a tier three status. The criteria they use to determine the ranking are; unemployment rate, poverty level, and the per capita income.

Regular Meeting Discussion

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation- Major Leslie Holmes
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Minutes Approval
 - i. Public Hearing-December 14th, 2023
 - ii. Workshop Meeting-December 19th, 2023
 - iii. Regular Business Meeting- December 19th, 2023

6. Solid Waste Board Appointment

Commissioner Lovett said he had personally or through proxy reached out to every elected official in the community. As a last resort, Ashley Gilles has agreed to serve on the Solid Waste Authority Board.

7. Conflict Counsel

8. Administrator's Report

i. Administrator's Report

- Reported that they are closing out for December and they have revenue that has not been booked into 2023.
- Reported that the Administration Building is moving on January 17th, 2023. The Board of Elections will move when the State allows them to move.
- Reported that he will give an update on the Animal Shelter at the Regular Business Meeting.
- Reported that there have been leaks in the roof at the Courthouse, the Sheriff's Office, and the Fire Station. The contractors are fixing the issues with trash in the gutters and the resurfacing around the air conditioning. The warranty on the roof repairs is five years for labor and 15 years for the roof.

Chairman Traylor said that he had a citizen with an issue. He called Shari Imberger with Public Works around 8:00 p.m., and they were able to put in a work order. The crew fixed the issue on Grove Street this morning. He said that they do not monitor the Discussion Pages, but a simple phone call was able to get a repair done in a timely manner.

9. **Public Comment**

Vice-Chair Gilles said that Mr. Miller of the Needleleaf subdivision was there to discuss the water drainage. She said someone from EXP looked at it, and they said a drain cover was needed for the drain, but it is not working. County Administrator Townsend said work still needs to be done off the right of way, and a ditch needs to be straightened out so it will drain. He said Public Works Director Rigdon said the silt is backing up into the pipe, preventing it from flowing. Mr. James Miller of 118 Needleleaf Subdivision said the right of way is not the problem; the pipe from the street drain to the right of way cannot hold the volume of water. He said his garage had flooded, and everything in the garage had been ruined. He said his home is three years old. Mr. Miller supplied a video of the water drainage. Mr. Miller said the land did not pass the perk test. He said the builders wanted to install the drain, but the County

Inspector was responsible. Vice-Chair Gilles said where his house sits, the water is coming down from the road and across the street.

Chairman Traylor said when they look at subdivision lots and plans, they need to pay attention to which lots are actually buildable. Vice-Chair Gilles said this is why she had a problem with the last subdivision in the floodplain. Vice-Chair Gilles shared a video of the water drainage from her phone and agreed to share it with the Board of Commissioners.

County Administrator Townsend said Public Works Director Rigdon has gone out there several times and they are saying it is off the right of way. Mr. Miller said if it is off the right of way, it will flood the entire area. It does not flood at the right of way. It floods in the street. He said he has consulted with multiple people, and Michael Turner dug it out. He said the pipe cannot hold a large volume of water. Mr. Miller said they only have the problem during heavy rains.

Planning Commission board member Dwight Fleming said Chairman Traylor commented that the staff needs to pay more attention to whether a lot is buildable. Mr. Fleming said anyone at the County level would not have the expertise to know whether or not a lot is buildable or a storm drain is sized correctly. He said that is when they need to use an outside County paid engineering company to approve all the drawings that the developer submits.

Chairman Traylor said that County Administrator Townsend would contact Public Works Director Rigdon and EXP regarding the drainage issue.

Donald Hartman of 507 Old Milner Road addressed the board. Mr. Hartman asked that regarding the Waste to Energy project the group has a tentative date of June completion. He said he would like to ask where they stand on this and asked if they are another 30 days out. Mr. Hartman asked if it would be fair to ask for a monthly progress report to give the citizens an idea of where they are in different phases. He said he knows they are going upward with the building, they put vents on it, they put three phase pad man out, we have done underground, and there is an RV park on the property. Mr. Hartman asked where they stood in the project timeline and what they had accomplished within the last 30 to 60 days. He said that the citizens need to be informed where the project is regarding completion; is the target date of up and running in June?

Elaine Hallada of 131 Steeple Chase addressed the board. Mrs. Hallada asked about the Conflict Counsel. She asked, "Once they decide on a Conflict Counsel, they give you, their recommendation? Chairman Traylor said they would submit information to the Conflict Counsel to review. Once they have had adequate time to review the information, they will come back with their response. Mrs. Hallada asked if it would take another three to four months to get a decision. Chairman Traylor said it should not take that long but they have to submit the information to the Conflict Counsel.

Mrs. Hallada said the project was supposed to start December 1st and asked Chairman Traylor and Commissioner Thrash what happened. They were supposed to turn the leachate on December 1st. Chairman Traylor said that there are things that are going to be coming out pretty soon. He said typically, in Public Comments, they do not turn this into a dialogue but he answered the question about the Conflict Counsel because it was on the agenda.

Chairman Traylor said that updates will be coming out soon. Mrs. Hallada said, "So nothing happened on December 1st?"

Round Table

Commissioner Fletcher announced that the Martin Luther King Jr. events and programs are starting this weekend. There will be a program on January 17th, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. at the Courthouse.

Commissioner Thrash said that the issue with the Propane Trucks and Old 41 Hwy is being discussed in the legislative session. The State is not keen on taking on that portion of the road. She said the Board of Commissioners may need a Resolution encouraging the State to take over that portion of the road. Commissioner Thrash reported a problem with the dams on Grove Street. She said that the beavers are building the dams, and the Public Works Department has gone over there about every two weeks over the last four months ,tearing them down. Commissioner Thrash said that an elderly couple with e serious health issues are the one having the issue. She said that an ambulance or a fire truck cannot get there; it is off the right of way, so they cannot go in and do repairs. The Department of Natural Resources could do the repairs. Commissioner Thrash said that trapping them is an issue because they come right back.

Mr. Fleming said a private trapper would be cheaper than using the Public Works Department to tear down the dams. He said that if the beavers are not eliminated, the dams will continue to be rebuilt. Mrs. Hallada said that there is a registered trapper named Josh Ellington who lives in Yatesville, Georgia.

Commissioner Thrash reported that at the corner of Hwy 41 and Old Milner Road, a fowl urine-type smell is coming off of the property. They found out they are developing property on the other side, so they brought in rocks and dirt. The heavy rains are causing the odor. In a couple of days, it should be gone.

Chairman Traylor reported that there will be a Blood Drive on January 25th, 2024 at the Barnesville First Methodist Church. He asked everyone to watch the severe weather coming on Friday and if anyone needs to travel to be safe as possible. If there are any issues with roads, let them know so that the Public Works Department can come out and take care of what they can. Sometimes, the phone calls come in from the Sheriff's Office and many times all they can do at the moment is put up barricades on the roads. He said Major Holmes wants everyone to be cautious about walking up to other people's parked cars where they should not be parked. Requested that if they drive on a flooded road, go the other direction even if it takes more time; use discretion.

Adjournment

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 1:26 p.m. Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Ashley Gilles, Vice-Chair

Jarrod Fletcher, Commissioner

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk