



**LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
Special Called Meeting Minutes  
Administration Building  
March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 3:00 p.m.**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 3:00 p.m. on January 16th, 2024. Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Gilles, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. The meeting was available via Teams.

**Animal Shelter Budget**

County Administrator Townsend presented several documents regarding the Animal Shelter. The first one was the signed copy of Resolution 2014-13 Animal Shelter, an agreement between the Lamar County Board of Commissioners intending to enter into a contract with the Barnesville-Lamar Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Inc. The second one was the letter from the Community Foundation of Central Georgia Contract. The third is the Animal Shelter Referendum. The Animal Shelter budget is around 9.3 million dollars, and the County collected over 14 million dollars; therefore, they were able to use the excess funds. The budget for the animal shelter is \$746,334.00. The SPLOST IV balance is \$433,629.58, the Community Foundation is \$190,000.00, and the Donations are \$100,000.00 with a General Fund balance of \$22,407.20 to have a balanced budget.

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to approve the Lamar County Animal Shelter budget for \$746,334.00. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. Commissioner Thrash said that in the Community Foundation Contract it states, "In the event that the Barnesville-Lamar Community Foundation should in the future form a nonprofit corporation to serve as an independent community foundation for Barnesville, Lamar County, Georgia, and its surrounding area, we desire that this Fund shall be transferred by the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Inc. to the nonprofit corporation organized as the Barnesville-Lamar Community Foundation." Commissioner Thrash asked if it would please the board to create the local Barnesville-Lamar County Community Foundation and have the money transferred into this local animal shelter foundation.

Commissioner Gilles said she did not see that the rates with the Community Foundation are keeping up with inflation. They are fixed rates. Commissioner Thrash noted that the fee is currently 2598% plus \$026 per transaction. She said that if they remove it from the Community Foundation and create their own non-profit, that answers Commissioner Gilles's question about getting the money when they need it. Commissioner Thrash said this might make people feel more comfortable. County

Administrator Townsend said that when he spoke with Fred Morris about a week and a half ago, he asked him how they would get the money. He told him they would do a requisition with a copy of the invoice and pay the vendor. County Administrator Townsend said doing it differently would also be fine. Commissioner Thrash said they would not pay the interest on the non-profit. But they would have the one-time \$026 per transaction fee. She said they have the question: is the non-profit operated by the County? Commissioner Thrash asked if they could have the money transferred into the animal shelter fund for the construction of the building.

Chairman Traylor said he did not know if this would make that much of a difference, and he said he did not know if they could make that decision now. Commissioner Gilles said that building the animal shelter will not fix all the problems. They still need spay and neuter, people to pull the animals, and rescues.

Chairman Traylor said there was motion from Commissioner Thrash and a second by Commissioner Fletcher to approve the animal shelter budget as presented. Commissioner Gilles and Commissioner Lovett opposed the motion. Chairman Traylor broke the tie and approved the motion to approve the animal shelter budget. The motion carried 3-2.

County Attorney Mayfield said that he is reaching out to John Pannell, their Finance Attorney, and asking him if there is a way they can deed the animal shelter and the land to the Public Facilities Authority. This could make it easier to do public/private donations. Since he helped set this up in the general assembly, it has been created for things of this nature. This is how the Administration Building was done. At some point down the road, when the debt is paid off, they may want to deed American Pie and the First Franklin portion of the building to the Public Facilities Authority.

### **Public Comment**

Tom Wellner of 271 Eady Creek Road addressed the board. Mr. Wellner asked the board for permission to investigate significant fundraising opportunities that have worked well in the private sector. He would like to report to the Board of Commissioners during their workshop meeting in April. Mr. Wellner said that he did not want it to get back to them that he was speaking on behalf of the County but instead investigating on behalf of the County and then reporting back to them. If the Board of Commissioners agrees, he would like to approach one Commissioner with his findings. Chairman Traylor suggested he report his findings to County Administrator Townsend. Mr. Wellner said they have a lot of work ahead of them but the reputation of the County will improve in time. He said there are lot of people willing to donate time and more money.

Elaine Hallada of 131 Steeple Chase addressed the board. Mrs. Hallada said she did not understand the urgency for building the animal shelter when this had been put off for years. She said a lot of other things still needed to be done. Mrs. Hallada said she realizes the priority because the SPLOST money has to be spent in a timely fashion and was allocated many years ago. Mrs. Hallada said her concern is how they will pay for the employees, maintenance, and utilities, and asked where the line item is in the budget. What are the weekly, monthly, and yearly operating costs? Mrs. Hallada said new bathrooms need to be built at the Recreation Department. Does it mean that once the animal shelter is up and running, the Recreation Department will get its new bathrooms? She said that she does not believe that any of this was considered. Mrs. Hallada said that for many years, Mr. Morris would come to their business,

and he had plans they would print out for free. He changed his plans many times over the years because the animal shelter was not built. Now suddenly, it is a rush. Mrs. Hallada again said that it must be because of the deadline on the SPLOST and asked if it was six years when it was collected. County Administrator Townsend said there was no deadline on SPLOST. Mrs. Hallada said the animal shelter was included in the SPLOST and asked what year this was, and she said she understood that it had expired. She said the ongoing cost had not been considered for the taxpayer. With a 14 million tax-based County for next year, nothing will change, so something will have to come from somewhere else. Mrs. Hallada said it is an election year, and some of them can say they got the animal shelter built, which is good for you. Mrs. Hallada said that going forward, they need to put more thought into things.

Donald Hartman of 105 Old Milner Road, addressed the board. Mr. Hartman said he thought the board voted to table the animal shelter budget for a month at the Regular Business meeting. He said in 48 hours, they are now making a decision on the animal shelter. Mr. Hartman said the image to the citizens is they said they were going to do this but they did not do this. He said they need to be aware of the money they spend on the projects. Donald Hartman said the County will be on the hook if the Solid Waste Authority defaults on the loan. He said the taxpayers have to come to the table to repay the loan if it defaults. Increasing taxes for the citizens of this County is not an option. Mr. Hartman asked what other process would the Board of Commissioners see as an alternative; how would they get those funds if they default on the loan.

### **Round Table**

Commissioner Fletcher invited everyone to a grand opening ceremony for his Insurance company. This will be held at 5:30 p.m.

Vice-Chair Gilles thanked Mr. Wellner, Sheriff White, and everyone who has put all of their hard work into the animal shelter. It will still take members of the community to address the problems. In the future they need to review the Ordinances and spay and neuter.

Commissioner Thrash addressed the concern for tabling the animal shelter. Commissioner Gilles retrieved the information that was stalling the Board of Commissioners from voting on the animal shelter budget.

County Administrator Townsend said there was misconception. He said that the animal shelter is actually a capital project, and there is a difference between M&O (Maintenance and Operations). County Administrator Townsend said this year, \$104,000.00 was proposed in the general fund budget if the project were to begin in July. This is included in the 2024 budget approved in December. If something is budgeted, they need to complete the project within that year so as not to tax the citizens more than once. County Administrator Townsend reported that the plaque at the Courthouse had been installed and thanked Mrs. Perry. He told her that this would be done within the week.

Chairman Traylor said there was no date range when they tabled the animal shelter budget. He said County Administrator Townsend clarified that it was already in the 2024 budget. Chairman Traylor said that the construction of the animal shelter has been a long time coming, and the documents were signed when Jay Matthews was the Chairman. It was voted on to have an animal shelter, and the cost is much higher than they anticipated. Chairman Traylor said they are getting a million-dollar building for half a million dollars. They are going into a building with built-in equity. There will be bumps in the road with operating costs, but it will be great for the community. Hopefully, they can get the spay and neuter program going as this

is something that he and Mr. Morris have discussed over the years. Chairman Traylor thanked Mr. Morris, Mr. Wellner and anyone involved in the animal shelter.

**Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 3:22 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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Ashley Gilles, Vice-Chair

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Jarrod Fletcher, Commissioner

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Jason Lovett, Commissioner

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Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

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