

Workshop Meeting
Lamar County Board of Commissioners
3-14-2024
12:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m. on March 14-2024. 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.

1) County Administrator Townsend Presented the Animal Shelter Budget.

Flint Construction has submitted a new Animal Shelter budget cutting out around 600 to 800 square feet and bringing the total budget to \$746,334.00. The balance in SPLOST III is \$433,629.58, and the Community Foundation, collected over ten years, has around \$190,000.00. There has been a donation made of around \$100,00.00. \$222,700.00 is needed to cover the total Animal Shelter budget. The quote from Flint Building Construction includes \$41,669.00 for labor, \$11,761.00 for material, and \$1,227.00 for supplies at a total cost of \$68,619.00. Commissioner Thrash inquired about where the \$222,700.00 would come from. County Administrator Townsend explained that \$250,000.00 in the contingency fund will go towards the \$222,700.00.

Commissioner Lovett said the SPLOST III funds were \$280,000.00 a year ago and asked how the balance is now \$433,000.00. County Administrator Townsend said there was a total collection budget of 9.3 million dollars for SPLOST. The total collection of SPLOST was 4.4 million dollars, so the excess funds were directed toward the roads, the Fire Department, the Sheriff's Office, and the Animal Shelter. Commissioner Lovett said the additional \$150,000.00 of what was allotted to the Animal Shelter is going to come out of the expense of EMS, roads, and improvements of infrastructure. County Administrator Townsend said the Animal Shelter has an allocated percentage. A percentage was done for each municipality and entity.

Commissioner Lovett inquired about the new location's square footage. Wright Woodall of Flint Building Construction said the interior square footage is 2894, and the pads are 300 square feet. About 3 to 4 acres have been allotted for the Animal Shelter.

Chairman Traylor said that Mr. Woodall has worked hard on this project, and several local vendors have been able to give donations and in-kind services to assist with the Animal Shelter construction. Commissioner Thrash said several local businesses have expressed an interest in making a donation to the Animal shelter.

Commissioner Lovett said they originally had a SPLOST budget of \$280,000.00, which has now gone to \$433,000.00. He said he presented data from the City of Barnesville, which handles animal control, a year ago. It is .75 animals per day, and if you include Saturday, the percentage is lower. Commissioner Lovett's solution to the problem is a spay and neuter program, not a new building. He has been looking for alternative buildings for an animal shelter, and the City of Barnesville has a vacant building at 166 Academy Drive, which is listed for \$153,000.00. It is 2800 square feet and is already fenced in. Commissioner Lovett said there are options, so they are not borrowing from the community or the general fund, not shorting the roads or EMS services, and providing a facility that the community can be proud of. The building is in good shape and would be an excellent place to put this facility. He said the donations made over the last ten years in the Community Foundation could go towards a spay and neuter program. He said the last time they addressed this, there was \$170,000.00 in donations. The spay and neuter program would allow 97 animals a month for five years. Commissioner Lovett said that Bob Barker was correct in saying that the only way to resolve the

problem with animal control is to spay and neuter. Building a new animal shelter will not resolve the animal control issue in the community. Commissioner Lovett encouraged people to look at the building for sale on the Lamar County Qpublic. He said what they are proposing to build is already available and could be renovated far cheaper than the proposed Animal Shelter budget.

Chairman Traylor responded that the money was not being taken away from the EMS services or the Sheriff's Office. The excess funds received have been spread to EMS, the Sherriff's Office, and roads. He said houses behind the proposed building for sale would be an issue. He said there could be noise issues and people complaining about the dogs barking. Chairman Traylor said the location of the Animal Shelter was voted on years ago. It was moved up the street and then back down the street. He said people donated money based on the location of the Animal Shelter. A sign for many years read "Future Home of the Lamar County Animal Shelter."

Mr. Woodall addressed the board. He said they can start very soon after the Animal Shelter budget is approved, depending on the weather. Mr. Woodall said many efforts were made to reduce things they could do without within the design of the building. Mr. Woodall addressed Commissioner Lovett about building an Animal Shelter. He stated he has not built an animal shelter but has been in the commercial construction business for the last 20 years. Mr. Woodall said the proposed Animal Shelter is a guaranteed maximum price with a contingency of about 3 percent, \$21,000.00, that could go towards owner upgrades.

2) Diane Perry-Digitized Recordings of Meetings

Mrs. Perry was absent from the meeting. Chairman Traylor said the request was that the County keep and maintain recorded video of the meeting beyond the approval of the minutes.

Attorney Mayfield said you could have digitized recordings. He said his opinion is that the official record of the meeting should be the minutes. Anything else seems problematic. He said someone would pull the meeting and go through the recording, then get the minutes and come up here fussing about a comma being in the wrong place or the word "the" versus the word "they," and it will unnecessarily burden the County Clerk. He said if they should get in a lawsuit over zoning or something controversial, he would only want one set of minutes to be the record instead of having minutes, tapes, and recordings. Attorney Mayfield said that ACCG and GMA both concur that the minutes are the official record, but there is no law against digitized recordings.

County Clerk Davidson said her opinion, based on her training, is that it is okay to have digitized copies, but when it comes to the official minutes, she believes the recordings should be deleted so you have one set of minutes that is your official record. County Clerk Davidson said you have controversy when you have more than one set of media copies versus written minutes. Lamar County minutes go back to 1921, and all of them are captured. They are all recorded. County Clerk Davidson said even though it is the 21st Century, she does not believe they should go away from this because it is not something that the Association of County Clerks of Georgia (ACCG), Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), or the Georgia County Clerk's Association (GCCA) teaches them. They teach that even though it is okay to have digitized copies or recordings you should only have one official set of minutes. County Administrator Townsend said that the State Retention on recordings is 90 days. County Clerk Davidson said this is taught in the Georgia Clerks Education Institute (GCEI) and ACCG training.

3) Protocol for Board of Commissioner Meetings

County Administrator Townsend stated that when the request for digitized records came up, they decided to look at the protocols for the board meetings and the workflow if the board wanted to change anything. He attended a County Managers meeting where there was a discussion about other counties that have eliminated online access. Three counties, Upson, Harris, and Elbert, no longer allow Public Comments.

- 1) Do they want to continue with Zoom, Teams, or online access?
- 2) Meeting Purpose-Boards meet to focus on the purpose of the meeting and all the elements.
- 3) Draft and Prepare the Board Meeting Agenda
- 4) Call of the Meeting (Start Time) Keep the 7 p.m. or move it up to 6:00 or 6:30 p.m.
- 5) Closing of the Meeting
- 6) Board Meeting Etiquette
- 7) Public Comments-Have a Form to be placed on the agenda under Public Comments or keep it open for sheet sign-up.
- 8) Workshop-Board Discussion with Department Heads or their Vendors.

Commissioner Lovett said that he likes having meetings online for the people. He realizes some procedures could be better, but he agrees with having the Workshops on Thursday, and the Public Comment section is the foundation for representative government. It is not pleasant or fun but it is vital for the citizens. Commissioner Thrash agreed with keeping meetings online for the people. She said she thought the purpose of the Workshops was for the Board of Commissioners to hear from the employees and Department Heads; however, they do not want to attend the meetings because the Public Comments have become hostile and out of control. It is up to the Board of Commissioners to decide how they want to reel that in. Commissioner Thrash said she never wanted to try to silence anyone but if they have the same Public that comes to the Workshops come to the Regular Business Meetings then they should have the Public Comments at that meeting. Vice-Chair Gilles said she preferred continuing with public comments at the workshops because if there is something important, they can look into it. This is the chance for people to talk to the Board of Commissioners before the Regular Business meeting. Commissioner Thrash noted that this was a good point.

Chairman Traylor noted that this was just a discussion. He said this is business, not a Town Hall or a Free-for-All, and they need to make sure the Directors feel comfortable and wanted at the meetings regardless of the Public Comments.

4) Open Records Custodian

County Attorney Mayfield said that the Open Records Act was changed about ten years ago when the State made every County, City, and School Board name one person to be the Open Records Officer. It used to be called the Custodian, but now it is called the Officer. There are no powers or duties associated with this position. You name that person, list it on the County Website, and that is the person to whom Open Records Requests are sent. They used to go round and around as to where to send the Open Records Request, so they named one person. County Attorney Mayfield was named the Open Records Custodian; he wanted to be the person named the Open Records Custodian because he could make sure that the response was sent to the correct person. When he was sued as the Open Records Custodian in one of the most recent lawsuits, it conflicted him out, and it cost the County money to hire another attorney. County Attorney Mayfield suggested that the County Clerk or the County Administrator take on that role so that does not happen again. He said if an Open Records request or lawsuit comes from a lawyer, it will be sent to him for review as the County Attorney.

Chairman Traylor noted that the Open Records Officer falls on the County Clerk in most counties. County Clerk Davidson stated that technically, she is already doing the job of Open Record Officer because they come to her, and she sends them to the correct person or Department to get the information or she gathers the information. Attorney Mayfield has been the one she sends it to and he sends it back to her. Chairman Traylor requested that this be added to the Regular Business meeting agenda.

5) The Board Reviewed the Regular Business Meeting Agenda.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation-Pastor Keith Battle of Antioch Baptist Church
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Minutes Approval
 - i. Special Called Meeting-February 1st, 2024
 - ii. Workshop Minutes-February 15th, 2024
 - iii. Regular Business Meeting Minutes-February 2024
6. Ordinance 2024-02 Dutton-Court Rezoning

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the board. She said there were originally three Public Hearings scheduled for 6:00 p.m., but two of those have been withdrawn. The remaining scheduled Public Hearing is for a family that would like to split two acres on a 20-acre parcel. There was a neighbor who came to make sure that there would not be an issue on their property.

8. Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement
 - i. Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement and Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS): This agreement is updated every five years with the appropriate contacts.
9. Animal Shelter Budget
 - i. Animal Shelter Budget
10. Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend said he and Public Works Director Rigdon have met with several vendors regarding paving the parking lot. The striping will cost around \$16,00.00. The largest concern is the cracking in the pavement in the front of the building. That cost will be around \$40,000.00, which includes taking up the old asphalt and replacing it with new asphalt, along with striping and updated fire lanes. They will put out bids for this project since he only has two interested vendors that have been used in the past.

County Administrator Townsend suggested that since Wright Woodall has been hired as the contractor for the Animal Shelter, he would like to use him to do task orders. He would also like him to do sheetrock work at the Animal Shelter due to a water hammer break. It ruptured and leaked into the walls. There are other items he could look into down the road. County Administrator Townsend requested that Construction Task-Flint Construction be added to the Regular Business meeting agenda.

Commissioner Thrash inquired about adding accessible parking spaces and a ramp for the front door. County Administrator Townsend said there is already a ramp there and it will be designated and lined out once they pave the parking lot. County Administrator Townsend said the fire lanes are the first priority. Commissioner Thrash suggested an accessible push access for the doors be installed. County Administrator Townsend said this had been previously discussed, and the cost is around \$10,000.00 to \$12,000.00, and he got outvoted because they did not want to do it at the time. Chairman Traylor said they had this conversation, but he thought the solution was to put a number on the door to call for assistance. County Administrator Townsend said they discussed installing door scanner cards versus using keys.

County Administrator Townsend said that down the road, they are going to need to address the roof at the Courthouse, which had recently been done. They missed some issues on the checklist and will have to come back and put metal around some areas. This is why one area was leaking. He said resealing the skylight should have been put in the RFP. They put the TPO but they did not reseal it. There is also a vent that should have been resealed. County Administrator Townsend said the Maintenance Department will be doing the resealing, but down the road, they will need to address a brick issue because of the water coming into the Probate Court. He said the bricks had been there since the 1930s, so they would have to fix the grout and reseal everything to eliminate the water coming into the Courthouse.

Vice-Chair Gilles asked if the limbs could be trimmed at the Courthouse. County Administrator Townsend said they will trim back the bushes and work on that.

11. Public Comment
12. Round Table
13. Executive Session
 - i. Real Estate
 - ii. Litigation
 - iii. Personnel
15. Adjournment

6) **Public Comments**

Tom Wellner of 271 Eady Creek Road addressed the board. Mr. Wellner said that building a new Animal Shelter is a slam dunk at this point, but it costs a lot of money. The cost of building the Lamar County Animal Shelter was \$500,000.00 10 years ago and building it for \$750,000.00 now is impressive. Mr. Wellner said his role now needs to be fundraising since there is a shortfall. He said a lot of people in the community have given handfuls of money, and some have given hundreds of dollars. There are others prepared to give a lot more money. Mr. Wellner volunteered to take the lead on fundraising. He said a nonprofit organization called "Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter" was formed several years ago. It is alive and well but it is dormant. Until the construction of the Animal Shelter is underway, there is nothing for them to do, and he cannot ask people for more money for a shelter that is not even under contract. Once the Animal Shelter is under contract and the backhoes are digging the foundation, they can re-active the "Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter." Mr. Wellner explained there is another source of funding that he wants to look into, but at this point, it is mute. A lot of money from foundations and grants can be spent on existing shelters. He said money will be needed for furniture and fixtures, and the "Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter" can take the lead.

Mr. Wellner complimented Commissioner Lovett. He said as a County Taxpayer he wants to ensure they are during their due diligence. Mr. Wellner said, in regards to an alternative building for the Animal Shelter, he has it that an animal shelter has to be built like a jail or a prison, and it has to be clean like a

hospital. He said he is not aware of any animal shelters being retrofitted. Mr. Wellner said he could pressure the people for more money. He said people will donate money for specific things such as a dog run or the lobby.

Donald Hartman of 507 Old Milner Road addressed the board. Mr. Hartman said Chairman Traylor raised concerns about the neighbors in the area of the building that is for sale that Commissioner Lovett proposed. His concern is with Johnny Poore and the Waste to Fuel Project. He said that on August 15, 2023, he found out through an Open Records Request the Lamar County Solid Waste Authority has one employee, one contract manager, and 511 acres of land valued at 10.3 million dollars. The landfill sits on 139.6 acres and 5 acres with a 172 Roger Brown Drive address. This is a total of 144.6 acres. Mr. Hartman said that Johnny Poore made a statement that this process will essentially do away with landfills. He said there are 144.6 acres in the landfill, with an additional 366.4 acres that the Lamar County Solid Waste Authority has purchased. Mr. Hartman said Chairman Traylor was concerned with the barking dogs next to a building they could possibly use for an animal shelter. He asked what about neighbors that may be impeded down the road if something happens to the 366.4 acres, and he could not fathom why they needed 366.4 acres at the Lamar County Solid Waste Authority. Mr. Hartman concern concerned about adjustments being made and what happens down the road. He said they were discussing billboards at a recent zoning meeting. If you allow for one, you have to allow for another, and it was voted down. His concern is what will happen with the neighborhoods around the 366.4 acres. What will happen to that property? Do they know of any intent? He asked if the neighbors on Old Milner Road or Five Points Road wanted a mountain of garbage in their backyard. Mr. Hartman said he was concerned about the additional acreage when Johnny Poore said they could make these obsolete.

Chairman Traylor said that the building for sale is an old recycling center. The property in the Industrial Park, if they are creating a new Industrial Park where communities and houses are located, they would need to be concerned and know. He said they were discussing moving something into a place that is not currently an Industrial Park.

Mr. Hartman said that in response to Chairman Traylor, the land was bought by private individuals. Mr. Swint bought some of the acreage, and some of it was purchased by other families. Would these families not be considered residential areas, or was it automatically incorporated as a commercial area? Mr. Hartman said that if John Doe sells their property and they sell 100 acres, does this automatically become classified as an Industrial Park? Mr. Hartman said he is concerned for the County's and the citizens' future. That is why he brought this awareness to the Workshop so that the Board of Commissioners can collectively discuss it and make sound decisions.

7) Round Table

County Administrator Townsend stated that Hogan Construction should be installing the new sign on the building and in the hallways this week.

8) Adjournment

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 1:20 p.m. Vice-Chair Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Ashley Gilles, Vice-Chair

Jarrold Fletcher, Commissioner

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk