

Lamar County Board of Commissioners
Regular Business Meeting Minutes
February 18th, 2025 - 7:00 PM
Administration Building

Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, Commissioner Boyle, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. The meeting was available via Teams Meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone said the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Invocation

Former Principal and Superintendent Dr. E.H. Harris gave the invocation.

4. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the agenda. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Recess for Public Hearing

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to recess the Regular Business Meeting and go into a Public Hearing. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. Commissioner Lovett abstained from the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

6. Public Hearing

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the board with a Public Hearing rezoning from Residential-4 to Highway Commercial. The property is located on the corner of Trice and McKenzie Road. The existing property is also located on Old 41 Hwy. The property is on Tax Map 18 Parcel 30B. Commissioner Jason Lovett is the property owner making the zoning request. The Planning and Commission Board and the following conditions were recommended.

- No entrance or exit allowed onto Trice Road;
- Entire area to be used for commercial purposes to be enclosed with an eight 'tall opaque fence;
- A twenty-five' treed buffer along any property lines that adjoin residential properties and along Trice Road;
- Security lights will be directional floods as to not cause light pollution for the neighbors;

- Entrance and exits from the property must be paved or concrete for the first fifty' and have a wide apron; and
- A compaction test and proper drainage is required for the footprint of any truck parking.

Rob Little, Ironstone Consulting addressing the Board of Commissioners stated they surveyed the property and will be performing the site plan if the rezoning is approved. Mr. Little appeared on behalf of Commissioner Lovett. The site plan is for 10.48 acres on the corner of Trice and McKenize Road from Residential-4 to High-Way Commercial. Commissioner Lovett's dumpster repair business is located on .002 acres. Mr. Little showed the map of where the office and the dumpster repair was located on the map. There are adjacent properties that are currently zoned as High-Way Commercial. The stated proposed use is for off street parking for commercial vehicles. This could include eighteen wheelers, dump trucks, propane trucks, etc. Mr. Little showed pictures of Dixie Pipeline and the trucking activity. Dixie Pipeline is open 24/7 and there are over one hundred trucks a day. They are very interested in additional secured parking for their operators; especially in the winter months. Although leased parking is a welcome extension to the dumpster repair business the primary driver of the rezoning request is for an immediate need for extra space for the empty dumpsters and parking of the trucks and trailers.

Planning and Community Development Director noted there were no Public Comments but at the Planning and Zoning meeting there were concerns raised about truck traffic on Trice Road, industrial growth, and code enforcement.

7. Reconvene Regular Meeting

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to reconvene the Regular Business meeting. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Minutes Approval

Commissioner Boyle made a motion to approve the following sets of minutes. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

1. Special Called Meeting - January 9th, 2025.
2. Workshop Meeting - January 16th, 2025
3. Special Called Meeting - January 21st, 2025.
4. Regular Business Meeting - January 28th, 2025

9. Proclamation

Vice-Chair Fletcher presented a Black History Month Proclamation to a group of ladies from the NAACP.

10. Old Business - None

11. New Business

1. **Ordinance 2025-01** - Rezoning from Residential-4 to Highway Commercial

Commissioner Gilles made to motion to approve Ordinance 2025-01 rezoning Tax Map 18 Parcel 30B from Residential-4 to Highway Commercial with the following conditions. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. Commissioner Lovett abstained from the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

- No entrance or exit allowed onto Trice Road;
- Entire area to be used for commercial purposes to be enclosed with an eight 'tall opaque fence;
- A twenty-five' treed buffer along any property lines that adjoin residential properties and along Trice Road;
- Security lights will be directional floods as to not cause light pollution for the neighbors;
- Entrance and exits from the property must be paved or concrete for the first fifty' and have a wide apron; and
- A compaction test and proper drainage is required for the footprint of any truck parking.

2. **Ordinance 2025-02**

Commissioner Boyle made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-02- Acquisition by sale or donation of property with a low fair market value. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Surplus of Equipment and Vehicles** - Public Works Department

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve and put fourteen vehicles into surplus where they will be auctioned off by Tac Auction Company and all remaining vehicles and equipment in surplus will be scrapped. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Full-Time Code Enforcement Officer and Fire Inspector**

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained the need for a full-time Code Enforcement Officer. There has been an increase in housing inspections from 14 (10 years ago) to 100 (January 2025). There is a need for full-time, trained personnel to support enforcement efforts. The proposed salary: \$18.00 to \$25.00 per hour. The budgeting for these two positions will come from the contingency fund (\$150,000). The need a full-time Code Enforcement Officer who is also mandated and trained. The number one requirement is education and number two requirement are enforcement. The Board of Commissioners has to approve the positions before advertisement can begin.

Fire Chief Matthews also requested the need for a Fire Inspector. This is in preparation of the I-75 project and also for existing businesses in the city and the county. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said there were over three hundred businesses in unincorporated Lamar County. Most of these are home office but there are a lot of trucking companies, gas stations and restaurants. All of these businesses should be on a yearly basis.

Vice-Chair Fletcher asked if financial comparisons were done with neighboring counties.

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to approve the position for a Full-Time Code Enforcement Officer and a Fire Inspector. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. FY25 Three Rivers Regional Commission Transit Agreement

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the FY25 Lamar County Three Rivers Regional Commission Transit Agreement in the amount of \$17,900 allocated for Section 5311 of the Public Transportation Service Agreement for Operations of the Three Rivers Regional Transit System covering Upson, Lamar, Spalding, and Pike counties. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Administrator's Report

• FY 2024 Budget and Financial Review

- Expenditures and Revenue Finance Report by Resources with a total revenue balance of \$16,513,030.82 and a total expenditure balance of \$16,337,768.85 leaving the deficiency of revenue under expenditures with a balance of \$175,261.97.
- Cash Balances as of December, 2024
- The December 2024 Cash Flow Chart is running higher than projections.
- The January 2025 Cash Flow Chart is running Lower than projections.
- The General Fund balance as of 2/14/2025 is \$5,854,214.87.
- The Special Revenue Funds balance as of 2/14/2025 is \$18,074.48.
- The Capital Projects Funds balance as of 2/14/2025 is \$2,649,941.22.
- The Debt Service balance as of 2/14/2025 is \$11,206,653.58.
- The Sheriff's Office has received four new cars approved by the board and the lights are being installed.
- The opening of the animal shelter has been delayed. Exterior fencing is being installed. A state inspection of the animal shelter is scheduled for tomorrow.
- The Senior Center bus was delivered on January 24th, 2025 and Public Works is adding vinyl lettering on the side.
- The roof and the brick on the Courthouse have been completed.
- The County, EXP, and GDOT are working on the RFP's for projects on Atlanta Street and the signal at SR 7 and Hwy 36. GDOT is also doing the R-Cut on Hwy 341.
- Ordinance 2025-02 needed to move forward with the Rock Springs project.
- Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) collections for January were \$153,860.50.
- Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) collections for January were \$269,931.62.
- Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) collections for January were \$248,224.11.
- Ameri-Pro Health: Requested 337, Transport 192, Refusal 100, Cancellation 45, Response Time 7:53 23 mutual aid with Upson and one mutual aid with Pike.
- Splits for FLOST-all board members agreed to continue negotiations with the City of Barnesville except for Commissioner Lovett.

13. Public Comment

Shirley Williams (148 Perdue Road) Mrs. Williams expressed concerns over the Lamar County School System opting out of the Statewide Floating homestead exemption despite voters approving it in November. Worried about having to pay school taxes at her age, especially since she has not had children in the school system for over 38 years. Advocated for senior citizens to be exempt from paying school taxes.

Donald Hartman (507 Old Milner Road) Mr. Hartman expressed appreciation for the work done on Fellowship Drive. Requested a plan for AmWaste to ensure the roads remain clean. Acknowledged the challenges the Board of Commissioners is facing with the Solid Waste Authority and assured them that many community members, both present and absent from the meeting, support them. Encouraged the Board to continue moving forward despite the difficulties. Thanked Public Works for their efforts in cleaning up old vehicles and equipment. Expressed gratitude to EMS and law enforcement for their services during the recent storm and confirmed that he heard the siren in his area.

Elaine Hallada (131 Steeple Chase) Mrs. Hallada Expressed gratitude to the Board of Commissioners for their work with the community and their handling of issues related to the Solid Waste Authority (SWA). Encouraged the Board to remember they are not alone and that everyone is in this together. Acknowledged the lack of updates due to ongoing legal proceedings and expressed understanding of the situation. Recognized the Board's efforts to correct the apparent mistakes made by the SWA and previous Commissioners, who failed to consider the long-term consequences of their decisions. Noted that what began as a simple question in 2023 has now led to even more unanswered questions. Described the unfolding situation as a "tragedy of errors" and humorously suggested that a local author could write a screenplay about it. Mentioned writing to the White House regarding the matter and encouraged others to do the same to seek clarity and resolution. Praised the structure and productivity of the current meeting, noting that it was a significant improvement from past meetings.

Mike Maddox (120 Magnolia Farms Drive) Mr. Maddox voiced strong concerns regarding the Lamar County School System and its leadership. He criticized the new Superintendent for starting off on the wrong foot by focusing on the cost of running a school per student. He took issue with a Board of Education member's statement that many voters did not understand what they were voting for, implying that citizens were being called "stupid." He expressed frustration that the Board of Education appears to yield more power than the Board of Commissioners. Regarding ongoing lawsuits involving the Solid Waste Authority, he sarcastically suggested turning the matter over to the school system since they seem to get things done their way. He emphasized that the situation is no longer amusing and that he is tired of the issues plaguing the county. As a retired citizen on a fixed income, he stated he is ashamed to live in Lamar County but cannot afford to leave. He believes the county has become a laughingstock in Georgia. While he has not lost respect for the Board of Commissioners, he urged them to take action to resolve the problems. He noted that the animal shelter project is

not truly behind schedule since nine years remain to complete it. He criticized the Board of Education for claiming a need for significant funding to run schools while also allocating large sums to a football field. He thanked Commissioners Lovett and Gilles for attending the recent Board of Education meeting and suggested that school officials do not want them in the building, as it has been cleared of equipment. Despite his frustrations, he encouraged the Board of Commissioners to continue their efforts and do their best. While he has not lost respect for the Board of Commissioners, he urged them to take action to resolve the problems. He noted that the animal shelter project is not truly behind schedule since nine years remain to complete it. He criticized the Board of Education for claiming a need for significant funding to run schools while also allocating large sums to a football field. He thanked Commissioners Lovett and Gilles for attending the recent Board of Education meeting and suggested that school officials do not want them in the building, as it has been cleared of equipment. Despite his frustrations, he encouraged the Board of Commissioners to continue their efforts and do their best.

14. Round Table Discussion

Vice-Chair Fletcher expressed frustration over ongoing lawsuits, stating he is sick and tired of the situation. The County is a co-signer of this mess, yet they do not want the Board of Commissioners to see anything. He said he is sick and tired, and he is done. Expressed appreciation for everyone that came to the meeting. Stated he was glad as a Board they could get stuff done peacefully without all of the arguing and going back and forth with hopes they can continue in this way.

Commissioner Lovett stated the School Board is separate from the Board of Commissioners. He was present at the meeting, and he agrees there is no reason for the school to opt out. They need to go over and express the interest of our community. Encouraged community members to express their interests and concerns, noting that 62% of the county voted in favor of the measure. Invited everyone to join him on February 26, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. to speak at the Board of Education meeting, emphasizing the importance of community voices being heard. Requested attendees to bring numbers to demonstrate their understanding of HB581 and show support for the vote. Mentioned that the Board receives a lawsuit nearly every week and compared the situation to national political issues, where transparency is often compromised. Two years ago, they all wanted to know what was going on. They successfully kept them abroad because they have to follow the law. The law says they have to go through these court proceedings. In Washington, D.C. there are people who have a key to the Courthouse and every time this happens, they go to the front of the line for a Court hearing. The Board of Commissioners do not have that luxury, but they will continue to fight. He said there are similarities between this case and what you see nationally. Nationally one side says look at this corruption and the other side says how dare you even look. They have this same similarity here where the Court says how dare you look. It has been over a year and a half since anyone from the SWA came here and reported that they have a good program. They are not defending the program they are simply saying how dare you look. Stated as citizens and as Commissioners that represent the citizens, they have the right to look to see how the money has been spent. Stated they will continue to move forward. Described the \$100,000,000 financial issue as reminiscent of a plot from an Austin Powers movie and reaffirmed the Board's dedication to seeking answers and ensuring accountability.

Commissioner Gilles Expressed agreement with Vice-Chair Fletcher and Commissioner Lovett regarding the difficulties faced over the past two years. Described the situation of being sued for \$100,000,000 as ridiculous and emphasized the need to move forward. Acknowledged her impatience, stating that if she could speed up the process, she would have it resolved by tomorrow. Commissioner Gilles requested that the community keep the Inglett family in their prayers, referencing a recent distressing phone call that no mother should ever have to receive.

Commissioner Boyle said he echoed with the other Commissioners and after only two years into being a Commissioner he has gotten a face full of it. He said he is tired of it and as a board they are trying their best to come to a resolution with this and they want to keep this moving. He stated that Government and lawsuits turn slow. Stated he does not know where his boundary lines are but noted that County Administrator Townsend has been great with whatever he needs, and he appreciates him. He said he is still learning what it takes to get a pothole fixed and said County Administrator Townsend has been fantastic and thanked him again.

Chairman Traylor urged citizens to like and follow the Lamar Commissioner Facebook page if they have not already. Recognized County Clerk Davidson and Media Relations Calhoun for their efforts in managing the page, including updates on projects like the cleaning of the Courthouse. Acknowledged that State and National leaders may not seem to be listening to the public but reassured the citizens that while they may feel the same way about the Board of Commissioners, the Board is actively listening and addressing concerns. Recognized Mr. Hartman for bringing to their attention the need for a sale or surplus of old county equipment and vehicles. Emphasized the importance of Black History Month and thanked the NAACP representatives for attending to receive the Proclamation. Encouraged citizens to shop locally or have purchases shipped to their homes to contribute to Lamar County's tax base. Explained that penny sales tax revenue supports LOST (Local Option Sales Tax), SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax), and TSPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax). Noted that purchases made through Amazon, gas stations, or restaurants in Lamar County directly benefit the county's revenue. Mentioned discussions in the Workshop meeting about ongoing concerns regarding dirt roads in the county and said they are working on this. Reported receiving calls about standing water issues over the weekend and noted the need to pull ditches to improve drainage. Assured citizens that the Board of Commissioners hear their concerns and will continue addressing issues within their control.

15. Executive Session-None

1. Real Estate
2. Litigation
3. Personnel

16. Adjournment

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to adjourn the Regular Business meeting at 8:02 p.m. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Jarrod Fletcher , Vice-Chair

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

Truman Boyle, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk