



## **LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

### **Workshop Meeting**

### **Administration Building**

**April 10, 2025, 12:30 PM**

### **Workshop Discussion**

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Present for the meeting was Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Gilles, Commissioner Boyle, County Administrator Townsend and County Clerk Davidson.

#### **1. Matthew Murlin – Interest Tax Lien – Harper Road (Parcel #088-050)**

Tax Assessor Haddock addressed the board with a tax lien issue. Tax Commissioner Amanda is out sick. The request is on behalf of Matthew Murlin. His tax bill was sent to the wrong address. He came in the first of March to pay his tax bill because he had not received a tax bill. They did not notify him or tell him that if he did not pay the entire tax bill, they would start a Fi-Fa ( tax lien) which goes against your credit. The Tax Assessor and the Tax Commissioners' systems do no interface. Mr. Murlin went to change his address in the Tax Commissioners office, but they told him they would need to change it in the Tax Assessors Office resulting in a delinquent letter for Harper Road-Parcel Map # 088-050. His current bill was \$466.58 with \$18.74 worth of interest. There is a \$79.54 charge for other fees and another \$20.00 for Fi-Fa. Since everyone in the Tax Commissioners Office is new and still learning the job, Tax Assessor Haddock said it is not their fault nor is it the fault of Mr. Murlin. Tax Assessor is requesting that the Board of Commissioners forgive the Fi Fa and have a letter sent to the Clerk of Superior Court Judge Caleb Tyson. Tax Assessor Haddock feels he should still pay the interest charge, but the tax lien be released.

Commissioner Gilles noted that the same issue happened to someone at the 183 Midway Road. The board requested that Tax Assessor gather the information on the resident of 183 Midway Road and along with Mr. Murlin they both be put on the Regular Business Meeting agenda.

#### **2. Sunday Alcohol Sales**

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the board with several Resolutions that Attorney Mayfield created. Lamar County is a dry County and there are no sales by the package or the drink outside the City limits. In order to allow for types of sales it has to go

on a ballot but before it can go on a ballot a Resolution has to be passed by the Board of Commissioners.

a. Resolution 2025-04 Sunday Sales 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that this Resolution is due to having a shorter amount of time to catch the brunch crowd since the time for Sunday sales of alcohol was put on the ballot and approved for the hours of Sunday alcohol sales to be between the hours of 12:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. This new Resolution would allow for the hours to be between 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. County Attorney said this was changed in the general assembly four or five years ago; 11:00 am. To 12:30 p.m. Lamar County already has Sunday alcohol sales, but the ballot approved beer wine and liquor but the Ordinance in Lamar County is only for beer and wine license. If they were to decide to have liquor on Sunday, that has been approved on the ballot. This Resolution would capture the early hours.

b. Resolution 2025-05 Package Sales of Distilled Spirits

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that this is for package sales on Sunday in the County. You can buy your pickle vodka on Sunday to take home and enjoy.

c. Resolution-2025-06 Distilled Spirits by the Drink

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that by the drink is sit down at a restaurant and enjoy a drink in the County.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that these three Resolutions would allow them to go on the ballot in November.

Commissioner Lovett said the community that he has spoken to is not in favor of this. He asked when these questions have to be on a ballot. County Administrator Townsend said it is normally 90 days before an election. Planning and Community Development Director Buice noted that this can only go on certain elections; March or November. County Attorney Mayfield said these questions could not go on a July election and could only be on the November ballot. He said it has to do with odd and even years. Commissioner Lovett stated he wanted a bigger turnout from the Community for this decision. Commissioner Boyle agreed. The board agreed to wait until a later time to make a decision about putting this on the ballot. The Resolutions were taken off of the agenda.

### **3. Noise Ordinance Discussion**

Planning and Community Develop Director Buice explained there is a Noise Ordinance draft that includes a decibel type of system. She said that as she and Major Holmes were looking into what this would entail. Planning and Community Develop Director Buice said she reached out to the Code Enforcement listserv and found she could find no one that loved a decibel type of system. Major Holmes did the same research with the Sheriff Offices' listserv and found that no one likes it, and one said the yearly maintenance is costly and the certifications are expensive, and the cost is more than what it brings back to the Community.

Major Holmes addressed the board and stated she had contacted almost all of the fifteen counties and made contact with a bunch none that carries a decibel system with Noise Ordinance. She said the original purpose of having a decibel type of system was to have a balance between the person that complained about the noise and the location that the noise was coming from. They are looking for something that falls between them so they can have a final reason for citation; yes, you are

violating or no you are not. Major Holmes said they are looking at companies to purchase a handheld decibel meter. As her grandson would say, “easy peezy” and the other grandson would say “easy peezy lemon squeezy.” Major Holmes said it cost nothing to purchase a handheld unit, but the cost of the calibration is what is expensive. This is the same principal as with their radar units they have to have them calibrated. The decibel meters can be for inside or outside usage, but the issue is not as simple because if we want to use a decibel meter for noise ordinance violation it is 50 ft. outside of where the noise is coming from, where the deputy is standing, 50 ft. outside of it, and the person, the home or the venue, would be in compliance with the national number which is a 70 decibel level reading. They could then leave that location and go to the complainants location and stand in front of their business, or home which is the 50 ft. away and you can hear the noise, and that number could change even though it has been calibrated. The person they spoke to at the decibel meter company said it is because what is between the venue and the complainant; a small ditch, a river, the trees, etc. the meter is only going to receive what is in the location without the added factors in the environment. You can be in compliance at the venue and go another 50 ft. in a different direction, to another homeowners residence, and that noise would be slightly higher or noisier than what the venues decibel level is showing, because of the environment factor. If you can control the environment only, then you will get the same decibel level readings.

Major Holmes said if they spent the money to get the decibel meters and spent the money to keep them calibrated it would literally put them back in the same location that they are in now; a catch twenty-two without the objectivity. Commissioner Boyle stated the weather is a big factor. He said sometimes he can hear the train at his house and sometimes he cannot. Major Holmes said the Sheriff’s Office would continue with their noise order control system. The deputy would investigate the noise, and the first request would be to direct them to turn it down and then if they have not turned it down or turned it up, it is then they will start writing citations. This is after the deputy determines that the noise is too excessive.

The board agreed to continue with the Noise Ordinance as previously adopted.

#### **4. Fire Department Space in the Old Administration Building**

Fire Chief Matthews presented a request for the Fire Department to move into the old Administration Building or potentially back into the former Tax Commissioners office (now the EOC building). The District Attorney’s (DA’s) Office has also expressed interest in occupying the old Administration Building. Currently, the Sheriff’s Office Investigations Unit occupies the second floor of the building. The Fire Department is facing space challenges, particularly with three staff members sharing limited computer access. EMS is currently working from the living room at Fire Station 1 alongside firefighters and the Fire Chief. The Fire Department previously operated out of the old Tax Commissioners office, and there is potential to move back there. The Corner, Clay Tillery is currently housed in that building, he is in agreement with this potential move. As far as moving to the old Administration Building, there are 8 rooms that they could use for office space. Fire Chief Matthews said he believes the Fire Department could grow into that space in the short term until a long-term solution is determined.

Chairman Traylor noted concerns about efficiency if staff are located three miles away from each other. Fire Chief Matthews stated that whether the Fire Department is next door or in town, travel is required either way. He said again that moving to the new EOC building would come with

additional costs, such as building out a back room. County Administrator Townsend asked Fire Chief Matthews when he would want to move and had concerns about funding this year.

Fire Chief Matthews praised EMA Director Martin for her performance during the recent storm. He said she stayed up through the night. They hosted EOC staff and Commissioners during the storm, reinforcing the building's importance. He said this is where everyone congregates when there is a storm.

Fire Chief Matthews suggested another source which is using the old Health Department because they have six desks and ten filing cabinets that could be repurposed. He said the long-term goal is to construct a building comparable in size to the EOC building adjacent to the Fire Department. He noted that the Fire Department is expected to grow, including several more administrative positions. Fire Chief Matthews said another thing to consider with the EOC building is that Coroner Tillery has one office, the storage room option lacks Air Conditioning and would require construction (walls, ventilation), implying extra cost. He said the conference room is a consideration but converting it would require a new hallway and two doors, resulting in the loss of meeting space. Fire Chief Matthews stated the conference room is heavily used during emergencies when the EOC is activated.

Fire Chief Matthews agreed it would be better to follow up next month with more information. The need to do a cost analysis and space planning. Commissioner Lovett said the Fire Department continues to face space constraints, with six people currently working in a cramped area. He noted that originally, the Fire Station was built with administrative space in mind, but over time, that space was reallocated and then reduced for budget reasons, and then further reassigned to the Tax Commissioner's office. Commissioner Lovett mentioned that relocating to the Martin Building is feasible. He suggested that the left side of the building could be allocated to the Fire Department, while the right side goes to the District Attorney's Office. This plan would provide more office space, better collaboration between the Sheriff's Office Investigations and the DA's Office, as they often work closely together. There are eight offices in total; both departments would only need a portion of them. The remaining rooms could potentially be rented out or reserved for future needs.

The Board agreed to have a collective conversation with the District Attorney during the upcoming circuit meeting to coordinate plans and confirm mutual interest in the shared space.

## **5. Enterprise Fleet Management**

County Administrator Townsend explained that Jones County is currently using Enterprise Fleet Management. Vehicles budgeted for \$45,000 are now costing \$60,000. Mileage tracking and timely maintenance are key priorities. Many vehicles are over 10 years old, with high mileage and increasing repair needs. Trucks hitting 60,000 miles; efficiency goes up after replacement.

County Administrator Townsend explained the key benefits of the program. Purchasing power and discounts on vehicles, improved maintenance tracking, guidance on the "sweet spot" to sell vehicles for maximum equity and sale proceeds from old vehicles can be rolled into purchases of newer vehicles. County Administrator Townsend said that Jones County joined national Enterprise program 8 years ago. He said enterprise vehicles are often sourced from other counties, cities, and states. One example is buying a car for \$22,000 and then selling it for \$10,000. This is where the savings are reinvested. County Administrator Townsend said there are lots of regulations with being in GASB 87 compliance. The leases are tracked in accordance with financial reporting standards.

County Administrator Townsend said that Code Enforcement is driving a 2015 model with 149,000 miles and one of the Maintenance vehicles from 2012 has 187,000 miles. The Fire Dept. and the new Fire Inspector are both requesting to add more vehicles. He said he has 1.5 million allocated for new Sheriff vehicles and they have a request for four new vehicles. The goal for the Sheriff's Office is for thirty vehicles to be replaced across 6 years (5 per year). New vehicles cost more upfront but reduce long-term maintenance (e.g., fewer issues like transmissions).

There was discussion regarding V6 versus V8 engine considerations. Commissioner Boyle noted that his V6 truck is pulling his camper just fine. County Administrator Townsend said there has been some pushback from some Departments who are hesitant to retire older vehicles. Enterprise has a massive spreadsheet in development to track all fleet details. He noted that Sheriff White has met with Enterprise twice and he is working on a priority replacement list.

## **6. Dirt Road Acknowledgement**

Commissioner Lovett addressed the issues with people moving on to dirt roads and expecting them to be paved. There is significant growth in rural areas; and the buyers are asking about dirt roads being paved. He said Means Road went from 0 to 12 homes in a year. Commissioner Lovett said the residents report being told roads will be paved but there are no such plans for this with the County. There are concerns that the builders and realtors allegedly are misinforming buyers. Also, there are EMS and Public safety issues on unpaved roads. Commissioner Lovett said the paving cost for one dirt road is estimated at \$4 million and there are seventy miles of dirt roads in the county.

Commissioner Lovett proposed a solution. They could post road signs at beginning and end of dirt roads noting "This Road Will Not Be Paved." Along with permit language clarifying dirt road status. He also suggested that builders be required to sign and acknowledge that roads will remain unpaved.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice and the Board of Commissioners discussed adding zoning overlay rules to differentiate between dirt vs. paved areas (e.g., deeper setbacks, wider frontage). It was suggested that they could require 5 acres = 300 ft frontage, 10 acres = 600 ft road frontage.

Commissioner Lovett requested that a monthly permit list be shared with Board of Commissioners. He noted that adding rules and signage would ensure transparency and prevent false expectations. It would also reinforce buyer accountability at closing.

## **7. Regular Business Meeting Discussion**

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation

Rev. Jimmy Lyons will give the invocation.

4. Approval of Agenda
5. Minutes Approval

1. Workshop Minutes – March 13, 2025: Approved.
2. Regular Business Meeting – March 18, 2025: Approved.

## 6. Proclamations

1. Lamar County Child Abuse Month – Read by Ashley Gilles.
2. Lamar County Hunger Awareness Month – Presented by Lovett.
3. Confederate History and Heritage Month – Presented by Truman.

## 8. Old Business

No old business discussed.

## 9. New Business

Planning and Community Develop Director Buice explained that Ordinance 2025-03 is a request from Southern Rivers to rezone 181 acres from Agricultural-Residential (A-R) to Manufacturing (M-1) that is located near Hwy 341 and Abbott Road. The current conditions are as follows:

- No public access from Abbott Road; access is for operational needs only;
- Development plan to include a fifty' treed buffer along Abbott Road and adjacent properties;
- Any new entrance shall be paved for the first fifty;' and
- Any buildings or equipment shall maintain a one hundred' setback from Hwy 341 South.

Commissioner Gilles raised concerns about noise, fencing (prefers natural vegetative buffers), noise and pollution, and permanence of zoning. Planning and Community Develop Director Buice explained that the zoning is for Southern Rivers and if someone else purchases the property they would have to come back to the Board of Commissioners for any changes in the zoning. Commissioner Lovett said he did not want to strangle tightly because Southern Rivers is an important business to Lamar County. Lovett emphasized fear of them moving out of County. Planning and Community Develop Director Buice stated that a development agreement would be drafted by the next meeting and Attorney Mayfield would be looking into the list of permitted uses and utility language.

### Resolution 2025-07 – Safety Coordinator

County Clerk Davidson is the Safety Coordinator and has been for the last fourteen plus year. ACCG/LGRMS is needing an approved Resolution stating who is the Safety Coordinator for Lamar County. There are new requirement including keeping a record book of all safety actions and plans.

### Resolution 2025-08 – Majik Market Variance

Planning and Community Develop Director Buice explained that the Majik Market recently reopened at 919 Veterans Parkway. The current operation is a convenient store, but the owner has future expansion plans that include a restaurant and a fueling station. Lamar County regulations require underground fuel storage tanks to be located no closer than thirty' from an adjacent property line. The owner is asking for a reduction of setback requirements to ten' to provide better access for the fueling trucks.

### Resolution 2025-09 – Chris Butler Catering Kitchen

Planning and Community Develop Director Buice explained that Mr. Butler currently has a state and county approved kitchen for catering and food truck for offsite sales of prepared food. Applicant would also like to be approved to make food sales from his property. This will be a pickup point only; no customers will remain on the property.

to dine on-site. This 4.57-acre property currently has a single-family dwelling occupied by the owners, a child day-care facility operated by the owners, and a commercial kitchen also operated by the owners. The also operate a food truck and Mr. Butler does night-time barbeque cooking for his business. The request is to allow catering kitchen operations at the residence with customer pick-up at home.

Commissioner Lovett had concerns about traffic, the steep hill, and time limits for operating the pickup service. Planning and Community Develop Director Buice said she did not anticipate Mr. Bulter having an issue with setting a time period for the pickup food service and would have an answer for them regarding the time frame before the next business meeting.

#### **10. Budget Amendment – Operating Contingency Fund**

County Administrator Townsend presented Budget Amendment # 1 for an amount of \$94,412.00 allocated for Code Enforcement and Fire Inspector salaries, FICA, Medicare, Communications and Uniforms. He reported that there is approximately \$497,000 left in the contingency line item.

#### **11. Surplus Vehicles – Sheriff’s Office**

County Clerk Davidson explained that approval was necessary from the Board of Commissioners to surplus the following vehicles. These vehicles are old and worn out and are no longer on the schedule of liability.

8954 1999 Ford F-250

5655 2001 Chev Tahoe

#### **12. Administrator’s Report-County Administrator Townsend**

- Animal Shelter Grand Opening scheduled (11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) with Chairman Ryran, Sheriff White, Major Holmes, and Tyler White. There will be vendors set up including Buck’s BBQ and Mainstreet Nutrition.

Chairman Traylor noted that they will be giving free rabies shots and microchipping.

- GDOT has ordered red light arms for Hwy 36 and 341 with an approximate 4-month delivery.
- Historical Society updates: Received a letter from the Historical Society requesting window repairs, and lightning and electrical work at the Old Jail Museum. Will reach out to Wright Woodall for an estimate. Commissioner Gilles suggested that the County hold a Haunted House at the Old Jail Museum to raise some money. Chairman Traylor said he did not see why they could not as long as it is safe, and they do not use the back area. County Administrator Townsend noted the biggest issue is with the windows and they will have to be custom ordered. Chairman Traylor said there is still a leak in the back corner.
- Road Projects:

Preparation for Zebulon Road and the R-Cut is underway.

LMIG funding notice from William Wright the GDOT Commissioners stating Lamar County is eligible for \$590,745.91. Public Works Director Rigdon is recommending that they add Zebulon Road to the paving project. Currently Piedmont and Howard Roads are listed on the Phase 2 paving project. Commissioner Gilles asked if this would include fill-ins for the ditches on Zebulon Road. County Administrator Townsend and Public Works Director Rigdon said they would get that done before they start paving. Discussed concerns over trailers running off roads. Fire Chief Matthews requested that Liberty Hill road be widened for the Fire Trucks that travel down that road.

Fire Chief Matthews reported that the Fire Department will training at Old Health Department and stated no concern was necessary for fire that they see coming out of the building.

Requesting of IT pricing comparisons is ongoing receiving one bid that is higher than what is currently being paid. Will speak to a company that the Board of Education is looking at and will continue discussing with Vice-Chair Fletcher.

### **13. Public Comment**

James Whitten of 388 Harmony Hill Road: Discussed road conditions on Harmony Hill Road. Reported he had scraped the road three times. Stated the road held up during the recent rains. Asked about dirt roads that had previously been paved and wanted to know why they could not be re-paved. County Administrator Townsend that part of that road had triple-seal paving and he wants to do more of this type paving in Phase 4, 5 and 6 which would be a third of the cost. Mr. Whitten had concerns with log trucks going across the bridge on Harmony Hill Road.

### **14. Round Table**

Commissioner Gilles reported that animal shelter volunteers need to report to the Animal Shelter at 10:00 a.m.

Chairman Traylor requested for everyone to come out to the grand opening of the Animal Shelter and stated he would love to have volunteers. Stated that this will be a grand day especially the amount of time Public Work Director James Rigdon and his crew, County Administrator Townsend, and Tom Wellner have put into the Animal Shelter. Reported he has a record of Fred Morris that he and his wife made before Mr. Morris passed away that he knows the community will love and appreciate. The video is available on U-Tube and there have already been twenty views.

### **15. Executive Session**

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to go into Executive Session for Real Estate, Litigation and Personnel at approximately 2:27 p.m. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **16. Adjournment**

The board adjourned the Executive Session at approximately 2:46 p.m. Commissioner Gilles made a motion to adjourn the Workshop meeting. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Ryran Traylor, Chairman

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Jarrod Fletcher , Vice-Chair

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Jason Lovett, Commissioner

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Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

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Truman Boyle, Commissioner

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