

Workshop Meeting
Lamar County Board of Commissioners
10/13/2022
12:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m. on October 13th, 2022. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Heiney, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend and County Clerk Davidson.

Discussion and Review of Draft Ordinance Changes Pertaining to the Lamar County Planning Commission Board and the Lamar County Board of Appeals

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that she would like to combine the Lamar County Planning Commission Board and the Lamar County Board of Appeals. There is not a draft Ordinance ready at this time but it will require two readings. The Board of Appeals is appointed by the County where they hear variances and special exceptions. The Planning and Commission Board is a joint board between Lamar County and the City of Barnesville where they hear rezonings and text amendments. However, the City of Barnesville on the same Planning and Commission board also hears rezonings, special exceptions, and variances. Two boards are doing essentially the same type of business and the larger applications include a rezoning and a special exception. When this happens, they have to go through three boards; the Board of Appeals, the Planning Commission Board, and either counsel or commission. Planning and Community Development Director Buice has spoken with all of the current board members and they are not opposed to having a joint Planning Commission Board with Lamar County and the City of Barnesville. This would be 2 from the City of Barnesville, 2 from Lamar County, and 1 joint appointment.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that originally the State had a model Ordinance for both boards and Lamar County adopted both boards. Commissioner Thrash had no concerns with combining the two boards. Vice-Chairman Heiney stated he had some concerns and said that the Board of Appeals should be independent of the other group in case there is a conflict and for transparency. Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that the Board of Appeals is a recommendation board for special exceptions and they make final decisions on variances. If there is an issue with a building permit or a decision that is made in the Planning and Community Development office, they are also the first appeal. In speaking with the County Attorney, he said that it works better to not go to a board that does not have the technical ability to hear appeals.

Discussion of Local Legislation to Modify the Appointing Authorities of the Board of Elections

Chairman Glass stated that this was based on a State Supreme Court case that questioned the Board of Elections having members appointed by non-elected bodies. This affects the Lamar County Board of Elections with an appointee from the Democratic and Republican parties. The County Attorney has spoken to the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and the State Board of Elections. The appointing authority in the case of the State is still the Governor but there is a recommendation made from the Democratic and Republican parties. If they make a change to modify the appointing authority of the Board of Elections it will need to go through local legislation or the courts.

Commissioner Thrash stated that she did not like what happened with the Sunday Voting in Lamar County and the way it was handled. She said that this is the downside of having political parties have appointees on the Board of Elections. Chairman Glass stated that the law states that the primary election is conducted

by the county for the two parties that gained the most votes in the previous gubernatorial election. When they have qualifications, the fees get split between the Board of Elections and the two parties. The State Board of Elections expects a recommendation from the two parties pending the approval of the Governor. Chairman Glass suggested that they work on a decision to submit to the local legislation in 2023. He said that the two viable options are to have the County appoint three members, the City of Barnesville appoint 1 member and the City of Milner appoint 1 member or have the County appoint 1 member outright and appoint the other 2 members based on recommendations from the Republican or the Democratic party.

Commissioner Thrash was concerned with how the redistricting was handled in the Board of Elections Office regarding citizens voting in the wrong district. Chairman Glass pointed out that the State was behind in sending out the voter registration cards which led to people voting in the incorrect district. The Board of Elections verified the ones that did come in and found some mistakes. Those cards were sent back to the State. Ashley Gilles who was present for the meeting stated she pulled the voter list on June 15th, 2022, and found 190 mistakes in District 3 alone. Using “My Voter Page” on the website she stated that the districts were still incorrect. Commissioner Thrash stated that this could have affected the recent election because citizens voted in incorrect districts. Citizens in the State of Georgia do not have confidence in the election process so therefore people are not voting. They look to the leaders to fix it. The Board of Commissioners agreed to bring these issues before the legislators to make sure that the election process works correctly. Vice-Chairman Heiney suggested that they use the machines to print out a ballot and put that in a lock box and then have it hand counted. Chairman Glass stated that there would be a time and labor issue for hand-counting votes. Vice-Chairman Heiney stated that Saturday and Sunday voting should not happen because employees have 2 hours to vote on Tuesday Election day. Commissioner Thrash suggested that she draft a statement regarding how the Sunday Voting decision was made in the Board of Elections office. Commissioner Thrash also suggested that they do breakfast or lunch in December with the Legislators.

Contract with Charles Abbott Associates

County Administrator Townsend presented a contract from Charles Abbott Associates (CAA) for Professional Building Inspection and Plan Review Service to assist in the Building and Zoning office with inspections. Planning and Community Development Director Buice stated that you have two categories: Commercial and Industrial. Currently, we ask that for these types of projects, they provide their own inspections and engineering plans. This is one category where it would be great if they could call on one company that they know and trust and who has the county's best interest at heart. The other section is Residential Construction and having professional help would be greatly recommended. The rate for this would be hourly. County Administrator Townsend stated that the bid that they provided was as if they were taking over the entire Planning and Community Development office. Planning and Community Development Director Buice stated that what was requested was to have service for 1 day a week, 8 hours a day, and 52 weeks a year which would be around \$33,000.00. Chairman Glass stated that the fees are based on the demand for service and therefore they can go up or down and should not be a large impact on the budget. Planning and Community Development Director Buice stated that this would be on the commercial side. CAA's proposal of hourly rates was as follows: Service Provided Hourly Rate Principal Civil Engineer \$149.00 Associate Engineer \$109.00 Residential Building Inspector \$80.00. County Administrator Townsend stated he would have CAA re-work the bid and bring it back to the Board of Commissioners in November.

LMIG and TSPLOST Discussion

County Administrator Townsend presented the Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Road List which is a part of Phase I of the TSPLOST list. This is due at the end of October. Chairman Glass

explained that LMIG funds are based on the percentage of the State collections for the fuel excise tax. The law states that the counties are to get anywhere from 11 to 15 percent. This year there has been no fuel excise tax collected since March and fuel tax collections are low. One of the Legislative Priorities is to ask the Governor to fund the LMIG programs as if the fuel excise tax had continued to be collected.

Van Buren Road	SR 36-Johnstonville Road	\$377,000.00
Bush Road	SR 18/US41-Fredonia Church Road	\$289,000.00
Five Points Road	SR18-SR7	\$300,000.00
Cauthen Road	Martin Dairy Rf-Trice Road	\$ 89,000.00
Cook Road	Morgan Dairy Road-Spalding County Line	\$ 90,000.00

SPLOST Discussion to Finalize the List for the March Ballot

County Administrator Townsend presented the list of SPLOST IV projects. This is a budget total of \$14,400,000.00 and will be around \$200,000.00 a month.

Vehicles	\$687,000.00
Facilities	\$250,000.00
Sheriff's Cruiser	\$828,000.00
Fire Station	\$1,525,000.00
Fire Equipment	\$832,400.00
Public Works Equipment	\$380,600.00
Public Works Roads	\$2,400,000.00
Recreation	\$1,350,000.00

The specific items discussed for SPLOST IV included in the above amounts are as follows:

Van for the Coroner, Lights, and Fencing for Parks and Recreation, New Security for Parks and Recreation, Request for Pickle Ball Courts with lights, Skate Park resurfaced, Equipment for Public Works, Senior Center building improvements, New bus for the Senior Center, replacing culvert pipes.

The Distribution for each municipality is as follows:

Lamar County	\$8,208,000.00	57%
Barnesville	\$5,472,000.00	38%
Milner	\$ 576,000.00	4.00%
Aldora	\$ 144,000.00	1.00%

Addendum to Tax Commissioners Software and Professional Services

County Administrator Townsend presented a contract for the Tax Commissioners Office from Aumentum Technologies for software and professional services for a total cost of \$11,960.00. The request was in the previous budget amendment. County Administrator Townsend can approve the contract because it is within his approval rights. Commissioner Thrash noted that the Tax Commissioner would like to put up glass partitions and sliding drawers so that the public does not have direct access to the employees.

Addendum to the Ambulance Contract

County Administrator Townsend presented an amendment to the Ambulance/Emergency Medical Service Delivery Agreement. This includes the addition of Pike County to the Regional System which will result in a reduction of the annual subsidy of \$25,195.00. There was a board discussion about not having a

paramedic on every ambulance but they would have an advanced EMT. Commissioner Thrash pointed out that the first responder on the call/scene will know whether or not to call for additional assistance. The board continued their discussion regarding the ambulance service in the County. Currently, there are 8 trucks available in the region with 2 trucks in Lamar County. Upson Regional Hospital and Ameripro EMS are working on their contractual agreement and Upson Regional Hospital requires that 1 truck be located at the hospital for a period of 12 hours for transport to other hospitals.

Legislative Update

Commissioner Thrash gave an update on legislative priorities. The Board agreed to vote on 3 priorities from the following 10 priorities below.

1. Vote against the amendment with a neutral position and oppose the Truck Weight Limit Increase.
 2. Home Rule: Design Standards, Short-Term Rentals, and Build-to-Rent Subdivisions.
 3. Modify Legal Organ Notice Requirements.
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1. Home Rule: Design Standards, Short-Term Rentals, and Build-to-Rent Subdivisions: Establishing appropriate local oversight of residential design standards, short-term rentals, and build-to-rent subdivisions. ACCG opposes these state preemptions.
 2. Creation of New Cities: The creation of new cities duplicates local administrative structures and can disrupt long-term planning, create service delivery challenges and inefficiencies, and impose greater costs on taxpayers both within and outside the new city. This does not apply to Lamar County.
 3. Modify Legal Organ Notice Requirements: Counties should be allowed to post legal notices on their county website or common statewide websites in addition to the required paid post in the county's legal organ. Should the legal organ fail to post the notice, the publication on the county website or common statewide website should serve as adequate notice to the public and serve as having met statutory notice requirements.
 4. Mental Health Reform: ACCG encourages the Governor and General Assembly to do the following: Increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for behavioral health provider services in order to increase the workforce and make Georgia competitive in the marketplace. Expand the availability of Behavioral Health Crisis Centers (BHCC) and Crisis Stabilization Units across the state within a reasonable distance in order to divert individuals from local jails.
 5. Truck Weight Limit Increase: ACCG opposes legislation that increases allowable weight limits on local roads and bridges as current allowable weight limits are at maximum capacity. The increase in truck weight limits contributes to the rapid deterioration of local road and bridge infrastructure and increases the severity of accidents which negatively affects the movement of freight and people through Georgia.
 6. Federal Inmate Exclusion Policy: ACCG requests that the federal government allow federal benefits such as Medicaid, Veterans Affairs, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to remain active for eligible inmates/detainees in local jails pre-adjudication
 7. Public Notification of Tax Increase: ACCG urges the General Assembly to adjust the formula for the rollback rate to allow counties to capture inflation
 8. Taxes Exceeding Fair Market Value: ACCG asks the General Assembly to call for a constitutional amendment that would grant the authority for county commissioners to waive taxes that exceed a property's fair market value.
 9. Tax Commissioners Contracting to Collect City Taxes: To make the process uniform, there should be a single contract that must be signed by the county commission, tax commissioner, and city council. This contract should specify reimbursement to the county for administrative costs and any personal compensation paid to the Tax Commissioner.

10. Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Program: ACCG opposes any changes to the LMIG program that reduce current county funds or reduce counties' proportionate share of such grants. With the suspension of the state motor fuel excise tax, ACCG requests that the Governor and the Georgia General Assembly preserve at a minimum the adopted FY 2023 budget levels for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in particular the LMIG appropriations. In addition, ACCG requests that the FY 2024 budget appropriate funding that would have been collected had there not been a suspension of collection for the state motor fuel excise tax.

Regular Business Meeting Agenda Discussion

- I. Call to Order
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Invocation- Associate Pastor for the Barnesville Church of the Nazarene, Jett Davis.
- IV. Approval of Agenda
- V. Minutes Approval
 - i. Workshop Meeting-September 15th, 2022
 - ii. Public Hearing Meeting-September 20th, 2022
 - iii. Regular Business Meeting-September 20th, 2022
- VI. LMIG Priority List of Roads
- VII. SPLOST Project List for the March Ballot

Administrator's Report-County Administrator Townsend

- Reported that expenses are around 75 percent and should be at 64.65 percent.
- Reported that the General Fund Cash Flow is high due to transferring LMIG funds into the General Fund for payment.
- Reported that the Local Options Sales Tax (LOST) distribution for September was \$142,639.24.
- Reported that the Special Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) distribution for September was \$255,869.23.
- Reported that the Transportation Special Local Options Sales Tax (TSPLOST) distribution for September was \$240,011.70.
- Reported that the Insurance Premium Rollback was received in the amount of \$901,147.00 which allowed the County to not have a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN).
- Reported that the contractors will begin work on the new Administration building around November 7th, 2022.
- Discussed having the FY 2023 Budget Workshop for the Constitutional Officers and the Departments that have changes to their budget on October 25th, 2022 starting at 9:00 a.m.
- Reported that he is looking for a truck for the Maintenance Department because their Van died.
- Chairman Glass reported that the Mental Health Center which is run by the McIntosh Trail Community Service Board needs help. They do outpatient counseling for around 470 people plus they support the DFACS program at the school system for around 75 students a year. The Georgia APEX program allows students to go to counseling inside the school. There are 7 counties within the local region; Butts, Lamar, Pike, Fayette, Henry, Spalding, and Upson County. All of the other counties provide a facility for their operations. They pay for their facility or they provide a facility free of rent. Medicaid or other types of insurance pays for the services and they collect those fees to help cover salaries and operating expenses. The State provides a supplement but the facility is provided locally by the counties in the local region. They have been taking money out of their reserves to pay the rent but they will have to close the operation down if they cannot find a place free of charge to rent. Currently, they are renting from the City of Barnesville and they are paying around \$55,000.00 a year for rent, utilities, and communications. Chairman Glass stated that he is working with County Administrator Townsend on letting them move into the old Tax

Commissioners Office/Accountability Court. It needs about \$5,000.00 worth of handicap modifications including a new door, commode, and sink in the bathroom. There will be some utility costs for allowing them to move into this building.

- Reported that he is looking at hiring a local County Extension Agent for \$36,000.00 a year.

Round Table

Chairman Glass announced that there would be a blood drive on October 20th, 2022 at the Barnesville First Methodist Church from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. There is no mask requirement and homemade cookies will be provided. The Red Cross is giving \$10.00 gift cards to all blood donors.

Adjournment and Executive Session

Commissioner Horton requested to go into executive session to discuss personnel and litigation at approximately 2:34 p.m. Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The board came out of executive session at approximately 2:50 p.m. Vice-Chairman Heiney made a motion to adjourn the Workshop meeting. Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Robert Heiney, Vice-Chairman

Bennie Horton, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk