

Workshop Meeting
Lamar County Board of Commissioners
6-13-2024
12:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m. on March 19th, 2024. Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Gilles, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. County Administrator Townsend was absent for the meeting.

Judicial-in-Rem Property-Tax Assessor

Tax Assessor Haddock addressed the board on behalf of the Tax Commissioner regarding a Resolution done in 2016 for properties unsuitable for non-judicial tax sales. The Tax Commissioner would like another Resolution for those judicial-in-rem properties that involve the Court System and lawyers. These properties are in estates, and Gregg Horton, who does the title searches, cannot sell them. There is a \$3,000.00 fee that goes to the lawyer to try and get it sold. If the properties do not sell, the Board of Commissioners are on the hook for the \$3,000.00. Tax Assessor Haddock said one of the properties is on Jenkins Street. The taxes were \$30.00, but now they are \$546.00. The County is responsible for the \$546.00; taking it to the Judicial-in Rem will cost an additional \$3,000.00.

County Attorney Mayfield said there are two types of tax sales, the non-judicial tax sale and the judicial-in-Rem tax sale, in which case an attorney files paperwork with the court and gets the lawyer to sell it. The advantage is the buyer on the courthouse steps gets a good title. The one the Tax Commissioner sells; you do not get a good title. The judicial sales are very marketable. If someone dies and they do not have an executor or an administrator you cannot sue an unrepresented estate. He said it is the same with code enforcement; you have properties that will sit forever until someone in the family cares about them enough to get appointed by the Probate Court to sell them. The goal is to put the value down so low and start generating the bill but whoever sells it in the future will get that money back. It makes the Tax Commissioner look bad to have them on the uncollectable list when it is impossible to collect.

Tax Assessor Haddock said the properties on Jenkins, Mill, and 11th Street will not sell. A piece of property on Perdue Road has 30 owners attached to it. Mr. Horton does the title search but cannot get a clear title for these properties. All of the properties are vacant; Gladys Worthy, Earlie mothers, and Lillian Holloway. The County will need to pay Mr. Horton for the title search plus the tax due, penalties, interest, and the \$3,000.00 to the lawyer.

Commissioner Thrash requested that County Attorney Mayfield research this issue before the Resolution is brought to the board for approval.

Board of Elections-Logistic Issues

Board of Election Chairman Bill Christopher (Mr. Christopher) addressed the board. Mr. Christopher said they used inmate labor trustees and a deputy during the last election to move their equipment. They had requested help from Public Works, but since they were shorthanded, they needed someone else to provide them with help. So, during the last election, they found a group of citizens with a trailer and a truck to assist them with moving the election equipment. They offered to pay them but they turned it down. He said they have two guys who handle logistics on the Board of Elections (BOE) who are over 70. including himself, and they have really bad backs. He said there are over 100 pieces of equipment weighing 20 to 40 lbs. or over. Mr. Christopher said most of the equipment is around 20 to 25 lbs. He

said they had discussed various solutions, including hiring a moving company, and their quotes range from \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00. This involves taking the equipment out on Monday and picking it up on Wednesday. Mr. Christopher said he spoke with a group called "College Hunks" and their proposal was \$1,350.00 for small elections and \$3,500.00 for large elections. They are bonded and insured. Mr. Christopher suggested they look into other groups, such as Civic Clubs, which have young members who need to meet public service requirements and can commit to moving the equipment every year. Another suggestion would be to discuss this with the ROTC at the High School or other Clubs or Teams that may be interested. They could contribute to their club to help with their activities. Due to school being out and them being busy with elections, they have yet to speak to any of them.

Mr. Christopher suggested that the Board of Commissioners make it a policy that departments have part-time people who could use extra hours during election time; they request that these departments commit to providing help with moving equipment. He said they are open to suggestions and have not exhausted every possibility. If they use the moving company in November, their budget will need to be tweaked. They have already used a huge portion of their budget to provide security for the building. Mr. Christopher said that the security person currently has to do a fire watch because the fire alarm has been disarmed in the building, and repairs will not be made until tomorrow. He said every hour, the security person has to check every room to ensure there is no smoke because, without the Fire Alarm, they do not know what could happen because people in the building need to be safe. Mr. Christopher said if they are going to start using moving companies, this will need to be a new line item in the BOE budget for this expenditure. If they use a moving company, then the budget will need to be tweaked.

Mr. Christopher said if they use County employees for moving equipment, he suggested they use money from the BOE budget to pay them for their time so it does not come out of that Department's budget. They could also pay for the cost of their benefits and taxes for those hours that they work with the BOE. The County Administrator responded that this would be an accounting nightmare.

Chairman Ryan said he loves the idea of using clubs and schools. He asked if they would have to have any bonding or insurance and if the BOE would serve as their supervisor. Mr. Christopher said they would be their supervisors. They do have concerns about injuries so they would have parents sign waivers. He said that football teams, other sports teams, and the ROTC are trained in lifting. He said the problem with using high school students is that they would need to provide the vehicles because he is sure they would not want a 16-year-old driving their vehicle. He said County employees could use their own vehicle, and in addition to the BOE trailer, the County has an additional trailer along with the Sheriff's Office trailer that they could borrow.

Mr. Christopher said they want to move the BOE offices to the new Administration Offices in July. However, after discussions with various people regarding changing the voting precincts for District 2, if they move early voting to the new Administration building for November, there will be a good bit of confusion. So, they are proposing to keep early voting in the current BOE building until after November. If they have to move to the new Administration building early, they will do everything possible to ensure the information goes out. Mr. Christopher said they are currently under investigation about moving their polling places. He said because of State logistics they were unable to get new and correct precinct cards mailed out between the time the change was made and the time voting started. So, no new precinct cards went out. They had signage out and notices in the legal organ. They had public meetings. But, even doing that, they still had problems where they had to send out certified letters to some voters. They would not send out certified letters with the possibility of changing the voting place for the November election. To avoid any conflict, they may need to send out letters to some voters. They could also send out postcards that cost about .50 cents for each postcard for around 15,000 voters. Mr. Christopher said they are in the process of making this decision.

Commissioner Lovett said he liked all of the ideas. He said he would like to see a budget adjustment to accommodate the moving of equipment issue but would like to see the high watermark plan of their choosing. Commissioner Lovett said he loved the option of using the local ROTC, football team, etc. and getting it down to a manageable deal. Community involvement is paramount in elections, and they

need to teach the young generation about elections. Commissioner Lovett said budget-wise wise if you need to hire a moving company then the money is available and if you can find a better alternative that uses the resources of the community that would be advantageous to both of them.

Commissioner Lovett said there are 15,000 registered voters and about 7,000 houses. He said the Board of Elections will have to move sooner or later. He said, in his personal opinion, no matter when they do this, people will show up to the precinct they have been voting for the last 15 to 20 years. They will need to understand that you have to move for both logistical and financial reasons. They can put a big sign on door telling them where they are voting.

Vice-Chair Gilles asked if they were still planning on moving District 3 into the new Administration Building or if they were planning on leaving it at the gym. Mr. Christopher said they were planning on leaving it at the gym. He said the main problem is that the only facility closest to the front is the meeting room, which conflicts with the Board of Commissioners meetings. The Elections are on the 3rd Tuesday, and the Board of Commissioners holds its meetings on the third Tuesday of the month.

Recreation Advisory Board Update

Recreation Director Lowe addressed the board. She said they are learning some things six months after having the new Recreation Board, and they have had some bumps and bruises along the way. The board a lot of insights, but it is still looking at the assessments. They have done a lot of research on their personal time. Recreation Director Lowe said she has given them a needs assessment list to guide them. They are looking at various discounts on equipment and opportunities for things that can be done in the future. At this point, they have not made any major financial decisions. They have started working on getting quotes for the SPLOST approved lights project. One company has given them a quote they all liked, and it will be presented at some point. They plan on getting other quotes. Recreation Director Lowe said they do not meet every month, but they met in January, February, and May. They took the Spring off because this was their crazy season. Recreation Director Lowe said they installed a crosswalk from the small playground to field number four. Because the kids run and cars fly through that location, they fenced it in and put in a small crosswalk so they can walk back and forth. They put up some one-way traffic signs to help with traffic flow. Their goal is to meet some of the safety concerns in the park. Recreation Director Lowe said they will post when the Recreation Advisory Board meets before their next meeting.

Chairman Traylor noted that many years ago, the Town of Aldora provided the Recreation Department with a supplement which helped the Recreation Department. He said there are several new companies in town that could assist with supplementing the Recreation Department: AmWaste, Vulcan, the Battery Company, Langdale Forest Products, the company that purchased Jordan Lumber. Chairman Traylor suggested the Recreation Advisory Board reach out to them for annual donations. He said this could be for \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 and could supplement the entire Recreation Department. Chairman Traylor said he did not know if the Commissioners or anyone in the audience had relationships with any of these companies, but if they could also reach out to them, it would be great. Recreation Director Lowe said she has adjusted the fees and cut out things over the last seven years to bridge the gap of losing the supplement. They continue to look for grants but they are hard to get because many times they do not qualify. Many of the grants are for-profit, and non-profit organizations do not qualify.

Rezoning from A-R to R-1: Paul Daly and Illicia Goodman

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the board. She said there is only one application for June. The property is located at 951 Hwy 18 West on a portion of tax map 023, parcel 006A. Paul Daly and Illicia Goodman want to split a 2.43 acre tract that includes a historic home from their 9.43 acres. The potential buyers wants the house but not all of the acreage. A split in acreage under 5 acres requires a rezoning. The desire is to have 2.43 acres rezoned from Agriculture-Residential to Residential-1. There was no one at the Planning Commission Public Hearing to speak against it and the Planning Commission Board recommended approval.

ACCG-Interlock Risk Management Agency (IRMA) Insurance Renewal

Chairman Traylor said they had seen some great information from ACCG regarding this renewal, which is done annually. He noted an increase in the renewal, but if you look at the number of claims over the years, it justifies the increase.

Renewal Contribution

7/1/2024 to 7/1/2025

Member: Lamar County

Auto Liability/Physical Damage (AL/APD) \$5,000 \$10,000

Crime \$5,000 \$10,000

General Liability (GL) \$5,000 \$10,000

Law Enforcement Liability (LEL) \$5,000 \$10,000

Property & Equip. Breakdown (PROP) \$5,000 \$10,000

Public Officials Liability (POL) \$5,000 \$10,000

Privacy & Security (Cyber) \$25,000 \$25,000

Renewal Contribution: \$515,170 \$489,591

Less Safety Credit: (\$24,169) (\$22,890) Net Contribution Due: \$491,001 \$466,701

Commissioner Lovett inquired about the Loss Ratio. County Clerk Davidson reported that from the email Matt Autry, Underwriting and Member Services Manager, sent the 5-year loss ratio 2018-2022 is 91%, meaning that we've paid out 91 cents in claims for every dollar of premium paid over the past five years, not counting adjustments for time value of money. Chairman Traylor requested County Administrator Townsend gather information from the Sheriff's Office and pull together some data that could reduce the number of claims. Commissioner Lovett said we are paying out small claims that are either at or under our deductible. The rate of incidents goes up every time we do this, so we need to drive down the rate of incidents, and that 91 percent payout needs to be 80 percent or less, so we get a rate increase that drives that down to that 80 percent mark. Commissioner Fletcher noted that there are a lot of small claims in the scheme of things, and we need to work to get those down. County Clerk Davidson reported a Safety Action Plan where the Sheriff's Office or other Departments have to report their plan of action and sign off on it along with the Chairman and the County Administrator. County Administrator Townsend said that new vehicles and the new building also play a part in the increase. County Clerk Davidson said that Lamar County also received a large safety discount that goes against the contribution that is due. Commissioner Thrash requested the cost of the new vehicles and buildings. Chairman Traylor requested that County Administrator Townsend provide them with that information.

The Board Reviewed the Regular Business Meeting Agenda.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation-Rev. Waylon Knight
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Recess for Public Hearing
6. Public Hearing
 1. Public Hearing-Rezoning from A-R to R-1 Paul Daly and Ilicia Goodman-951 Hwy 18 West
7. Reconvene Regular Meeting
8. Proclamation-Waylon Knight
 1. Proclamation-Waylon Knight
9. Minutes Approval

1. May 16th, 2024-Workshop Meeting
2. May 21st, 2024-Regular Business Meeting
10. Old Business
11. New Business
 1. Ordinance 2024-04 Paul Daily & Illicia Goodman to Rezone A-R to R-1 Tax Map 023, parcel 006A
12. Administrator's Report
13. Public Comment
14. Round Table
15. Executive Session
 1. Real Estate
 2. Litigation
 3. Personnel
16. Adjournment

Public Comments

Elaine Hallada of 131 Steeplechase addressed the board. Mrs. Hallada said regarding the Board of Elections and the Recreation Advisory Board and their lack of funds, if the Solid Waste Authority (SWA) had been paying the 2.5 million dollars to the County since 2017, there would not be a budget problem in this County. Mrs. Hallada said she did not see a reference to an investigation of the SWA on the agenda for Tuesday night's meeting. She said 90 percent of the voters who answered the question on the ballot voted for one to be done. Chairman Traylor you have been proven once again that is definitely not the 3 percent that you threw out to us. It is 90 percent and a problem that both you and Commissioner Thrash orchestrated by being on the SWA board since 2017. As elected officials, you are supposed to represent us, the taxpayers, and be held accountable to the will of the people. The Conflict Counsel has been a waste of time and taxpayer dollars. The taxpayers want an investigation. Mrs. Hallada thanked the citizens in District 4, who overwhelmingly voted for Truman Boyle to replace Commissioner Thrash, where she lost by 83 percent. Mrs. Hallada said this was a landslide. She said that one of Commissioner Thrash's latest Facebook rants was actually referring to the election when she replies to one of her friends about losing the election and they said to let it go. She told him she planned to expose how this happened. Mrs. Hallada said she lost because 83 percent of the voters did not want her there anymore. Mrs. Hallada said, "Let it go." She said she does not think a taxpayer in this community wants to pay for you suing anyone else. Mrs. Hallada said as far as the Board of Elections is concerned, she believes that Mr. Christopher is right; he should have funds added to his budget. The equipment for elections is supposed to be safe and secure. Taking criminals out of jail for a day or two does not make it any safer or secure. Mrs. Hallada said Commissioner Lovett is right; they should present you with a plan and have money added to their budget. Mrs. Hallada said that the appearance of deception is a common thread, and she has to ask a question to which she may never get an answer. Mrs. Hallada addressed Attorney Mayfield regarding the date of July 21st, 2021. She said that Attorney Mayfield was the County Attorney of record on this date and asked who the County Attorney of record was for the Solid Waste Authority on July 22nd, 2021, when the AmWaste contract was signed. Mrs. Hallada said it is amazing what the citizens can do when they have a comprehensive plan of action.

Bonnie Martin of 626 Piedmont Road addressed the board. Mrs. Martin said she had two reoccurring questions the Board of Commissioners needed to answer. When will the promised town hall meetings going to begin? What is happening with the Conflict Resolution concerning the SWA fiasco? Mrs. Martin said \$19,000.00 has been spent with no real advice they can see. Acting like they are going to do something

about something and then forgetting about it does not solve any of the problems. If something is going on, why is it not being talked about so the public can hear about it? A big propaganda ad in the from the SWA is not the answer. The board needs to be addressing these things and let the public know what is going on.

Donald Hartman, 507 Old Milner Road, addressed the board. Mr. Hartman said there was an issue with the tracks on Old Milner Road at the grain plant, and the railroad did some work. It is a very rough intersection. There is a lot of debris on Old Milner, Fellowship, and Industrial Road at the track. Mr. Hartman asked if the Board of Commissioners or County Administrator Townsend needed to reach out to the railroad, CSX, about this issue. Mr. Hartman said he spoke with a message taker. One of the residents was out picking up nails with a magnetic wheel. Mr. Hartman said a lot of equipment is going in and out at the crossing, and the debris needs to be cleaned up. Mr. Hartman said that regarding public safety, he has noticed a lot of mailboxes and addresses, and we have a lot of great citizens who mark their homes. There are some that do not have an importance in doing this, but they will not realize that until they call 911. Mr. Hartman believes the citizens should be aware of this and they need to be clearly marked because it helps out the 911 system because you cannot go by the GPS. He said it is a great tool but those in public safety know the odds and the evens and how they run high and low. There are mismarked addresses in the County. Mr. Hartman said there are road issues with patching in the City and the County. It looks like they fill them up with rock, and we get a good rainstorm, and they are back to being potholes. He said he knows the team works hard and they are trying to do what they do, but there are some areas where those who do the road work are riding around or over them and could possibly stop their truck and take care of the problem right then. Mr. Hartman said he knows that front-end alignment is quite expensive and can cause real damage. If you have a low-profile car, he said he does not own a Corvette or anything like that, but he is sure they can do some hefty damage. Mr. Hartman said these are some things to bring to light. He said the railroad crossing is pretty rough.

Round Table

Commissioner Fletcher congratulated Commissioner Gilles on having her new baby.

Commissioner Thrash said she had spoken to the railroad about the issues with the railroad crossing.

Chairman Traylor said they discussed Turner Bridge Road at the last Regular Business meeting. He said Vice-Chair Gilles had also communicated with the Commissioners about the shape of the road, especially on a rainy day. Chairman Traylor commended Public Works Director Rigdon and five or six workers for working on that road. He said they came up with a new idea or researched an idea from Monroe County where they do away from ditches and pull the road from ditch to ditch. He drove his wife's car down the road and videoed it. He said her car has low-profile tires, and he did not feel a single bump. Chairman Traylor said the issue with this road and any dirt road in their town is that they are country folk and enjoy being country folk. However, there are people in the community who, when it rains, want to take out their four-wheelers, side-by-sides, razors, and tractors and go up and down the dirt road, which creates more issues on the roads.

12. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the Workshop Meeting at approximately 1:29 p.m. Commissioner Fletcher 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