

Lamar County Board of Commissioners
Budget Workshop
November 4th, 2024
9:00 p.m.

Chairman Traylor called the Special Called meeting to order at approximately 9:04 a.m. Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Gilles, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. Commissioner Fletcher was absent from the meeting.

Revenue Discussion-County Administrator Townsend-Discussed at 9:00 a.m.

- Reviewed the Revenue Manual, which showed a Proposed FY 2025 revenue total of \$17,434,478 with an additional \$2 million from GDOT LMIG for monthly project funding.
- Sales tax (LOST) is approximately 2.5 percent higher than in 2023, and in 2022-2023 they were 19 percent higher. There will be sales tax increase due to product delivery delays on I-75.
- Prior-year revenue and tax collections are impacted by a 60-90 day grace period; revenue after 60 days is booked into the following year.
- Reported the ISO rating could be a decrease in the Insurance Premium rollback.
- TAVT is trending higher due to a population growth.
- Reported personal property revenue decreased due to a lumber company divestment and \$30 million in fixed assets coming off the books.
- Reported there will be an increase in Real Estate Transfer now that everyone has to do it online.
- Reported an increase in housing growth which helps with the 3 percent that comes from the School Board.
- Financial Institution increase bad on monies received. Increase from \$23,650.00 to \$30,000.00.
- Reported an increase in LMIG from \$468,722.00 to \$2,072,779.00.
- Miscellaneous revenue updates: Police officer grant from 2020 (\$400,000.00) and COVID-related alcohol revenue increase.

Salary Proposal Request - Discussed at 9:15 a.m.

- Review of wage studies and salary adjustments. Suggested increases of 2.5-10%, with a three-year plan to reach competitive salaries, especially in comparison with neighboring counties. Sheriff White is requesting more in salaries due to increases in surrounding counties.
- Discussion on offering financial incentives for employees opting out of insurance and adjusting pay based on skills and positions. Discussed giving retirement incentives, salary increases and better health benefits as options for the employees.
- Suggested the HR Director create a total salary/benefit payroll package be presented to each employee.
- Discussion on rewarding employee compensation based on skill sets.
- Discussion on hiring younger employees and training them since employees are looking at retiring.
- Discussion on the longevity of employees not making more than \$15.00 an hour.
- Discussion of giving a wage study raise creating a higher start pay and how it affects an employee that had been employed for 10 years on the lower pay scale.
- Commissioner Lovett insurance costs and participation reviewed: 136 full-time employees, with 16 not on insurance.

Insurance rate is based on the number of employees. Corporate organizations tend to have more employees than local government and the balance of giving an employee the amount of money in a paycheck for insurance not taken is not as crucial as it is with a local government and only 136

employees. So, by example, if you have 100 employees it will cost you \$100.00 but if you only have 50 employees it will cost you \$150.00. There will be a per employee bump if you pull 20 to 30 percent of the employees out of the insurance pool.

- Concerns about wage competitiveness for new hires and options for adjusting salary structure and benefits to retain employees.
- Discussion on paying employees a set amount from \$300.00 to \$500.00 for not taking insurance if they have insurance with a spouse.
- Currently the County is paying \$941.00 per employee for insurance.
- Chairman Traylor said he took the insurance from the County. He has two deductibles. But not taking the insurance would be around \$300.00. He said that his wife is paying around \$600.00. If they give an employee \$300.00 then they are paying the employee to be attached to their spouses insurance.
- County Administrator Townsend reported on the salary increases over the years and stated that in 2024 it was around 5 percent, in 2023 it was 10 percent and 5 percent in 2021. A wage study was in 2020 and they thought they were in line with other counties but then they increased their salaries putting Lamar County behind. In 2022, the raise was around 5 percent. He said the Sheriff Department was around 21 to 22 percent behind and some offices were around 18 percent behind and then Public Works was around 23 percent behind. He said it is averaging around 23 percent behind other counties.
- Commissioner Thrash said she is not a fan of wage study's. County Administrator Townsend said Lamar County is competing with larger surrounding counties with more money. The Sheriff's Office is paying \$48,000.00 but advertisement for deputies are on billboards for \$58,000.00.
- County Administrator Townsend said on the three year plan the goal is to have a salary increase of 7.5 to 10 percent.
- HR Director Kilchriss announced that there are 117 employees on the roll plus three people out of office that are not showing up on the roster.
- Reported that the total insurance premium is around 1.1 million dollars.
- HR Director Kilchriss announced that there are 136 total employees and 16 of those employees are not taking insurance. This means 120 people are taking insurance.
- Chairman Traylor said it would behoove him to go back on his wife's insurance and Commissioner Gilles agreed.
- HR Director stated that the Fire Department volunteers are not on the County insurance.
- Commissioner Lovett stated that if 20 people drop off the insurance at \$300.00 this the difference between a 5 to 7.5 percent raise. County Administrator Townsend said he would need to know a decision in the next two weeks. Commissioner Lovett said they needed 23 people to go from 5 percent to 7.5 without affecting the budget. Commissioner Lovett said you can never go down but you can always go up. Vice-Chair Gilles suggested \$300.00 and Chairman Traylor suggested \$400.00. Commissioner Lovett said at \$400.00 this would be about 26 people needed to drop off of the County insurance. Commissioner Thrash pointed out there is a penalty for not taking employee offered insurance.
- HR Director Kilchriss pointed out that this would be if they declined insurance and went on their spouses insurance instead of the County insurance.

Industrial Development Authority (IDA) - Moved to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.

County Extension - Discussed at 10:00 a.m.

- Requested a need for a new transportation such as an SUV.
- Reported that applications for AG Educator position is being advertised. This position is included in the budget.
- Reported that she has requested to walk students in and out when they enter the building for sessions. They walk together to the rest rooms.

- Reported they can only have 10 students for every adult volunteer.
- Reported clubs for youth programs reviewed, including Science, Entomology, Sewing, and Art clubs, with notes on supervision and facility use. The Art club is meeting at the old facility because they are using paint and she does not want paint in the new building. There are 6 students in the paint club and Becky Patterson is the volunteer that is leading this class.
- Reported Trap machine and BB gun coaching programs planned for youth development and they need volunteers.

HR Director Kilchriss

- Reported that if you have your insurance with your job it will be cheaper than the marketplace. If you do not take your insurance with your job you lose the saving on the marketplace. Chairman Traylor said they have to make sure they are on some type of insurance plan. HR Director Kilchriss said most employees are on the County insurance because they cannot afford to be on their spouses insurance. There are a few that are still on their parents insurance; up to the age of 26. Chairman Traylor said if they go with this plan they will have to show they have insurance coverage somewhere else. He said this plan of giving the employee \$400.00 gives the employees that are not taking insurance the same benefits as those that are taking the County insurance. Commissioner Lovett said they need 26 people to opt out of taking the County insurance. HR Director Kilchriss said there are already 16 that are not taking County insurance.

Elections - Discussed at 10:15 a.m.

- Chairman Christopher reported that the Elections audit went well. He said he did not know how affectively they were going to be able to count 13,000 ballots but they will do it.
- Reported that law enforcement would be visible during the election.
- Overview of the 4 polling places available for voting.
 - i. District 1 is at the Barnesville Lamar County Library
 - ii. District 2 is at the Barnesville Civic Center
 - iii. District 3 is at the Lamar County Service Center
 - iv. District 4 is at the Milner Library
- Reported they are going to get the old batteries left at the old building and got wet. They are moving them to the new building because the State is exchanging the new lithium ion batteries for the acid batteries.
- Requested Security and more control access to the offices. One way in and one way out. A buzzing system is needed. Reached out to Wired Technology to install a ring type doorbell and putting on each of the employees computers or laptops and then an app installed on each of the computers so they could open the FOB to open the door.
- Requested a better way to store equipment so as not to block the motion detectors. The material has to be secured. The storage room needs to be re-keyed to be an Elections Office only storage room. The only one who has keys and access to the ballots and the only ones who has keys in the Elections office is Anita Reid, and the Chairperson.
- Reported that the training and schools budget adjusted from \$17,000.00 to \$25,000.00. The training budget increases and decreases based on conference being held every other year.
- Elections Superintendent Reid reported they have a lot of volunteers. Reported that when they take their application request, she fills out a Personnel Request and she sends it to HR. Before the person leaves she makes sure they schedule an appointment with HR but they receive a lot of applications back because they have not come back and HR has not reached out to them. She said she was told by HR that this is her responsibility to reach out to the applicant. Elections Superintendent Reid said that once she

fills out the form she does not feel like it is her responsibility to reach out to the applicant because she does not know their personal schedule and this is something the HR Department should do.

- Elections Superintendent Reid reported she has a Registrar position open. She sent over paperwork as to what she wanted posted on the website and the paper. She said it is legal and nothing wrong with it. Elections Superintendent Reid reported that what she sent over to be posted was changed and it left off a key deadline that needed to be put in that job announcement and it needs to be updated based on what she sent over to HR. Elections Superintendent Reid reported again that the announcement had no deadline and it was changed it for the applicant to come to HR. Elections Superintendent Reid reported that when they do poll workers it gets thrown back on her to call them. That is why she put that all applications be submitted to the Elections Office. Elections Superintendent Reid reported that this has been a pattern between the Elections Office and HR and said she has all email documentation to back that up. Elections Superintendent Reid reported that she has a minor in HR and what she wrote for the application is legal and it is not the first time they have advertised for this position. She has a friend that is an attorney to look over it and said there is nothing wrong with what she submitted.
- Wage study recommendations considered to improve salary competitiveness. They have trained two people that are leaving to work with a State agency. Elections Superintendent Reid requested for an outside company such as the University of Georgia to come in and do a wage study based on titles and job descriptions rather than someone in house to do a wage study. Elections Superintendent Reid reported said that there seem to be a lot of salaries that are not equal. She reported that next year every County in the State will have a combined board. There will no longer be a board of Registrars and having the Probate Judge be a part of it. They are taking it away from the judges.
- Reported they submitted a wage study with their budget.
- Reported that the health care benefit in the County is horrible. She said she has never had to fight for a surgery she had in April and she is getting bills from the hospital telling her she owes what it would cost to buy a brand new car because insurance has not paid. Elections Superintendent Reid reported said she has been her for 20 years and this is the worst insurance she has ever seen with their health care. She said you are not going to attract employees with degrees and the benefits package is not there to keep them here. Elections Superintendent Reid stated she was in the room with the broker last year. She said she was one of the ones that was vocal and knew he was lying because he could not verify the insurance. She works in health care also and she already knew the broker was selling insurance just to get you to bite and said they were going to go with this insurance. Elections Superintendent Reid reported that every time she goes to the doctor she hears that the insurance is not valid and it is ever appointment. Vice-Chair Gilles said she too is getting collections letters since she had a baby and wishes she had stayed with her husbands insurance. Chairman Traylor said he is also having the same issues.
- Potential 2024 elections and early voting plans discussed. Two elections and two run-offs are anticipated. There will be a primary for the Public Service Commission and possibly a primary run-off. A general election in November for the Public Service Commission in conjunction with municipal elections. The turnout will probably be less than 20 percent except for the City of Milner which will be 100 percent. The City of Milner is raising their taxes. Elections board Chairman Christopher reported that an election cost anywhere from \$13,000.00 to \$15,000.00.
- Reported that in 2020 there was a 70 percent turnout and cost about \$2.00 to \$3.00 a vote. Keeping it down to \$5.00 or below per voter is good.
- Reported that Sunday voting consisted of people who ages ranged from 25 to 50 years old. They added an additional Saturday voting for this election.

Library - Request reviewed at 10:30 a.m.

- Budget increase requested was from \$307,422.00 to \$313,632.00 to cover audit fees, office supplies, and a 3% payroll increase. The library pays for their own insurance as opposed to the County paying for their insurance.
- Inquired about doing a bonus for employees and asked for the 3 percent payroll percent increase instead.
- Detailed breakdown of the library’s income, including county funding, fines, copier fees, loss book fees and support from Friends of the Library.
- Reported they have Coca Cola Stock and the dividend brings in about \$2,000.00 a year. They have a few Certificate of Deposits (CD).
- Library staffing: three full-time and three part-time employees.
- Reported that she is in her 29th year at the Library.
- Reported that the board is made up of six members from Lamar County and six members from the City of Barnesville.
- Reported that they have 2 study rooms for available and one meeting room that is free during library hours.

Animal Shelter - Start date for new hire, Tyler White, is November 8. Revenue estimated at \$20,000 for operations next year.

Recess

The board recessed for seven minutes between the Budget Workshop and the Special Called Meeting. There was no adjournment.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Ashley Gilles, Vice-Chair

Jarrod Fletcher, Commissioner

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk