

Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes
October 24th, 2024
9:00 A.M
Administration Building

Call to Order

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Present for the meeting was Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. Vice-Chair Gilles was absent for the meeting.

9:00 a.m. - Budget Recap

- No budget increase for FY25.
- No anticipated health insurance increase in the budget book. Waiting on numbers from NFP. Scheduled meeting with NFP on November 4th, 2024.
- Elected Officials received an increase based on the population increase.
- Elected officials and adjustments to base rates due to population increase over 20,000.
- Noted Elections logistics, travel, and training expenses of \$15,000.00
- Administration increase from \$250,000.00 to \$300,000.00 due to contingencies, training and travel expenses.
- IT increased due to software contracts.
- Risk management showed an 8% increase.
- Courts increased from Bailiffs, Towaliga Circuit, and decreased DATE fund collections.
- Fire Department budget increase due to a three year period of missed retirement for an employee. The request is for \$24,000.00 from Charlie Muise, whose retirement was not funded or recognized in 2006-2009. Fire Department M&R increase.
- Public Works Increase due to funding received from GDOT for High Falls, Chappell Mills and Roc Spring Road of \$2,072,778.22. Budget request of \$77,586.80 for the Atlanta Street project with \$100,000.00 out of SPLOST funds.
- Lamar County Animal Shelter budget added into the budget.
- Senior Center Meals on Wheels request for 16 people that are currently on a waitlist. The cost is \$36,960.00 annually.
- Recreation is requested \$15,000.00 for a part-time person and \$5,000.00 for programming expenses. Increase for utilities due to an increase in scheduled activities at the gym.
- The Barnesville-Lamar County Library is requesting a two percent increase and Conservation is showing a decrease due to an unfilled position that was supplemented by a grant. Will continue to pay retirement in the Conservation budget.
- Zoning increase will depend on the approval of the Legacy 75. A commercial contractor will need to be added to the budget if approved plus an increase in fuel.
- Addressed salary increase proposal based on either steps or seniority which will probably require a millage increase. For fully funded insurance a millage increase will probably be required.
- Materials delivered sales tax increase considered for revenue enhancement.

9:15 a.m. - Sheriff Department

- Discussion on operational growth, rising costs, and calls for service.
- Medical cost increases for inmates of \$23,000.00 to \$24,000.00.
- Maintenance challenges for vehicles with some due to deer-related accidents.
- Need for a new jail facility raised; estimated costs have risen from \$14 million to \$30 million.

- Issues raised regarding the design and conditions of the current jail, including pipes and blanket flushing in the jail cells.
- Staffing challenges for deputies and facility management.
- Vehicle considerations included discussions on Tahoe, F-150s, and other makes/models.
- Space and mold issues in the Sheriff's office were discussed, including evidence room needs and potential SPLOST-funded expansion for the investigation building.

9:30 a.m. - Probate Court

- Under budget by \$50,000, suggestion of these funds being shifted to employee compensation.
- Completion of a scanning project at a reduced cost; improvements noted in technology with no current glitches.
- Building issues such as mold, old ceiling tiles, and outdated electrical infrastructure were discussed, alongside plans for renovation.

9:45 a.m. - Zoning

- Budget adjustments of \$2,000.00 and compensation requests for zoning positions.
- Discussion on code enforcement cases going to superior court, which incurs delays and expenses. This will be about \$10,000.00 from the Board of Commissioners budget.
- Discussion on vehicle needs for Planning and Community Development Director. Specifically, one with a hatch back tall enough to look at plans and for going into the mud.
- Discussion regarding hiring a part-time and full time employee that could assist with animal control.
- Budget request of \$4,500.00 overall.

10:00 a.m. - Public Works

- Emphasis on maintenance challenges, overwhelmed staff, and the need for additional help.
- Addressed salary considerations for part-time workers and applying for student summer intern grants and using students to learn the trade.
- Rock supply from Vulcan and road maintenance issues discussed.
- Issues with fixing major culvert on Roger Brown Road and no manpower to fix it. Can't close the road due to residents and log trucks.

10:15 a.m. - Building and Ground Maintenance

- Maintenance Director Beverly reported that he is backflow certified. Backflow testing challenges discussed.
- Replacement of water heaters at the jail.
- Replacement of carpet to hard wood type flooring at the Courthouse.
- Public works crew may assist with winter maintenance, and backflow compliance issues addressed with city authorities. Concrete and Asphalt will need to be cut.

10:30 a.m. - Tax Commissioner

- Minor budgetary adjustments due to staffing changes.
- Overall decrease of \$9731.00 in the budget.

10:45 a.m. - Magistrate Court

- Increase in due and fees from \$750.00 to \$1,170.00.
- Discussions on updating the phone system on the bench in the Magistrate Court.
- Discussed using the Owl recording/video system that the County Administrator provided him to use.
- Requested a new computer for the Magistrate Court Clerk. Suggestion made to rotate computers every five years.
- Addressed E-filing system and using the Owl to implement this.

- Increase in dues and fees from \$750.00 to \$1000.00.
- Increase in training and travel increases for employees.
- Increase in stamps from \$1,650.00 to \$2,000.00. Discussed the need for a postage machine.

11:00 a.m. - Tax Assessor

- Introduced Lacy Merritt who is in training to take over as Tax Assessor in the next five years.
- Discussed the possibility of contracts decreasing by \$34,000.00 for Tinker and Associates that may not be needed if an amendment passes for personal property going from \$7500.00 to \$20,000.00 she will not need them.
- Focused on increase in training, hotel expenses from \$7500.00 to \$9,014.38.
- Communications decreased from \$5492.00 to \$2,840.00 due to incorrect line item posting.
- Advertisement decreased from \$231.00 to zero due to incorrect line item posting.
- Adjustments due to potential legislative changes.
- Increase in Stamps and Postages from \$600.00 to \$1,500.00.

11:15 a.m. - Recreation

- Emphasis on staffing challenges and a request to increase salaries and hire a full-time and part-time staff.
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- Challenges with staffing for the gym and time changes for pickle ball.
- Discussions included increasing program fees by \$5,000.00.
- Discussed projects and sponsorships for FY 2025 and minus All Star donations they received around \$15,000.00 to \$18,000.00.
- Increase in training and meetings from \$1,600.00 to \$2,000.00.
- Increase in supplies from \$1,300.00 to \$1,500.00.
- Increase in utilities due to using the gym for basketball and pickle ball.
- Issues with trees that need to be taken down.

11:30 a.m. - Fire Department

- Discussed the growth of services on the Northside of the County requiring additional part-time and full-time positions.
- Discussions on fire gear storage (lockers) of around \$5,400.00 and \$9,971.00 for two big fans.
- Discussed hose testing, and the need for big fans.
- Discussed using the new Lucas (CPR device) in less than 24 hours.
- Discussed the issue with Charlie Muise retirement not credited in 2006-2009 in the amount of \$24,000.00. He wants to retire in April of 2025 and is asking to have those years of service credited back.
- Discussed the location of the new Milner Fire Station for which SPLOST funds have been allotted. This is the corner of Zebulon Road and Hwy 41 South/Ga 7. Reported an R-Cut will be put at this location. He met with GDOT about this location.
- Reported one new Fire Truck has arrived at the Fire Station.
- Discussed salaries of the Fire Fighters of around \$35,000.00 and the need for hiring two more fire fighters. This would be six fire men a day instead of four a day.
- Discussed vehicle maintenance challenges.

11:45 a.m. - EMA

- Reported that the Salary line item is \$19,968.00 as opposed to the \$19,019.00 shown in the budget book. Discovered her salary is in the Salary-Regular Employee line item instead of the Salary/Dept Head.

Reported that the PPA funds from the State used for salary is \$7,874.00 and runs from July 1st to June 30th. Received the majority of these funds go towards her salary and was this way with the former EMA Director Billy Campbell. There is \$2,000.00 left over and they normally buy something with it but she does not need much. Requested to have left over PPA grant money go towards the EMA director salary. Commissioner Fletcher stated that he is in agreement with this especially have witnessing her performance during the last storm.

- Reported that Supplies and Tools of \$4100.00 was added to the budget and is used for battery replacement for warning sirens. Each siren holds 4 batteries and are replaced at the same time.
- Requested that the Hazard mitigation funds will be \$20,000.00 as opposed to \$25,000.00 but requested to leave the budgeted amount at \$25,000.00. Requested to purchase a generator with these funds. The last generator estimate is around \$36,000.00. This will include the entire EMA building and the power to the body cooler.
- Reported that if the Governor keeps the Declaration open from the last storm she can apply for funds based on the State and Local Declaration.

12:07-1:07 p.m. - Lunch Break

Commissioner Fletcher made a motion to recess the Budget Workshop for lunch. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Board of Commissioners came back from lunch and reconvened the meeting.

1:15 p.m. - Coroner

- Reported he had switched jobs and is now on County Insurance.
- Communications will increase from \$1,600.00 to \$ 3,797.00 due to the installation of fiber. This will be between the Fire Department, EMA and the Coroner.
- Requested an increase in Supplies and Tools from \$1,250.00 to \$3,000.00.
- Requested to have a printer and a fax machine. Discussed using Ring Central for faxes.

1:30 p.m. - Administration

- Discussed keeping the conflict attorney fees in the budget. Increased contingency funds from \$300,000.00 to \$325,000.00.
- Reported that scanners related to the MCCI Laserfiche will be ordered so records can be scanned into the program.
- Discussion on audit fees and having to pay for the single audit. Budgeted \$43,000.00.
- Discussion on the County Administrator's salary.
- Discussion on Communication budget used for phones. We are able to upgrade phones annually.
- Discussed swapping out computers in a five year rotation.
- Reported a Decrease in Stamp/Postage from \$4,000.00 to \$2,000.00 due to AP moving from mailed checks to ACH processing. Discussed using a postal machines or online postage.
- A suggestion was made for the Finance Director or the County Administrator to do department-level detailed quarterly budget report training even if pizza has to be bought and they do it during lunch.
- Reported that the Constitutional Officers do not double check their bank statements and the auditors mark it as a finding.

1:45 p.m. – Commissioners

- Suggested County wide shirts or ball caps for the Commissioners and employees be purchased.
- Focused on salary adjustments and travel allowances for commissioners. Discussed the potential for a full-time chairman role. Reported that last year the Chairman in Pike County was getting paid \$32,000.00 and the Commissioners were getting paid \$23,000.00. Discussed changing the Chairperson to \$36,000.00 and the Commissioners to \$18,000.00. Discussed having to have 3

Public Hearings in order to change the Salaries. Discussed waiting to January to change the Chairman and Commissioner salaries. Chairman Traylor stated he would not reference the Chairman hours as full-time.

- Discussed raising the travel allowance from \$250.00 to \$350.00. County Administrator Townsend has the authority to change the travel allowance. Chairman Traylor suggested moving it to \$400.00. Commissioner Fletcher suggested they move it to \$500.00. There was discussion about various other counties paying their Commissioners and Chairman higher salaries. The Commissioner in Newton County makes around \$50,000.00 per Commissioner Fletcher. Finance Director Johnston noted that the Chairman in Fayetteville make \$20,000.00 and the Commissioners made \$16,000.00 but the perk they were the most excited about was the insurance. The Board of Commissioners continued discussing the Lamar County Board of Commissioners travel. County Administrator Townsend noted that the travel increase will move from a total of \$28,160.00 to \$46,360.00.
- Discussion about obtaining iPads or monitors for the Commissioners.

2:00 p.m. - Clerk of Superior Court

- Discussed M&R Office Equipment going from \$4,500.00 to zero. There was a piece of equipment that was in his office in 2015 and if it broke down there was no access to hard copies of files and they needed to be able to get to the hard copies. That piece of equipment is no longer in his office since the filing system has changed to online.
- Discussed the increase in postage and was on board with having a postage meter in house except for certified mail.
- Discussed the upcoming flooring updates moving from carpet to hardwood in the Courthouse.
- Asked about the windows replacement because for the last 12 years he was told they would be replaced. County Administrator Townsend noted that he is working on getting quotes from Wright Woodall. He said when they received a quote for the back windows, they came back and said the manufacturer is not making any commercial windows.
- Expressed thanks for the tree that was taken down in the Courthouse parking lot.
- Reviewed the vendor fees for real estate indexing and filing for the State. Kofile does this for him and the bill changes depending on how many documents are filed in his office. The budget line item remains at \$19,100.00.
- Discussed building maintenance comparisons raised by other counties with more industry and more money and there have been significant improvements made in their Courthouses. They come to Lamar County and their idea is that it is a dump. Clerk of Superior Court Judge Tyson stated that he likes the old Courthouse and he appreciates it. He does not want to move from the old Courthouse but whatever they can do to not give off that vibe they need to work on.
- Discussed the possibility of salary increases in FY2025 that will be discussed on November 4th, 2024.
- Reported that his employees said they would rather have better health benefits than a small increase in pay.

2:15 p.m. - Senior Center

- Discussed an increase in schools and trainings going from \$1,400.00 to \$2,000.00.
- Reported the exterminating budget has gone from \$274.00 to \$350.00.
- Reported an increase in diesel fuel from \$3,800.00 to \$4,500.00 due to an increase in trips.
- Reported an increase in senior activities from \$5,976.00 to \$6,500.00.
- Reported an increase in membership of 15 new members. Total membership is 250 member.
- Request to increase Salary Part-Time.

- Reported a new sink and dish washer will be installed the week of Thanksgiving. The dishwasher cost is \$850.00. Water Fountain estimate is \$846.00. The Deep Freezer for storing more inventory is \$1,600.00.
- Reported that they are overserving and Three Rivers is telling her they can only serve 20 Seniors a month. They are going to work with funding the extra Seniors with money not used from other Senior Centers. There are 42 people on Meals on Wheels. There are 20 to 25 Seniors being served at the Senior Center. There are 50 people being served meals on Home Delivery.
- Discussed applying for the Lamar Gives 365 Grant.
- Discussed getting a person who is blind on Meals on Wheels.
- Discussed meal program challenges with people who are not getting meals.
- Reported the bathrooms have been fixed and they are smelling better.
- Reported complaints regarding the landscaping in front of the building not being maintained.
- Discussed the need for replacing the doors.
- Reported that Yoga class has gone from 10 to 15 people and requested a divider door.
- Reported 100 Seniors participated in the Masquerade Ball and 150 Seniors participated in the Fall Festival.
- Reported the lights on the outside of the building has been fixed.
- Reported that she has applied for a \$2,000.00 grant for a mobile rack to put the can goods on to handle extra storage space needs
- Reported a trip to Blue Ridge will be on November 1st, 2024. Three Rivers paid for them to travel on a chartered bus. Three Rivers gives \$3,200.00 to be used for trips. A charter bus will cost anywhere from \$800.00 to \$1500.00 per trip.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that the new bus should be here by the end of November or early December.
- Reported that they take trips such as Gordon for lunch, Dairy Queen, the Jelly Jar, Roses and the Dollar Tree.
- Discussed taking the Senior to the play “The Christmas Carol” at Gordon.
- Reported she does an Angel Tree at the Senior Center requesting 3 things they would like to have for Christmas.
- Reported boxes are placed at different locations in the County for donations of scarves, gloves, blankets, flashlights for the Seniors.
- Requested an extra \$36,000.00 for those that are not getting Meals on Wheels.
- Reported it cost \$12.06 per mealtimes for 20 days is \$241.20 x 17 seniors equals around \$4,100.40 need in FY2024 until the end of the year. County Administrator Townsend stated that he will do a budget amendment in the budget to cover this.
- Suggested the Commissioners do a spaghetti dinner with the Seniors during lunch.
- Discussed the Commissioners going to Gordon for lunch on catfish day with the Seniors.

2:47 p.m. - Adjournment

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to adjourn the Budget Workshop at approximately 2:47 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